

GUYANA

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ALLEN C HANSEN
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Georgetown (1957-1959)

Mr. Allen C. Hansen joined USIA in 1954. His overseas postings included Venezuela, Spain, British Guiana, and Mexico. Mr. Hansen was interviewed by Dorothy Robins-Mowry in 1988.

Q: You were then directly transferred from Mexico to Georgetown, British Guiana. How did that come about?

HANSEN: Well, one morning I received a letter signed by Frank Oram who was then area director, informing me that I was to be transferred to Georgetown, British Guiana; that there was great concern in Washington that "B.G." might become "the second Cuba." This was a very challenging assignment for a young, relatively inexperienced officer. There had been considerable discussion in Washington (I learned later) as to whether or not they should send an officer as young and inexperienced as I was at the time to that hop spot, but they decided to do so. This was just before Christmas, so we were able to stay on in Mexico City for Christmas and the New Year's, and then we left, my wife and I.

It was on the way to Georgetown that we stopped off in Caracas for the weekend, when, as I mentioned earlier, Perez Jimenez was leaving town, forced out by his military colleagues. When we arrived in Georgetown, then, for the first time, I truly knew what an underdeveloped country is. Georgetown is, we used to say, at the end of the line, but then you go over to Dutch Guiana to the south, and you think the same thing, and from there you go further south to French Guiana, and that really is the end of the line!

But in any event, Georgetown is a place, we used to say, where you could be six feet under and still breathing. The reason for this is that the town is about five feet below sea level. The Dutch, when they ruled that section of the Guianas, built dikes to keep out the sea while water from the tropical downpours flows into Georgetown from the land side. If it's high tide, they can't open the sluice gates to let the water out until the tide goes down. So the water sits there after a heavy rainstorm until they can let the water run out a low tide. Occasionally the sea wall breaks and the sea comes in anyway. Therefore, a lot of buildings in British Guiana, in Georgetown and elsewhere along the coast, are on stilts. Georgetown itself is interspersed with canals to drain the area.

At the time of my assignment to Georgetown, President Kennedy was in the White House. There was great concern that British Guiana, which would soon get its independence, would very

possibly become a second Cuba (as mentioned earlier) inasmuch as the prime minister at the time was Cheddi Jagan. Jagan, usually described as a Marxist, was very friendly with the Cubans and the Soviets. His leanings were certainly in the Communist direction. So the feeling in Washington was that it was time to have a USIS office there.

Q: You were the first one to go in?

HANSEN: I was the first American USIA officer to be stationed there. We did have a library that had been set up by a Guianese employee under the direction of the PAO in Trinidad. My job was a branch PAO, reporting to the PAO in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad (who was Gar Routt at the time). Again (as in Mexico), I was there for a year-and-a-half.

Q: How was it? What did you go through to open up a new post in a place like that?

HANSEN: The small library was, of course, our cultural center. The whole city had only 100,000 population at the time, and there were about three newspapers that, perhaps, we could do some business with. I made it a point to get to know the newspaper editors and writers and political cartoonists.

The leading cartoonist in Georgetown and I became friends. I used to give him ideas for some of his cartoons, which he would occasionally use. I always thought that was a great thing from our point of view. Everyone was very friendly, but the political situation was such that Cheddi Jagan and the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) were on one end, and the American consulate--we had a consulate there at the time--was, in a sense, on the other. We tried to have an AID program there. A few people from AID were assigned to B.G. but Cheddi Jagan and his PPP were always attempting to keep the Americans from gaining influence, so while the local government talked a lot about the need for more economic assistance from the Americans and others, Prime Minister Jagan and the PPP managed to keep the AID program small while putting up road blocks with regard to the few AID programs that were initiated.

Q: You didn't find any problems being an American, even though there were Communist leanings? Or did you?

HANSEN: No, I really didn't find any problem. As a matter of fact, there was a young man named Ranji Chandisingh who was one of Cheddi Jagan's lieutenants and the editor of the PPP newspaper, Thunder. We became friendly enough for him to invite me to his home one day to try some East Indian cooking which his mother prepared. (Like many Guianese, he was of East Indian descent.) While we were sociable we discussed our diametrically-opposed political views but each always left through the same door by which he entered. British Guiana-Guyana as it is know today--is known as the "Land of Six Peoples." The major ethnic group is of African descent; next are the East Indians who arrived from India to be indentured laborers; then the Portuguese--they distinguish them as a group; and the Chinese and the Amerindians--so-called to distinguish the indigenous Indians from the East Indians. The sixth and smallest minority, about one percent or less of the population, was the Caucasian group.

Shortly after I had arrived in Georgetown the agency had obtained a film--perhaps it was a USIA film--of the trip to India of the renowned black American singer, Marian Anderson. I thought: what a marvelous way to introduce myself to the community if we could show that film in the USIS library! While racial problems existed, of course, between blacks and whites, the big problem in Guiana was between the blacks and the East Indians (mainly because they were an economic threat to each other--or so they thought--being the two major local groups in size). So here, in an hour-long documentary, was Marian Anderson, an American black, who takes this marvelous trip through India to perform for the Indians! So we set that up and invited Prime Minister Jagan and his American-born wife, Janet Jagan, along with other local notables to the grand opening of the new USIS office. Cheddi Jagan didn't come but his wife, Janet, who was Minister of Labor in the Jagan government, did. The film was a big hit. So much so, that for the next year or two the B.G. Government Information Services borrowed a copy and showed it all over the country.

Q: It is amazing how a visual can be used very effectively in getting through all sorts of barriers. I assume, then, there wasn't any language problem in British Guiana. Was English the going language?

HANSEN: Yes, English. We always joked, however, that there are at least three type of English--American English, English-English, and Guyanese English.

Q: You weren't there very long. You were there something less than two years?

HANSEN: Yes.

Q: In view of the fact that you were new, or USIS was new, what did you feel the biggest triumph was that laid the ground work for later action?

HANSEN: I think that our cultural and educational influence was what was most lasting, and most important, really, because Georgetown, which is the only city in Guyana, is so isolated from the rest of the world. In those days, they were isolating themselves even further by ignoring or turning off any economic assistance from the United States, and turning, as Cheddi Jagan and his Peoples Progressive Party were doing, to Cuban and Soviet influence.

The upshot of that, however, was that Cheddi Jagan never retained power after independence was declared. A black politician, Forbes Burnham, who had been Jagan's deputy years before, ran against him, and by hook or crook--and I use the term advisedly--took over the government when British Guiana became independent. Burnham stayed in power for about 20 years, until one day he had to have a throat operation. As I understand it, he had a Cuban surgeon work on his throat in 1985 and he didn't survive.

Q: Some very interesting conclusions can be drawn from that.

HANSEN: Yes. But the sad commentary is that the U.S. in those days was trying to convince the British that B.G. was a great danger to the western world if it became a second Cuba. The British were inclined to think, "Well, Jagan's a nationalist." They were much less concerned. But

I think the American point of view won out. The U. S. Government devoted considerable resources--USIS is just a small reflection of this, by instituting more AID programs later and no doubt the other agency was involved down there. But the end result is that Guyana today is probably just as poor as it was in those days. My feeling at this point is that I think that if we had kept out of it, they might have been better off, and U.S. interests would not have been seriously affected. Of course, we have no way of knowing. (Note: In January 1989, the Washington Post reported that "despite the long years of hardship and discontent, the ruling socialists have won every general election since 1964. "Jagan's American-born wife, Janet, is also in politics. Her explanation of PNC's 25 years of electoral success is widely shared both at home and abroad. Since they were catapulted into office, we have had one rigged election after another, she said." Her husband Cheddi Jagan, still active as the major opposition all these years, joined forces in 1988 with three other opposition parties in the "Patriotic Coalition for Democracy" to try to unseat Burnham's successor, President Desmond Hoyte who was allegedly trying to open Guyana to foreign capital. The small, still impoverished country remained in 1989 with a \$1.2 billion debt.)

NELSON C. LEDSKY
Consular/Economic Officer
Georgetown (1959-1961)

Ambassador Ledsky was born in Cleveland, Ohio and was educated at Case Western Reserve University and Columbia University. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1957, serving in Georgetown, Guyana; Enugu, Nigeria; Bonn and Berlin, Germany and in the State Department in Washington. In his various assignments he was closely involved in matters concerning the status of Berlin and West Germany as well as on the persistent Greece-Turkey conflict over Cyprus. Among his other assignments, the Ambassador served on the Department's Policy Planning Staff. Ambassador Ledsky was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2003.

Q: You finished your INR assignment in 1959. At the time, I assume that you were asked what onward assignment you would like. Do you remember what you sought?

LEDSKY: I think I asked for an assignment to Iran, Turkey or Greece. Those were the countries on which I had worked and knew something about. My assignment in 1959 was to Georgetown, Guyana.

First, I had a fight with the Office of Personnel. I was originally assigned to Windsor, Canada, as a vice-consul to work on consular matters. Cecile put her foot down; she was not going to any foreign post which could be reached by the Ohio Turnpike. She didn't want to deal with my mother! So I told Personnel that I would not go to Windsor. I met with someone and asked whether I could not be found a job "overseas." I didn't care where, as long as it was not next door to the U.S. That was not "overseas" as far as Cecile and I were concerned. Going to a suburb of Detroit was not "overseas." I was ready to go anywhere "overseas." I met with

someone in the Bureau for European Affairs, which was responsible for Canadian affairs. That person advised me not to turn down the Windsor assignment because Personnel would wreak its revenge as it did on most that refused their assignments. I said something along the lines that “nothing could be worse than Windsor, Canada.”

After a couple of weeks, I received my assignment orders and they were for Georgetown, Guyana. That post was also under the jurisdiction of EUR and was handled by the same management officer who worked on Canadian matters. Georgetown was a subsidiary post of Trinidad, which was still part of the British Empire. I was still in EUR, even if far removed from Europe. When I received this piece of paper, I did not know how to react. I really didn't know where Guyana was. I had never had an opportunity to learn much about South America or the Caribbean. My mother-in-law didn't know where it was; my mother didn't know where it was. They thought that I had just been reassigned to another Washington office. So, at first, they were delighted and then, when they found out where Guyana was, they were horrified.

Cecile and I weren't horrified. She much preferred Georgetown to Windsor. We did want to distance ourselves from our parents in Cleveland and Georgetown certainly did that. Therefore, we were not unhappy about going to Guyana. The post report did not frighten us, even though it was quite horrendous. Georgetown was quite primitive, to put it diplomatically. I should mention that Jonathan had been born in April 1959. That made it two young children.

We went to Georgetown in two shifts. I went first, while Cecile and the two children stayed in Florida in her parents' house. I was supposed to go first, find suitable accommodations and assistance for the children and then the family would join me. So I went.

Q: Did you have any consular training before you left?

LEDSKY: No. I had a couple of weeks of training during the A-100 course, two years earlier.

Q: What size post was Georgetown?

LEDSKY: When I arrived, it was a two-person post: the principal officer and the vice-consul. I was responsible for all consular matters, all administrative matters, all economic issues and some of the political issues. I covered the waterfront. As I recall, I was quite busy – almost too busy. Every morning, there were lines out of the front door of people seeking help from the consular section. I had about six locals working for me in that section and they were busy all the time. During my time, an administrative officer was added to the staff. That officer not only took care of the usual administrative functions, but also supervised the USIS (United States Information Service) library.

We had to find our own living quarters, which was not an easy task. There was a shortage of suitable accommodations. The principal officer had a house which had been passed on from principal officer to principal officer. The vice-consuls scrounged as best they could. I first moved into the apartment that my predecessor had occupied, but he had had no children. I stayed there for a couple of weeks. Eventually, the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) director, a wonderful man, took pity on me and gave me the AID apartment which

was large enough for Cecile and the kids and gave us a base to look for more permanent quarters. That took another two months, but eventually we did find a house that met our needs. It was on stilts two blocks from the ocean. It needed to be fixed up; I had to have screens installed and bought lots of mosquitos netting. It was not air conditioned, as was true for the whole city. Electricity was not reliable; we used to have blackouts and brownouts continually. Despite all these shortcomings, the house was cute. It had been built by an Indian. The car was parked underneath between the stilts. The staircase led to the kitchen. The house had three bedrooms, a nice paneled living room and a small dining room.

Q: You mentioned an AID program, a USIA (United States Information Agency) program, so this was more than just a diplomatic mission.

LEDSKY: Yes. Our offices were all in a wooden three story building. The ground floor, which in Guyana was rarely used, was rebuilt and became the USIS library, attended by an American USIA employee assisted by a couple of locals. They conducted programs there. The second floor was taken up by the consular section and the AID mission was on the third floor. When I arrived, the AID mission consisted of three or four people. By the time I left, it had grown to ten or twelve. In fact, the AID mission had expanded so much that it required another building for its program.

As I said, it was a busy post. All sections were well integrated. I often went out with the USIS truck to show films in the countryside. I became a great attraction.

Q: Why did we have a post in Georgetown?

LEDSKY: We had had a post in Georgetown for many years. While I was there, our principal function was to watch a developing communist movement, which was slowly, but surely taking over the colony. Our chief concern was that Cheddi Jagan, who was presumed to be a communist, would lead the colony to independence and into the communist camp. He did win the presidency in 1992.

Q: Jagan has been deemed an interesting personality. Did you have a chance to observe him?

LEDSKY: Sure. Guyana is a very small place. It is essentially a jungle and one city. The coast is essentially the only inhabited area. Georgetown is the only city, although there are a few scattered hamlets. And even Georgetown only had 100-150 thousand inhabitants. The government leaders were all easily accessible. They all lived around the corner. They were seen in town every day and could frequently be heard on radio.

Q: What kind of society did you find in Guyana in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

LEDSKY: It was a British colony, run, I would guess, in much of the same way it had been run during much of the 19th Century. The British held all of the major posts. Self-government was at an embryonic stage. The elected officials had some power, but it was certainly not complete. The British controlled the police force.

The society had a wealthy, white upper-structure, consisting of people whose families had been in the colony for a long, long time – mostly British colonialists. The country was actually run by one British company – Bookers. That company started as a sugar grower and producer. It now also gives out an annual literary prize in Great Britain. When I was in Georgetown, Bookers owned and operated ten sugar plantations, the sole department store in the country and a major grocery store in Georgetown. It ran most of the businesses in the country. It, therefore, was an economically dominant powerhouse. It was run by perhaps a dozen whites, who came from Britain on long-term contracts. They lived in a compound a little way out of the city. We lived two blocks from it and knew all the inhabitants of that compound.

We had some commercial interests in Guyana. Reynolds Metal worked some aluminum mines. There were some other ore extraction operations in the jungle. There were also a couple of other active American companies, such as Alcoa. There were also considerable Canadian economic interests. They had a major ore excavation and smelting operation run by a company by the name of McKenzie.

Q: Was the consular work related primarily to immigration petitions?

LEDSKY: Despite the fact that Guyana was a small country, the lines for consular services were very long. We had three or four categories of work. First of all, there was considerable tourist and business traffic between Guyana and the U.S., particularly New York City, which had a major Guyana expatriate presence. The Guyanese-American community goes back to an earlier part of the 20th Century. Many moved from Guyana to New York between WWI and WWII. There was considerable intermarriage between Guyanese and American blacks as there was also for people from other parts of the West Indies. Secondly, there were a considerable number of British-trained nurses in Guyana – both blacks and Indians. There was a nursing school in Georgetown, which graduated a lot of nice, able nurses who were in high demand in the U.S. As a result, we had a lot of nurses applying for visas to work in the U.S. It seemed that every graduate of these nursing schools in Guyana and Jamaica would get a job in an American hospital. We had long lines of these applicants. Thirdly, there were many Guyanese who wanted to emigrate. A lot of Indians were among our applicants. There was a Chinese colony in Guyana, which also wanted to leave. As the economic situation deteriorated, the number of applicants for U.S. immigration visas grew rapidly. So we had our hands full in the consular section. In addition to the poor economy, there were many Guyanese who were concerned about Jagan's likely take over of the country, which loomed right over the horizon. He had already been elected to the top position, but did not yet have full power. However, people saw that as just being a matter of time.

This was the period in which Trujillo ran the Dominican Republic. People were fleeing from there, but could only get as far as Guyana or Trinidad or Venezuela. As most of these people wanted to immigrate to the U.S., we had a lot of Dominican citizens applying for immigrant visas from our consular section.

Q: What was your reaction to consular work?

LEDSKY: I liked it, but from the beginning, the rules seemed odious. That made the work very difficult. The law required racial and geographic quotas. If a black Guyanese-born applicant came in for an immigration visa, he would go into a pool from which we could only issue 100 visas per annum. If you looked Asian – e.g., Chinese – you were processed as an Asian-Pacific applicant and would fall into the Chinese quota pool. I found that very odious because a lot of the applicants were clearly of Asian origin – or of mixed background and were treated differently from the black applicants. I did not like such discrimination at all. The oriental-looking applicants had practically no chance of being admitted to the U.S. as immigrants. There were never enough numbers to accommodate them. That practice was very odious to me; it was pure discrimination, which I found very disturbing. This situation was very hard to administer and even harder to explain to applicants, who wanted to know when they might be admitted to the U.S. I often had to tell people that they had no chance of being admitted.

During my tour, there was a conscious effort on the part of the Chinese community to leave Guyana, even though it was quite rich and influential in Georgetown. A number of these people were friends of ours. I remember well, for example, the Pan-American agent, who was of Chinese origin, who tried to help people leave; I had to keep his referrals down. Except for this odious policy, the rest of the work was fun.

Q: You mentioned that you also did some economic work. What did that entail?

LEDSKY: I had to do the annual economic summary, as well as other mandatory reports. Sometime I was able to say, “Does not apply to Guyana” in response to a report request, but I did have to write a couple of lengthy annual reports.

Q: Tell me again what the organizational structure was?

LEDSKY: Our consulate in Georgetown reported to Trinidad, which was our supervisory post. It in turn theoretically reported to our embassy in London, but we didn’t have anything to do with the embassy. It was the consul general in Trinidad who wrote our efficiency reports or review statements. Our Washington backstopping desk was the UK desk. While in Georgetown, I met Jerry Goldstein and Ed Moline; they were stationed in Trinidad and we used to see each other either in Georgetown or in Trinidad, which I used to visit at least once a month on a courier run. We used to split the courier function among the American staff of the consulate; we ran a pouch to Trinidad once a week.

Q: Did the State Department or any other agency pay much attention to Guyanese affairs?

LEDSKY: Washington left us pretty much alone. I could not discern any Washington interest in Guyanese affairs. Occasionally, I used to hear from the consular bureau in the department. I used to correspond with some employees of that bureau on specific consular issues which raised some questions in my mind. The desk officer in Washington may have passed through once during my tour, but we really never had much contact with him. We may have sent a periodic report of “doings in Georgetown,” but that didn’t generate any response.

On the other hand, the White House had an interest in events in Guyana, beginning in 1961, just as I was being reassigned. This was after the Kennedy election. Professor Arthur Schlesinger, who became an advisor to the new president, had an interest in Guyana and its relationship to Cuba. He was interested in efforts being made by Castro to develop an alliance with Jagan, i.e., Cuban penetration of the continent or the spread of communism. When I returned to Washington in 1961, I was invited to meet with Schlesinger in one of the NSC offices. We talked about the Castro-Jagan connection. But in State, there was absolutely (or very little) no interest in any Guyanese matters. Eventually, Schlesinger included the Guyana issue in a couple of his books.

Q: While you were there, were you concerned that Castro might make some inroads in Guyana or that it might fall to communism?

LEDSKY: I was not concerned. I saw no evidence of the “domino” theory working in that part of Latin America. I was much more concerned that the Jagan leadership would result in a disaster for Guyana, as I believe it did. I was concerned that that country, with much charm and attraction, would end up economically devastated. I did not see Guyana a part of a vast international conspiracy, led by Castro or the Soviet Union, even though there were many indications that Cheddi Jagan was a communist who would lead the country in a communist direction. But I did not really focus on that possibility. The British, I think, were alarmed by this prospect. They spent much of the two years I was in Georgetown in devising schemes which would have kept Jagan from taking power. I think they were ready to delay independence until the “Jagan specter” was somehow disposed of or until they could devise some way to manipulate the electoral system, which would guarantee the election of a black leader, rather than an east-Asian one. They spent a lot of time on that scheme.

The Canadians were also concerned. I assume that someone in the Washington bureaucracy was concerned, but we never heard about that if it existed. The Guyanese black community was concerned, which may have also been felt by the Washington black community with which it had some close relations. All these parties were concerned about Guyana’s future if Jagan rose to power.

There was racial tension in Guyana, particularly between the blacks and the Indians. It was a unique racial divide. The Chinese were not involved, because they were few in number, but quite influential. Guyana was known as the “land of six people.” The six were the Amerindians (the natives), east Indians (from India and Pakistan who had been brought as indentured servants by the British during the 19th Century), the Chinese, the Portuguese (who had also been brought to Guyana in the 19th Century as indentured servants by the British), the whites and the blacks. Those were the distinct racial groups that lived in Guyana. Maps used to show Guyana as “the land of six people.” The existence of all these various racial groups was a fundamental problem and remains so today. It is today still the central political problem in that country.

The racial divide had an economic significance. The blacks were all freed from indenture in the 1840s and 1850s. They had all drifted into Georgetown, which made it essentially a black city in the mid-20th Century. The blacks occupied the civil service positions. The city’s police force was almost all black. They were the aspiring middle-class. The Portuguese and Chinese were the business community; they controlled manufacturing and trade – both export-import and internal.

The Indians were all in the countryside; they managed the rice and sugar plantations. They had immigrated after the liberation of the blacks at the invitation of the British; they lived apart from the blacks. They had become, in the course of the 20th Century, almost half of the population – larger by far than any other racial group. Their birthrate was much larger than that of the blacks. The Indians were perceived as the group most likely to take over the whole country and slowly but surely become the predominant political power. The statistics and the perceptions became the source of the racial tensions. Jagan was the first and only Indian leader to really emerge. He was viewed, as I have mentioned, as a dangerous threat because he was a communist – even if not controlled by Moscow – and he was an Indian. He was a Hindu. He was the leader of the Indian community. He was a new phenomenon and therefore seen as a threat by the blacks.

The Indians had become the majority community during the 20th Century. Cheddi Jagan's election was a signal that they were ready to lead the country. The fact that he was married to a Jewish woman from Chicago, who was a communist, was just another complicating factor. Her antecedents were not a major factor in the political debate, but they were noted and discussed to some extent. Guyanese politics was essentially about race, creating major tensions among the various communities. The British always felt they were sitting on a keg which would explode when they left Guyana. To some extent, that perception did come true.

Q: Were there any riots while you were in Guyana?

LEDSKY: No. Georgetown was torched about a year after I left, in 1962, I think. We did not feel threatened. We always regarded Georgetown as a wonderful place; we were very happy for the two years we spent there. The kids grew up in a relaxed atmosphere. I had a wonderful job which I enjoyed thoroughly. The Guyanese cultures were not hard to master; the common tongue was English, although other languages or dialects were spoken by various communities. The blacks in Georgetown were warm and friendly, they reached out; they were gregarious. In general, the society was well educated, benefiting from the excellent British educational system and from a smooth functioning bureaucracy. There was some petty thievery and crime, but we felt quite secure. We traveled around the countryside and always felt welcomed and well treated. We had many British, Canadian and Guyanese friends. There was not much of a diplomatic community; there were only three or four consulates in the country. Our integration into local society ran smoothly – without competition. We lived in a black neighborhood right near the expatriate compound. Georgetown was and still is a very nice place. Its politics may be screwed up, but it is a great place to live.

I don't want to sound too Pollyannaish because there was and is considerable poverty in Guyana, particularly in the city and in the rice farming communities. The Indians who lived on rice farms were raising their standards of living. They focused on the education of their children and looked forward to upward mobility. Many of them did leave the rice farm and improved their conditions considerably. Cheddi Jagan was the son of a rice farmer; he had come to the U.S. for college and an advanced degree. He was a model for his fellow Indians. To watch this upward trend was in some ways quite inspiring. Many of the Indians left for Great Britain, Canada and the U.S., where they established some close knit Guyanese communities. They are well-educated, highly motivated. I found them terrific. I have met, literally, dozens and dozens of these Guyanese in

London and New York. Many of them are professionals, civil servants or academics or other professionals. Their stories are inspiring.

This is not to deny that there isn't considerable poverty in Guyana. There is and that is indeed lamentable. The country is waiting to be developed and until there is adequate investment, it will continue to have considerable poverty.

BERNARD E. DUPUIS
Assistant Program Officer, USAID
Georgetown (1967-1969)

Bernard Dupuis was born in Berlin, New Hampshire in 1927. He served in the U.S. Airforce (1947-1954). He received his BA and MA from University of Maryland, College Park. He joined USAID in 1962. His overseas posts include Phnom Pen, Cambodia; Leopoldville, Congo; Georgetown, Guyana; Quito, Ecuador; Haiti; Managua, Nicaragua; and El Salvador. Mr. Dupuis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: Where did you go when you left Washington?

DUPUIS: I went to Georgetown, Guyana, which had just become independent, by the way. I arrived in October 1967 and stayed there two years, which was a very nice change for me. I was the assistant program officer.

You remember Cheddi Jagan? Well, he was the leader of the Loyal Opposition and Forbes Burnham was the prime minister when I got there.

Politics there was divided, not equally, between the East Indians and the blacks and never the twain should meet.

There had a communist, socialist government and you had Cheddi Jagan, a dentist, versus the socialist government of Forbes Burnham and these people were always at each others' throat. The politics was based on racial animosities: the East Indians versus Africans. When I was there, the person in power was Prime Minister Forbes Burnham, a very eloquent socialist.

And Cheddi Jagan lived two houses down from mine. Every time we drove by, my little girl would wave to Dr. Jagan. And he had of course an American wife, Janet Jagan, a real communist, as I understand it. He had been prime minister previously. He talked a lot, but his government wasn't successful.

We had the standard projects, we had education projects, cattle projects, bringing in cattle that could survive in very wet climates and very low lying lands, they came from Texas, somewhere. They didn't have any textbooks, so we brought in professors to do textbooks. Family planning, all the same ritual, the same programs, we had before.

Always the politics are changed a little bit and the politics are never stable, always the same thing. I remember when I first got there, our post had just been raised to the status of an embassy, from a consulate and the consul, Delmar Carlson, became the ambassador on the spot and I remember when I first got there, the ambassador liked to have big Christmas parties and smaller Fourth of July parties.

Anyway, I had only been there several days and I was talking to some fellow and in the course of the discussion I said, "By the way, what do you do?"

He said, "Well, I'm the Governor General of Guyana." I felt I was a character in a Gilbert and Sullivan musical. It was sort of funny, in a way.

The funny thing is, he became the first president of Guyana and paid a visit to London. Well, I was listening to the BBC that day and heard that as Sir David Rose was leaving one of the clubs in Westminster, some scaffolding that had been put there fell on his car and killed him. It was sort of dramatic. So I called the DCM and he didn't believe me.

Each year Sir David had a big ceremony to meet all the new members of the diplomatic corps. So I went there as a new officer with my wife. We were announced in alphabetical order; the ambassador was behind me, which was a bit unusual. My wife and I walked down this big long rug and we shook his hand. I thought I was in an MGM movie.

But the country never got off the ground, really, because they kept always fighting.

Q: How did, say, the cattle project and all, how did these projects work out?

DUPUIS: Well, it's always the same story, projects are approved for two years. You start them up and you hope they'll catch on, you hope they'll have enough critical mass to have some multiplier effect.

I wouldn't be surprised if they weren't still going. But, the unfortunate part is, I don't know. So I would say they were successful, but I can't give you any details, I just don't know, I wasn't there long enough for the projects to begin to yield results.

Q: Well, while you were there, was there real concern about Cheddi Jagan and how he might sign up with Castro, or something like that?

DUPUIS: Oh, yeah, the fight there between Jagan and Burnham was very real and it was felt at the embassy all the time, because the election of Burnham had been very close.

So what the effect was for foreign aid was we had a very tentative economic situation. They couldn't pay their bills, all the ministers changed jobs. They were always short of money and we were always ready, I hate to use the word handout, we were always ready to help, although we were advised not to contribute to the treasury directly. We wouldn't provide money directly to their treasury, because then we'd lost control of how the money would be used.

Those were called Economic Security Funds, but we didn't have too much of that in Guyana. But on the other hand, I was neither the mission director nor the ambassador, I was just one of the Indians taking care of the loans, so I don't know.

But that's my entire experience, over 25 years, the question always comes up and I raised it, too, were we successful and my view depends on what the criteria is. If you want to maintain some presence and I think we should, I think once the United States doesn't maintain a presence somebody else will and it's not costing us all that much, really. I think it's very worthwhile.

Q: Later, Jonestown happened there. [Ed: On November 18, 1978, in what became known as the "Jonestown Massacre," more than 900 members of an American cult called the Peoples Temple died in a mass suicide-murder under the direction of their leader Jim Jones.]

DUPUIS: When that happened, I'd been gone for about five or six months. That's somewhere there in the west of Guyana, which was called the Rupununi Savannah and there was always some conflict between Venezuela and Guyana at the border. All Guyana's borders are disputed, all the time.

Jonestown, I learned about it just as you did, in the newspaper. But personally I can see where Prime Minister Burnham would have liked to have an American presence there, close to Venezuela, to sort of utilize the land, but this guy was a nut, apparently and he utilized it wrongly, I suppose. You may know more about it than I do, in fact.

PAUL M. KATTENBURG
Deputy Chief of Mission
Georgetown (1967-1969)

Dr. Paul M. Kattenburg was born in Brussels, Belgium and emigrated to the United States in 1940. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina and served in the U.S. Army in the Office of Strategic Services. He later received a master's degree from Yale University before entering the Foreign Service in 1955. Dr. Kattenburg's Foreign Service career included positions in Guyana, Vietnam, Germany, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What were you doing in Georgetown?

KATTENBURG: By late '66 I felt the time had come to decide what I was going to do with myself in the Foreign Service. I was looking for an assignment having been in Washington for four years. Somehow, someone I had known in the past, as a matter of fact we had been undergraduates together at North Carolina—again the personal factor plays a role—saw that I was available for an assignment. He was the Desk Officer for Guyana, Bill Cobb, who is currently the Executive Secretary of DACOR. Bill told me the DCM position in Georgetown was

open. I said, “Where the devil is that?” It turned out to be a really fantastic place—to go there as the DCM. I found out the Ambassador in Georgetown was a guy named Delmar Carlson. I don’t know if you have ever known him.

Q: No. I have just heard the name.

KATTENBURG: Del had been in the Embassy in Ottawa and I think he had served also as Consul General in Vancouver and had some Washington experience on Germany—or perhaps he had served in Germany after the war. In any case he had experience only in Canada and Germany. But he had been made Consul General in Georgetown, Guyana before independence. I believe the Prime Minister, Burnham, had requested his appointment as ambassador after independence. Since he was another Coloradan and U. Alexis Johnson was from Colorado and there weren’t any other ambassadors from Colorado, Johnson—I believe Del Carlson told me this—pushed his appointment along.

I was sort of delighted when I began reading about Guyana. Here was a place, lost in the jungles of the Amazon, a sort of no-man’s land, a kind of wild place which should be interesting. A microcosm of politics anywhere because of its ethnic problems, the great division between East Indians and blacks with colored, some whites and a small number of Portuguese and 2 percent of Chinese who were totally disacculturated from China. I thought it was an interesting mix and a good place to go. At the time my children were in college. Only the two youngest ones went.

1966 had been a harrowing year on the Philippine Desk, because I went there 3 times in that year, both my parents-in-law died in the middle of the summer while I was in Manila. We signed another rather important agreement with the Philippines at the end of the year on Filipino veteran claims. We settled that issue hopefully forever. We gave them a final grace payment declaring that we would never again pay another penny, and I trust that will be honored. So, I looked upon this as kind of relief. Also I might say that we had the Marcos State Visit and anyone who has been a country director during a State Visit knows what that can be like. It was a very important State Visit for LBJ, I guess, and for our reward we were told the day the visit ended that our President was going to Manila in the next month to discuss Vietnam! So I needed some relief!

I went down to Georgetown and found a very interesting small post with no marines, this had been the decision of the ambassador. The Ambassador mixed little, not being much of a mixer. He was away a good bit of the time, because the place was humid and difficult to take, perhaps, visiting Grenada, Montserrat and various small islands or on consultations and home leave. There had been issues of interest to the U.S. in 1964 but there would be nothing serious again until 1968 when an election occurred and it was determined that Burnham should stay in power.

I found the single most difficult thing was that while Bill Cobb had told me I should establish contact with the East Indian political leaders, not necessarily barring Cheddi Jagan, the head of the People’s Progressive Party and a proto- communist (his wife was the former Janet Rosenberg from Chicago), I found that Del Carlson had adopted a policy, which Burnham really in effect talked him into, of total and complete abstinence of any contact whatsoever. I’ll relate two incidents of my Guyana career.

One occurred when Del first went on home leave which was sometime in the early Spring of 1967 and left me in charge and told me not to have any contact with Jagan. But he wasn't gone a week when I received a letter addressed to me personally from Cheddi Jagan, whom I had never met, asking me if I would represent the United States in a debate at City Hall on U.S. policy in Vietnam, in which members of Burnham's party, he said, and himself and a number of other political leaders would appear. I felt that I should do something even though I thought an appearance would be directly in conflict with what the ambassador wanted. So, I called the Department and got out of EA a film which had a speech by Bill Bundy on it. I knew something like that existed explaining policy. I delivered the film to Cheddi's offices on my behalf with a note saying I would appreciate it if he could play this film, as I was unable to attend the event. I thought I had handled it okay. I was amazed when the ambassador came back and berated me for it—"I said no contact with Cheddi, you are just playing into their hands, etc." Then I got to know the situation a little better and realized that while Janet Jagan was absolutely a neurotic, who is nonetheless devoted to her people and the poor there and doing good works, that Cheddi was a fairly reasonable politician who was really much more comfortable in opposition.

We then began to engage in a clandestine operation which I thought was absolute baloney. But we did it and it was a very costly and considerable one involving the 1968 elections. I don't want to go further into that, there is no point to it. It has not been recounted in any detail anywhere yet. We obtained what we wanted, the reelection of Burnham. But I played no part because I told the ambassador quite clearly my difficulties with it—I did not think we needed to do it.

Our relations remained good on the surface but I got to feel that he was a timorous person who did not dare leave the capital and who constantly tried to keep me from traveling in the countryside. He didn't want me to go anywhere. He thought perhaps the risks were too great. After our ambassador in Guatemala was assassinated, Gordon Mein, he became timorous to the point that I had to drive his automobile to the office while he drove my car on another route. I didn't mind that. I said, "Sure I would be happy to do it." But he was extremely afraid as to what we might confront. He just wouldn't accept responsibility. For example—I think these examples are legion all over the Foreign Service so they are nothing special—but I recall one example in which a guard, East Indian guard that we had, was seen by two or three Embassy officers sleeping on his post in front of the Embassy at night. He asked me to have a—what do you call this sort of court-martial—kangaroo court and get the guy fired. I said, "Yeah, but I think we have to go by the labor laws here which we have agreed with them." A minor incident, but anyway, he accepted no responsibility whatsoever. I fired the guy but I wasn't very proud of it. I think the guy should have had a better hearing than he got. Sure he was spotted asleep, but was he really told he wasn't supposed to sleep, did it just happen, was somebody after him, etc.

The main problem for me, I suppose, in the end was that by now we had gotten to 1968 and I wasn't finding myself advancing anywhere. I had been class 3 since 1961. So I wrote a letter to personnel in late '68, I believe, saying that I would like to have an assignment to the Foreign Service Institute if there was a possibility to have one. About six months later in early spring 1969 I got a letter from John Stutesman at FSI saying that some guy in the Department had told him that I was looking for an FSI assignment. "You must be out of your mind. But if you really want one, I am here and would love to have you at the School of Professional Studies." So I

departed happily for FSI, feeling that my career was ended. The reason for that was probably mostly because of Vietnam but secondly probably the fact that while giving me good efficiency reports Carlson had never been effusive or really given me full due for anything. I felt he didn't give a damn. I thought, well, what difference does it make, I am not really that interested in being an ambassador, but maybe if I don't get beyond class 3 I won't get any good jobs anymore.

THEODORE J. C. HEAVNER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Georgetown (1967-1971)

Mr. Heavner was born and raised in Ohio and educated at Northwestern University, (Case) Western Reserve, the University of Iowa and Harvard University. After Vietnamese language training he pursued Southeast Asia study at Cornell University. His foreign assignments include: Saigon, Vietnam; Medan, Indonesia and Georgetown, Guyana. In his Washington assignments Mr. Heavner dealt with Southeast Asia Affairs and Caribbean Affairs. Mr. Heavner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Ted, we are at 1969 and you are off to Guyana. You were there from when to when?

HEAVNER: From 1969-71.

Q: You went as DCM.

HEAVNER: Right.

Q: Did you consult with your ambassador or were you just sent there?

HEAVNER: I was just sent there. I consulted in the Department before I went out, although my recollection is that there was less than a burning interest in briefing the new DCM before he went out. I suppose I shouldn't say that. I think that was the function of the country director, John Hill. Evidently he had a lot of problems, which I didn't know anything about at the time, but he clearly had no time to see me and talk to me. I subsequently learned that he left the Service under something of a cloud. I don't know the details but I think that may have accounted for the fact that I didn't get much of a briefing.

Actually, I think the interest in Guyana was out of all proportion to the importance of that country in any objective way because we had seen this as indeed I think the British did, as a potential Cuba. There was a very strong communist party there with the support of the majority of the population. The communist party leader, Cheddi Jagan had been elected repeatedly as prime minister during the British colonial period and after independence he expected to be re-elected. This was a concern here because of our chagrin about Cuba, our concern that a second communist country in this hemisphere would spell dominos and the beginning of I don't know

what. Consequently, going to Guyana was not quite as much an exile as it might have sounded otherwise.

It is a very small place with a very small economy and of no great interest to us even though a number of American and Canadian bauxite companies were there extracting bauxite. Bauxite, as you know, is very widely found throughout the hemisphere and indeed throughout the world. Later on the Guyanese leaders and others in the Caribbean thought they could do what OPEC did, but bauxite isn't like oil.

It was a good assignment and I wasn't displeased by any means. I did not get much of a briefing here, but that was okay. Delmar Carlson was the ambassador there. He had been there as consul general at the time of the switch to independence and contrary to our usual practice he had been kept on as ambassador thanks in large part to the plea of Forbes Burnham, who while still under British rule had managed to get the prime minister's job. Cheddi Jagan, I'm sure, thought Burnham's tenure would be short term.

That was funny. I don't know if Jagan made a miscalculation or whether he didn't understand what was being asked, but he agreed that before independence it could be decided by the governor general that there would be an election and that the results would be decided by proportional representation. Of course, the governor general decided in favor of that because the British government did not want Cheddi to be prime minister in an independent Guyana any more than we did. So the governor said that they would have the election before the British left so it would be all fair and square with no rigging and it would be by proportional representation. This meant that the Forbes Burnham party and a third party led by a Portuguese politician by combining together could form a government. That turned out to be the case after the pre-independence election as well as before. So Jagan was pushed out and independence took place under Forbes Burnham.

Q: When did independence come?

HEAVNER: In 1968, just a year before I got there. Burnham was still fresh in the job and Jagan was still waiting in the wings expecting to be elected at the next election and not unreasonably so since he was the undoubted leader of the Indian population in that country. As you may know, the Indian population, Indians from India, is the majority group and he had virtually 100 percent support from them. He was a very charismatic figure in the Indian community. Burnham, however, in power was repeatedly able to arrange that the elections didn't come out that way. They were rigged and we knew they were rigged and that was fine with us. In those days, we thought we could not risk having a second communist country in our own hemisphere.

Q: When you arrived in Guyana, what was the situation there, political and economic?

HEAVNER: There had been a lot of violence, and we were concerned that that could happen again, but it didn't. The balance was racial, blacks versus Indians. The blacks had been primarily urban, interestingly enough. They were descendants of slaves but when the British abolished slavery, they left the fields in droves and came into the city and became shopkeepers, politicians and a variety of other things. The British then brought out indentured servants in droves from

India to work the fields, the rice and sugar cane fields. They remained on the land, and I guess still are. Guyana exported both rice and sugar and I suppose still does today. The biggest source of foreign exchange, however, was bauxite. Alcoa, which I think was the biggest, was there. Reynolds was also there and I think there was another American company there as well. All of them were subsequently nationalized under Burnham, I think in 1972. That didn't really matter in terms of our sources of bauxite, because as I said bauxite is a widespread commodity and Burnham was not able to hold it back, apparently as he assumed he could do, for higher prices.

When I arrived there we thought there might be more racial violence, there certainly had been. We were concerned about Jagan essentially taking over by violence. He had been trained and was patronized by the Soviets. He went regularly to Moscow where he was lionized. He was clearly at all times following the Soviet line on all questions of any international importance. He seemed to be almost a rubber stamp for the Soviets. His wife was probably the more astute politician there, Janet Jagan, who was an American and lost her citizenship as a result of being a Guyana cabinet officer and then was subsequently given it back. This was after I left. I am not really sure what those circumstances were. She is a very interesting person and I think the brains behind Cheddi in many respects. She is still there. He died a few months ago and I believe she is leading the party. I am not sure how that will work out because I wouldn't have guessed that she was that popular a figure in the Indian community. She wouldn't have had his charisma, that is for sure.

Q: To follow through on the Jagans, what was our policy towards them? Were we talking or dealing with them?

HEAVNER: When I arrived the answer was no. Carlson had no connection with them. He didn't even invite them to national day. I don't know if he told us we could not talk to them, but certainly that was clearly the idea that they were totally unacceptable as leaders. Of course, Burnham himself rapidly moved to the left once he was in power. He adopted a very militant third world stance, got very cozy with Cuba and ultimately became almost the same kind of bete noir for us that we had feared Cheddi would be. I recall that when that Cuban airliner went down, around 1972-73, they blamed, as Cuba did, the U.S. for the bomb that knocked it out of the sky. Kissinger was so angry that he pulled our ambassador out and our relations went into a deep freeze for quite a while. I was country director by then for the Caribbean. But, Burnham, even while I was there, had begun his move away from essentially a pro-West stance, which had put him into power, and became increasingly hostile and not too long after I left nationalized the bauxite companies. He did a good many other things, especially siding with Cuba in the UN.

Q: As you were sitting there looking at this, what was the reasoning, as far as the embassy was concerned, about why Burnham was doing this?

HEAVNER: Burnham was an intellectual, a very, very brilliant man. He read constantly, going through a couple of books at night after he had done all of his other stuff. He would sit up reading and devour all of the books and talk about them. He was Oxford educated. This is a man who would have been a successful leader probably anywhere. It was his fate that he was born into this small inconsequential country. Nevertheless, he had enormous ambitions and I think that he did it because he saw it as a way to become prominent on the international stage, playing

a really important role in world affairs that he otherwise wouldn't have had if he was just a friendly U.S. satellite. This is I think his motivation, but he was such a complex personality that you could probably explain it in many ways.

Q: I was wondering whether he had come out of the London School of Economics. Nyerere in Tanzania and others had picked this up there and I wonder if this was behind it all?

HEAVNER: I don't know. Another factor there was he was undercutting Cheddi by adopting this stance. I don't think the Russians trusted him, with good reason, but he did go to Moscow and talked a great deal about getting Russian aid. I think he subsequently did get some. He talked about getting a Russian mission there, but I can't recall if he ever managed that or not. Certainly this was one of our concerns because we thought of it as another potential place to run agents throughout the hemisphere. I think the Russians really were not that interested and besides they had their guy there, Cheddi, who they probably expected would become prime minister at some point. Cheddi actually became president because Burnham had changed the system and made himself an executive president on our model. Burnham left the Commonwealth and Guyana became a republic while I was there. One of the interesting consequences of that was that on leaving the Commonwealth, they had to choose a ceremonial president. The question, of course, was whether this new president would be black or an Indian. A thorny question which many believed Burnham would resolve by finding a tame Indian. He had some in his cabinet, but he didn't do that. He found a Chinese for president. He was a citizen of Guyana and an attorney there and had been a justice of the supreme court. Arthur Chung was Guyana's first president!

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the embassy itself. How big was it and can you talk a little bit about Carlson and how he worked?

HEAVNER: Well, the embassy was fairly big because of our concerns first of all about this being a second Cuba, and secondly we had a big AID mission there and we wanted to support the free democratic system versus the Cheddi Jagan model of the communist system. The AID program was large given the small population and lack of any strategic position of that country.

Q: What was the AID program doing?

HEAVNER: They were doing infrastructure, roads, schools, and water systems. We had a very independent AID director who did not want any input from the embassy or any meddling, as he saw it, and Carlson left him pretty much to his own devices and obviously then so did I. Therefore, I can't give much detail of the AID program except that it was pretty big given the size of the country.

Q: Did we have Peace Corps there?

HEAVNER: Yes, we did. That was one of the groups that felt the switch Burnham made after he was secure in power because he threw the Peace Corps out. They did that while I was Chargé actually. I think this was quite deliberate because they didn't want to deal with Carlson on it, whom Burnham regarded as a close friend. In fact, Burnham had requested very strongly that he stay on as ambassador and I guess it was that request as much as anything that caused the

Department to change what seemed to be a policy of not keeping on consuls general when countries become independent.

Q: How did we react to the Peace Corps being thrown out?

HEAVNER: Essentially we turned the other cheek. Our options were Burnham versus Cheddi and we still thought Burnham was a better bet. We thought he was making a lot of mistakes. We certainly didn't like the militant third world stance he was taking and especially his gestures to Cuba. It fell to Spencer King to try to moderate Burnham's increasingly leftist behavior. I don't think Spence had much success. First of all Burnham never regarded him as a personal friend the way he did Carlson and he increasingly felt, with some justice, that the U.S. was a paper tiger and wasn't going to do anything very difficult for him regardless of his own stances and statements and behaviors. So, Spence had a pretty tough job there. Spence wasn't an intellectual like Burnham either. Burnham was one of these people who had ten ideas a minute and talks about them in paragraph sentences. Spence was a taciturn man. He was slow of speech and judgment, never jumping to conclusions and very diplomatic, which didn't suit Burnham at all. He wanted somebody to joke with. He and Carlson, believe it or not, had a kind of vaudeville act that they did. It was just inconceivable that Spence would have done anything like that.

Q: When King came in did they change the attitude towards contact with the Jagans?

HEAVNER: Yes, because King did invite them to national day and he did permit me to see Jagan on a few occasions. We still kept him at arms length though. It was still clear to us, or so Washington still thought, that Burnham was preferable to Jagan. I don't know when that changed, probably after Spence left, although it was only after Burnham died that Jagan was able to win an election there. Not because of us, I think, but because Burnham was able to rig the elections so successfully as long as he was on the scene. He died in surgery in Cuba, by the way.

Q: I would have thought he would have preferred somewhere else. Guyana became notorious later on because of the Jimmy Jones thing. Was Jonestown in existence at that time or was Jones making any effort at that time?

HEAVNER: No, they weren't there then and in fact, my recollection is that Jonestown only really got underway about 1974.

Q: It wasn't there very long was it?

HEAVNER: No and I had left the country desk, thank heavens, before Jonestown blew up. That was such a mess. Looking back it seems to me that there was no way it could have been handled so that things would have come out differently. I can't imagine anything that John Burke, ambassador then, might have said to Congressman Ryan, who was killed there, which would have deterred him from going out there. It was just a terrible mess. Fortunately for me they were not there while I was DCM and not there essentially when I was country director.

Q: One has the feeling that Georgetown sits on the edge of an almost impenetrable jungle. Is this true? Were you able to get out and around much?

HEAVNER: It is not much in the way of jungle, it is scrub mostly. There is a thin band of cultivated land along the coast and the only road that amounts to anything in the country is the coastal road which goes down to Surinam. You could get into the far reaches of the country where there were some cattle ranches, believe it or not. There were prospectors back there prospecting for diamonds and gold and they brought quite a bit in. It was a respectable kind of prospecting country. There is a famous falls there. Kaieteur Falls is twice as high as Niagara, very spectacular. The only way you could get there during my time was to fly there. I remember very well flying up the gorge to the falls and I was with one of the secretaries who had taken flying lessons and was quite knowledgeable about flying small planes and she was terrified. She said that he was not going to make it as we approached and was gripping my hand so hard it hurt. I was innocently looking around and taking in all the scenery. The falls were above us. What she hadn't thought of, and I wasn't even concerned until she panicked, was that the falls created a tremendous updraft and it was like an elevator and the plane shot right up and over.

But the back country was essentially unpopulated, you are right, except for the areas where the bauxite companies were located. They had built roads into their operations. You could go up the rivers. In fact, a great excursion for embassy people was to rent the mail boat on Sunday, a day it wasn't delivering any mail, and go up the river and swim off the boat. There were pirana in the river but they never bothered us and we never heard of anyone having any difficulties. The other thing you could do was to visit the forts the Dutch had built there in the 1600s. They evidently did nothing in the forts but drink and would throw the bottles off the fort so that in the sand there you found lots of these 17th century black glass, hand blown bottles which are collector items here. I still have three of them.

Q: Were the British sort of number one diplomatically?

HEAVNER: Yes, very much so. The elite in Guyana almost to a man were educated in Britain and had a very English point of view. There were British business establishments there. There was a book once called, "Bookers' Guyana," and for good reason because Bookers was the controlling commercial interest there.

Q: Bookers being a?

HEAVNER: A British firm. Their big department store was the place to shop and about the only place for any luxuries that you might want even at the time I arrived. So you had a very strong British influence and the British high commissioner was at least as influential as the American, but they worked hand in glove, were very tight. Del Carlson had as good a personal friendship with the British high commissioner as he did with Forbes Burnham. Again that changed when Spence came because he didn't know the British high commissioner and then the high commissioner changed. He was a bright young man whose view of diplomacy and personal connections was a little different. It was very chummy, almost a family situation, when I arrived. Carlson had been there a long time and knew everyone and was on good personal terms with most of the leaders, except of course for Cheddi and his group.

Q: Did the Cubans have a presence there while you were there?

HEAVNER: Not while I was there. I think they did subsequently.

Q: We are talking about 1969-71 and the Nixon administration had just come in and Henry Kissinger was national security advisor. Did you get any feel about the Nixon White House and their interest in the area? It would have been very anti-communist.

HEAVNER: I think that was reflected in the fact that we couldn't even consider Cheddi as a leader. I don't think the White House was paying much attention to Guyana.

Q: How about the CIA?

HEAVNER: I really don't know. My predecessor was on the outs with Carlson. Kattenburg and Carlson were oil and water and it got so bad that Carlson distrusted Kattenburg, thinking he talked too much, and wouldn't let him see any of the sensitive cables even though he was DCM. The code clerk was instructed to show them only to Carlson. For a while, that was also the case with me but it wasn't long after I got there that Carlson decided I might be okay. By the time he left we had a good relationship. I got along very well with Spence, too, by the way, who was a much more traditional Foreign Service officer and who used the DCM much more than Carlson did. Carlson was pretty much of a one man show and he could do that because he knew everyone and was on close personal terms with many of the leaders there.

Q: Paul Kattenburg gained some prominence, and still does today, with his dealing in Vietnam. Do you think he had been sent to Guyana with the idea of getting him away from Vietnam?

HEAVNER: Paul never told me that, but that may be true. He was certainly not supportive of the administration's Vietnam policy. When I left the Vietnam Working Group, Ben Wood was already gone, Kattenburg came on board to be the man in charge and for a short time I was his deputy. So, I knew Paul a little bit. My recollection is that he hadn't then yet decided that what we needed to do was to get out at any cost. When I came back to the States en route to Guyana, Paul was here. I'm not very sure what he was doing then, but I did talk to him about Guyana and got a lot of interesting insights. Paul is an interesting personality, again an intellectual, and not your traditional diplomat.

Q: He is a professor and has been for some time now.

HEAVNER: I think that is more his role. He was also an extremely active sort of person when I knew him. He had so much energy he was bouncing off the wall. He couldn't sit down and talk to you, he had to pace around. When I had dinner with him before going to Guyana he was out of his chair more than he was in it. As a psychologist I subsequently wondered if Paul was a little manic. Some very successful people are, by the way.

Q: Did you feel, while you were there, part of Latin America?

HEAVNER: Absolutely not. It was English speaking and their connections with neighboring countries were mostly with the Caribbean English speaking countries, Trinidad, Jamaica and

Barbados. Trinidad being perhaps the one that they had the most connection with. There was a Brazilian embassy, but the general who was there was not fluent in English and I think, himself, was in exile.

Q: The Brazilians have done this from time to time.

HEAVNER: He played really no role. His DCM was a very likeable young man who has subsequently become an ambassador in Europe in one of their important posts. He did all of their reporting and whatever needed to be done. The ambassador was just sort of there.

Q: What about Venezuela?

HEAVNER: It was the other big problem for the Guyanese, not Brazil so much although they did worry about that border. They had a boundary dispute with Venezuela which predated independence and which was carried over and there were even hints that the Venezuelans might use force to take that stretch of territory. It became especially of concern when it looked as though there might be oil there. I don't think they ever did find any oil there. It was while I was in Guyana that they finally worked out an agreement, I think, basically disagreeing but leaving the thing pretty much unresolved. The issue then sort of disappeared and as far as I know has never resurfaced, perhaps because there is no oil there.

Q: Were there any major incidents while you were there or problems with Americans in trouble?

HEAVNER: Not really. The movement to militant third world stance was of most concern to us, Burnham's leftist thrust. But that was a gradual process. I guess while I was chargé between ambassadors what exercised me most was American in nature when our Peace Corps people decided that they needed to demonstrate against the Vietnam War outside our embassy. They wanted to see me as chargé and deliver their sentiments. It all seemed to me quite inappropriate that they should be doing this in a foreign country. In any event, to answer your question, not a lot happened while I was in Guyana. Well, personally something happened. I met a woman who was working at the British embassy and at the end of 1970 we got married. That was a big deal for me.

Q: The Peace Corps was demonstrating all over the place. How did one deal with this? Did you have instructions?

HEAVNER: I don't recall that we did have instructions. I dealt with it by having the consul meet with them and accept their petition which was sent to Washington and trying to down play it as much as possible. I was concerned with the impact on the local scene rather than with their attitude towards Vietnam. I had come out of Vietnam and thought they were talking about something that they didn't understand, had no first hand knowledge of the situation. History would say they were right and I was wrong, but at the time I thought they were way out of line. I felt they had every right to demonstrate in the U.S. and every right to express their opinions wherever they might be but to make an issue of it in a foreign country when they were in fact a government agency themselves seemed to me very inappropriate. Of course, the Peace Corps was always a special beast in that regard. Whether it was or was not official was not very clear.

Q: Was the concern a petition or did they want to demonstrate out in front?

HEAVNER: Oh, they did demonstrate out in front of the embassy with placards, etc., which seemed to me ludicrous as though a demonstration in Guyana could have any impact on anything except Guyana and secondly, that it was inappropriate given their role as an agency of the U.S. government.

Q: This was obviously before they were kicked out?

HEAVNER: Yes.

Q: Did you find yourself in discussions on Vietnam with Forbes Burnham at all?

HEAVNER: Initially, when I arrived, Del Carlson brought it up in a meeting between the three of us and we did talk about it. It was clear that Burnham did not have a great interest, but that in any event he certainly didn't agree with the stance that I was taking and the official American position, but he wasn't going to argue about it at that point. Carlson had most of the contact with Burnham. I don't think I ever saw Burnham alone while chargé. Sometimes he would lead the diplomatic corps to projects in the countryside and I would see him then along with all the other diplomats, but to see him one-on-one like Carlson did, I don't think I ever did. It wasn't he who told me the Peace Corps had to leave; it was his minister of health, whose husband then was a minister and who married my wife and me and who subsequently became the UN representative up here.

Q: Were there any efforts to get leader grants?

HEAVNER: Yes, we had leader grants, sure. We had a USIA director who was very much concerned with that and involved in choosing and arranging for those. We had a USIS library which was heavily patronized and I thought was very successful. The Guyanese were increasingly American oriented, I think, although the major cultural influence there continued to be British.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Consular Officer
Georgetown (1970-1973)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador

to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: So what happened?

ALEXANDER: Well, we had no assignments in Europe. In fact, of the posts that were available I think almost everything was in Africa, two or three posts were in Asia and two or three posts were in the Caribbean, South America. I wound up going to Guyana because I was the only one who put it down. And the reason I wrote down Guyana was because, I knew nothing about Guyana but I had collected stamps as a kid and at the time the most valuable stamp in the world was a Guyanese stamp from British Guyana. So I wrote down Guyana and wound up going to Guyana as a consular officer.

Q: Well I was wondering, I mean here you have obviously fluent French and so you're sent to a-

ALEXANDER: An English speaking post.

Q: An English speaking post, bringing your English up to par. You were in Guyana from when to when?

ALEXANDER: From '71 to '73.

Q: What was Guyana like when you got there? The capital is Georgetown?

ALEXANDER: Georgetown.

Q: Georgetown. What was Guyana like at the time?

ALEXANDER: Well, Guyana had just, was a recently, what's the word I'm looking for? It had been a colony and recently-

Q: Liberated?

ALEXANDER: Liberated, yes, freed nation. The elites were still very much Anglophiles just by, you know, the fight for freedom and all that. It hadn't been a violent conflict with the British. The British, as you know, most of the West Indies were allowed to become free but it was a country struggling with its identity. A country in conflict, great conflict; a country with a government, the first post-colonial government that was essentially put in power with the help of the U.S. and specifically the CIA. The Guyanese were very ambivalent towards the Americans. This was the height of the Cold War; we had deposed Cheddi Jagan who would have been prime minister had it not been for our direct involvement.

Q: What was our involvement?

ALEXANDER: Well, they had sort of a transition period as the British were leaving and before they had their first democratically elected government they had a premiere, Cheddi Jagan.

Cheddi Jagan was the head of the PPP, the Peoples Progressive Party. He was an East Indian, as were most Guyanese, 60 percent of the country was ethnically East Indian from the Indian subcontinent, 30 percent were African Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, the rest were Portuguese, Chinese, mixtures thereof, what have you. Not surprisingly, the majority population being Indian voted an Indian into office and that was Cheddi Jagan. And we conspired to get rid of Jagan, which we did and saw to it that Forbes Burnham, an Afro-Guyanese, became prime minister. Forbes very quickly turned on the U.S., became a rather devout illuminati in the non-aligned movement and kept us at a distance. It was a country, again, with a lot of political tension, a lot of racial tension, a lot of ethnic tension.

It was, I think, a great post for me, never having been exposed to the Foreign Service or diplomacy in general. Being in a small post, to be involved in things that I probably wouldn't have been involved in had I been in Paris, for example. I remember the ambassador and I were invited to a big function at the prime minister's house, the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) wasn't invited, but at a small post, personalities, to the Guyanese I was a diplomat, they didn't care what I did in the embassy. And I remember because the DCM said, "If I'm not invited you can't go." And I rather indiscreetly went to the ambassador and said, "Mr. Ambassador, I really would like to go to this thing. I understand that Fidel Castro's going to be there and I'd like to meet him." And he said, "Well of course, you've been invited, go. Why?" And I said, "Well the DCM says I can't go." "Don't worry about it, I'll take care of him." I realized later in my career you weren't supposed to do things like that, but I was young, I was naïve. Guyana, which I did not like, because I'd never lived in the Third World, was very primitive, took forever to get mail, there was no TV. I really didn't enjoy Guyana, but in retrospect it was a great introduction to the Foreign Service.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

ALEXANDER: Spencer King.

Q: And the DCM?

ALEXANDER: George Sherry. Ambassador King had been the DCM immediately before going to Guyana, had been the DCM in the Dominican Republic. I believe he was the DCM when L.B. Johnson sent the Marines. From there he went back to Washington for a year or two, or maybe not, maybe he went directly to Guyana as ambassador.

Q: How did you find the embassy as a unit?

ALEXANDER: The ambassador and the DCM were very supportive, very kind. My boss, who was a woman, she was a consul-

Q: Who was that?

ALEXANDER: Owie Harpootian, Ovsanna Harpootian. Owie was very strict, she was like a schoolteacher. She had been a Foreign Service secretary, college graduate, and through whatever program they had, Mustang Program-

Q: Mustang Program.

ALEXANDER: Maybe that's what it was called, I was thinking in the military it was.

Q: I think it was called that, yes.

ALEXANDER: She had become a consular officer. And a fine woman. Again, tough-- she intimidated me. She was extremely demanding and a great boss. I replaced Ralph Johnson and she used to tell me, she said, I feel like, I felt like a mother toward Ralph, with you I feel like a grandmother, you're so young. Ralph and I both, later on in our careers became ambassadors and I always said I was very proud of my boys. But she, I learned a lot from her. Others in the embassy were, to be generous, unkind. The admin people were extremely unkind. They were Foreign Service. Well, the admin officer was a Foreign Service staff officer, a drunk. The GSO was his staff officer. There were a few others who were generally unkind too. There were a lot of class distinctions, even in a small embassy like that. And my being the most junior of juniors, I used to take it in the neck from people like the admin officer who was very resentful because he was treated as a second class citizen. So I immediately get nothing. I wanted to get into this world, into that world, but I sort of got caught up into that. I tried as much as I could to avoid those tensions and I did to a certain extent because I was considerably younger than everybody else. But I was very conscious of the communicator, I can't remember what they called them in those days, communications or records officer or what they were called, was black, Henry Grant; they made that man's life miserable, absolutely miserable. The econ officer was also a Foreign Service officer; he was unkind but became very kind later, but a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was young and the most junior person and easy to pick on and I didn't know anything.

Q: What were you doing while you were there? Obviously consular, did you do consular the whole time?

ALEXANDER: I did consular the whole time. I did visas the whole time and it was a high fraud policy. Everybody wanted to get out of Guyana.

Q: Where were they going?

ALEXANDER: To New York.

Q: New York. How did you, were you able to get away with saying no?

ALEXANDER: Yes. In fact we were told at one point that we had the highest refusal rate in the world, but Owie was a tough cookie; rules were rules and we weren't going to give those visas.

Q: Did you ever run across Mrs. Jagan, who is an American citizen?

ALEXANDER: I did, once or twice. Janet Jagan. I ran across her through her brother-in-law, through Cheddi's brother, Paul. I became very close friends of Paul and his wife Ena Jagan. Paul was a dentist like Cheddi. In fact, a funny story is that his name was actually Sirpaul, he wasn't

Sir Paul but Sirpaul, all running together, but I thought he was Sir Paul. But anyway, I became very good friends with Paul despite his being 20 years older than me— close personal friends, first name basis, dinners at our house all the time. And I met Cheddi and Janet at Paul's place on a couple of occasions; they were extremely gracious. Cheddi used to tell me with obvious fondness about his times in the United States. In fact, I remember his telling me one story when he was a young man, this would have been in the early '40s I guess, traveling in the U.S., traveling in the South, that he wore a turban so that he wouldn't be mistaken for a black American and subject to all the horrible racism that blacks suffered in the South in those days.

Q: Did you find through the social life, because the visa side wouldn't have reflected this so much, the tension between what the CIA had done to Jagan and his party?

ALEXANDER: Oh yes, yes, yes definitely. By the time I left, particularly by the time I left two years later, it was clear that Forbes Burnham and his cronies were not taking Guyana in the direction that I think many Guyanese had hoped. It was becoming increasingly a socialist state, so to speak, a one party, one man. Economically they just weren't doing well. The East Indians were, for the most part, shopkeepers, shop owners, small businesspeople, importers, were finding it increasingly difficult to do business as the burden of taxes and import restrictions and other socialist experiments took their toll on the economy and people were becoming increasingly disenchanted with Burnham. They were eventually vindicated because Burnham stayed in power literally until he died in 1985. A lot of people began blaming the CIA and the U.S. for the problems that the country was experiencing as a result of having this one party rule.

Q: Well did you have, were you aware of the sort of influence of the CIA and all? Or was that sort of off to one side?

ALEXANDER: No. I was very, again, very naïve, and had never been exposed to anything like that. But by the time I left, yes, I saw the influence, the impact of the CIA's machinations in Guyana. But I have to say, there were some things that I found rather repugnant, but I very much believed that they were necessary to keep Cheddi Jagan and his party from coming to power because I was convinced that they would have turned Guyana into another Cuba. As I look back on it now with the force of years behind me I don't think that would have happened, but at the time I believed that would have happened.

Q: What kept Guyana afloat? I mean, bauxite or some? I don't know.

ALEXANDER: Bauxite and sugar and U.S. aid. Guyana was, when I was there, the third largest recipient, on a per capita basis, the third largest recipient of U.S. aid. We were spending tens of millions of dollars in that country.

Q: Well, if Burnham was keeping us at a distance, were we just sort of swallowing this or what?

ALEXANDER: Yes, we were. I think there was a compact. Listen, you can play whatever silly socialist, Third World, non-aligned games you want to play as long as they're games. In other words, don't do what Fidel did. And I think Burnham understood that— that as long as he didn't replace the Guyanese flag with one that had a hammer and sickle on it. We were very unhappy

when he invited the Russians in, the Soviets, and they opened an embassy. Extremely unhappy. But he said listen, this is all part of the non-aligned and I have to, if I'm going to play your silly game, I have to pretend at least to be committed to the non-aligned. But I think he was very much cut from the same cloth as many Third World, I use the term not in a pejorative sense, just to distinguish former colonies from European and North American countries, as many leaders in the emerging states of Africa and Asia were doing. I think Burnham is pretty much cut from the same cloth. So we tolerated his activities.

Q: Well, what about the British? Did they, it had been their colony. Were they still a pre-eminent embassy?

ALEXANDER: No. The Americans were by far the pre-eminent embassy. The Brits retained some influence among a very small percent of the elites, those who were themselves Sir Somebody or another or who had been decorated by the British, had gone to school there and there was a certain longing for them but no, no. The Brits didn't have the ability or didn't have the interest to project any power in Guyana.

Q: How did your wife cotton to the Foreign Service and this not-luxurious post?

ALEXANDER: Quite well. She taught school there. She claimed to enjoy it very much. Didn't complain about it. No problems there.

Q: How about the social life?

ALEXANDER: Had a pretty good, pretty active social life. We had friends in the British high commission who were young like we were. We had some Guyanese friends who were also in our age group. The Guyanese elite in those days still had money and were able to entertain pleasantly. Everybody had servants. So we managed to keep ourselves amused. It wasn't the most exciting place in the world.

Q: Was there pretty much a class distinction with the blacks sort of the hewers and carriers of wood and all that?

ALEXANDER: Yes. The blacks were either in politics because Forbes Burnham was the prime minister or they were pretty much at the bottom of the pecking order. I don't recall ever meeting a wealthy black person in Guyana. Met plenty of wealthy Indians. Upper class Afro-Guyanese were those who generally tended to look longingly and wistfully for the days of empire because they had been given the little decorations and they were the ones who had run the customs service and the police and all that.

Q: I take it Jim Jones hadn't made his, set up Jonestown yet.

ALEXANDER: No, that was after my time.

Q: That was after your's, luckily for you.

ALEXANDER: Yes, thank goodness.

Q: Where did Burnham get his support if he was black and the majority were Indian, was it, that he didn't represent? I mean, it was him or Jagan?

ALEXANDER: Yes, pretty much so. Well, he bought support in the Indian community, particularly among the well to do, with certain favors. Since the government controlled the importation, exportation of everything, that certainly gave him some leverage, a lot of leverage. The police force and the Guyanese defense force were overwhelmingly black and so he had the guns. So he didn't really need much in the way of support from the majority population.

Q: Well did you see much of the movers and shakers of the Third World Movement, the non-aligned?

ALEXANDER: I, well much. I was invited to a couple of functions, one where I met Fidel who was, I have to say, a very charming man, tall, he was much taller than I thought, and actually he was a very handsome man, he was a very good looking man, obviously a very charismatic man. I met others from Africa, I don't remember who they were now, they all sort of, they all seemed to be cut from the same cloth, literally. Again, I don't say that in a pejorative sense, but...

WADE MATTHEWS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Georgetown (1974-1976)

Wade Matthews was born and raised in North Carolina. He attended the University of North Carolina and served in the US Army between 1955 and 1956. He then entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and held positions in Munich, Salvador, Lorenzo Marques, Trinidad and Tobago, Lima, Guyana, Ecuador, and Chile. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

MATTHEWS: [...]. They offered me DCM in Georgetown, Guyana, under a career Ambassador named Max Krebs who was just in the process of being assigned there. I didn't give it three thoughts, though Guyana was not the center of the world and was not considered the most plush post by any means in the world. There was a big criminal problem and a government that was often hostile to our interests, I immediately accepted. I had my name put to Max as Ambassador and Max took me as Ambassador.

Well, some time after that, Dick Vargavie, the DCM in Lima called me and said, "Wade, I thought you were going to Guyana as DCM." "Well, I am, and I have been formally assigned there." "Well, what is this cable from Sheldon Turner saying he still hasn't heard anything about the assignment of Matthews to take the place of the officer who had established a name for himself in the foreign services for opposing Sheldon Turner and his policies and later was Ambassador to Argentina after other things." "Anyway, where is Matthews?" And the department gave me a call or I called the Department, I called personnel and I said, "What is

happening, I understand the assignment is official." "Oh, yes, you are but we've got to tell Sheldon Turner something and they said the Ambassador insisted on having Matthews for this important DCM job." "We have an ideal candidate for Political Counselor for you. We just have to cross a few more strings. We'll let you know shortly." When I called they said, "We haven't the foggiest idea who to send, but we'll find somebody."

Q: Sheldon Turner won renown because I don't know if it was at that time but there was a very severe earthquake and the Ambassador's residence was undamaged or relatively undamaged, and he and his wife forbade people from the Embassy from even using the bathrooms. It is one of the Foreign Service stories that gained a great deal of renown. It sounds like you probably knew and were well out of it.

MATTHEWS: That was a big part of it. It was not just the political counseling. Jim Cheek was the fellow I would have been replacing. His name wouldn't come to me at the moment.

Q: Well, then you went to Guyana, and you were there at our Embassy in Georgetown from when to when?

MATTHEWS: I was there a little over two years from June of '74 to August, I think, of '76 as DCM. I had an excellent assignment there. Max Krebs, the fellow I served under, his previous assignment had been as DCM in Argentina. He had served as DCM somewhere before. He knew Latin America very well and it turned out that this was his first and only Ambassadorial post. He had a relaxed attitude toward it. He realized that retirement was mandatory at that time at 60 years of age. His retirement came before I left and I served my last few months there as Chargé. When I arrived, he had a lot of home leave accumulated and he wanted someone he could turn the post over to with some confidence who would take it for several months while he used all this accumulated home leave. I got there in June and he had scheduled his home leave which he didn't come back from until late September. He was leaving in late June, so I had, I was introduced to everybody. I learned what I could about what should be done. I was told about what sort of Fourth of July celebration we were supposed to have which I was supposed to host as Chargé, and he went off for home leave. He would check into the Department every now and then to make sure I hadn't run the post into the ground. I had an excellent experience with him. He, having been a DCM, he knew how to handle a DCM and how to let the DCM develop. He had no jealousy at all. Oftentimes an ambassador would be jealous of the DCM. "That's my contacts; you stay away from my contacts." He had none of that. He had no problem with my, Now when he was there on post, the prime minister was expected to call on him and deal with him, not with me. Ditto with some of the ministers although some ministers I maintained some contacts with. Anyway, I had a fine time.

Q: What was the situation in Guyana and what were the American interests there?

MATTHEWS: The American commercial interest was Reynolds Aluminum at the time. They were under strong threat of confiscation and certainly of nationalization. Our attitude and Reynolds' attitude was you want to nationalize, nationalize but with adequate compensation. If you don't there will be repercussions. No confiscation in other words. Nationalization is up to you. We didn't put any real pressure on them not to nationalize. Bauxite was not that much in

short supply. Nationalization with compensation was quite OK. But there were problems. Guyana was a country of slightly under a million people. It has dropped in population now because of so much emigration since then, not because of a low birth rate. It was about 50% or 55% East Indian in population, about 35% black, and the remainder mixed races.

Birnham's government was a black dominated government. I was told by a one time confidante of Birnham, the issue of democracy for Guyana was brought up. It had a democratic form; they did have elections. The issue of democracy was brought up and where Guyana should be in the political spectrum. Birnham looked at it, a very intelligent man, he looked at it pragmatically and said, "Look, in a real democracy, this is allegedly. I cannot say this conversation took place. It is logical and I think it probably did. "Look, I can go one of three routes. I can be a real honest to God western liberal democrat. If I do that, the United States will be pleased and approve, but I won't last long at all because voting in Guyana is ethnically based. I'm black; the majority race is the East Indians. Their traditional leader, not their leader but their leader since politics had developed was a man that I and the American CIA and the British helped me maneuver out of power, Cheddi Jagan who was a Moscow line communist and will always be a Moscow line communist. That's gonna take place and once that takes place there won't be democracy anyway, and even if there were, he could stay in power. He will just have the support of the East Asians against it. The other route I could go would be to try to maneuver Cheddi Jagan off as the communist leader, but the Russians will never really trust me. Therefore I will be under their thumb in any event and the United States won't like me either. The other way is to be a radical socialist authoritarian. That way I can maneuver elections, I can stuff the ballot box, I can make sure that I stay in power. The United States won't like me, but the Russians because the United States will dislike me so strongly, they will not even push their man to take over. They will keep him alive as in case I go in a direction they don't like, and I will have credentials in the third world. I will be a respected independent third world leader."

That is exactly what happened. Guyana had importance out of proportion to its size in the third world movement. There were Prime Ministers came and went a number of times a year. Guyana played a strong role at the United Nations as a leader of the third world even though there were less than a million people, slightly less than a million people, and had a limited GNP. So Birnham was nobody's fool in that respect; he stayed in power that way.

Q: How did we deal with him?

MATTHEWS: We had old ties with Birnham when he was a labor leader. He was a barrister, he was never a legitimate labor leader, but labor unions at the time he got involved in Guyanese politics were the way to the top. He developed some trade union credentials, but he broke them once he got in power. The non-communist element of the trade union movement was in the government's pocket or else some elements of it were independent. We had no labor attaché there. I handled what labor matters as an old labor attaché, what labor matters we did. Our relations with Birnham as I would like to have it was as if you give the fact that he is going to oppose us internationally, Guyana is going to vote against us almost overwhelmingly at the United Nations, they are going to try to establish radical third world credentials. They are going to vote generally the way the Soviet Union wants to, but they will not develop close ties with the Soviet Union. For awhile they were toying with the idea of developing close ties with Fidel Castro and

the Cubans. The largest Embassy while we were there was the Chinese Embassy. The Chinese thought here is a radical third world regime that can easily become, while Maoism was beginning to, the cultural revolution was still in power, Maoism was a little shaky at that time, but here was a way into Latin America. The Chinese didn't realize that Guyana wasn't Latin America. It was in South America but it wasn't Latin America. This was not a stepping stone to Latin America. They had a huge embassy there, larger than ours by far, larger than the British, larger than the Russians. The Cubans established a sizable embassy there. I remember ours and the Cubans and the Russians were about equal in size. Next came the British; next came some others.

When I got there, I consulted, well it was an interesting political situation, I thought there were some ties. Birnham, I had very good personal relations with Birnham but very little influence on tactics that he did. I was taken by the ambassador and introduced to the Prime Minister, the President, everybody. When I was there, Birnham would sit on the porch of his house and smoke Cuban cigars. He didn't drink Cuban rum because in the Caribbean the drink of choice is Chivas Regal. They would occasionally drink Johnnie Walker Black Label; I'm talking about the elite.

Q: Chivas Regal is a very expensive scotch, and Johnnie Walker Black is close to it.

MATTHEWS: Not Johnnie Walker Red. Only at American receptions where the waiter serves you and doesn't show you, would you deign to drink Johnnie Walker Red. So he wouldn't find out. So we would sit around and smoke these Cuban cigars and talk Guyana and how things were going. I could joke with him better than the Ambassador I think because in Trinidad I learned to speak old talk which is sort of Creole. It is English it isn't real Creole. Of course Forbes Birnham could speak better English than I having trained in the UK as a barrister and all that. He enjoyed talking old talk and whenever he would start talking old talk with me, I knew that I could have considerable leeway. He wasn't really that annoyed with me, but he wanted to tweak me a little, so I would reply to him in old talk. Illustration: The Fourth of July reception. We had decided because we were getting increasingly annoyed with Birnham and his pronouncements against the United States and his pro Castro pronouncements and their votes and sayings at the United Nations, we would show him that maybe we had another horse to play there. As a faint little show for the first time ever, we would invite Cheddi Jagan, the leader of the opposition and longtime member of the communist party with his American wife. We'd invite both of them to our national day reception. The ambassador authorized this and so on, so we did. Cheddi called up incidentally, and talked to my secretary and said, "Look do you mind if Janet goes early and I come a little later because I have to fill in for my brother in his dentistry practice," Cheddi was a dentist, "at the noon hour and I have appointments scheduled at noon, and I can't get there until one o'clock without canceling some appointments which I would prefer not to do." My secretary consulted me because I was chargé at the time and I said, "Of course, sure, tell him to come on at one." Well, he came. I had a vice consul there to tell me who was coming, and Birnham was there, the president was there, everybody was there at the reception at the ambassador's residence, not in my residence, where it was planned to be. The guest list was approved by the ambassador. I don't want to say this was all my doings. Jagan came in an I went over. I had met him before. The ambassador said, "If we are going to invite him, we ought to call on him." Janet was there and everybody was there, and I went and started talking with Jagan. My old talk is a little rusty now but it went something like this. Birnham came over and said "What dis I see. You consult with the opposition." I said, "Sure, I consort with your opposition. Dats what we do on de post.

We talk with everybody." Jagan said, "What you complain about? You and the American, you plot agin me. You kick me out as premier of de country. I be prime minister if it weren't for dese American, and now you complain because I talk wit dese American." Jagan going into old talk as well. I turned to Cheddi and said 'Om' God Cheddi. Yes, you know I say dat, but here you get me in trouble. I just arrive in the country. I probably be PNG. I don't want to be PNG yet."

Birnham then says some other conversation. He drifts off and I drift off and we have other conversations. Somebody snapped a picture of Jagan and Birnham and myself, and there was a newspaper called *Caribbean Contact* published in Jamaica, a weekly circulated all around the Caribbean. The picture was in there and it said, "It takes the Americans to do it." There was an article under the caption and it said U.S. ambassador, well it said Cheddi Jagan, Forbes Birnham, prime minister of Guyana, and Wade Matthews, U.S. ambassador. I sent this to Max Krebs and said Max tell them who you are. The whole essence of the article was, and there was a radio analysis of this, the Americans getting Jagan and Birnham together who are bitter political enemies talking serious stuff.

Well, that was the serious stuff. Anyway that was illustrative of the sort of environment we were working in. I found it a good environment, an interesting environment, even though U.S. policies were not being, really, we were defending them as well as we could, but we couldn't defend them any better.

We had an AID program there. We looked at the thing while we were there and recommended that the AID program probably be downgraded and eliminated eventually. The AID director didn't approve of that.

Q: When you were there I guess it was Reagan. Ford had happened.

MATTHEWS: This was '74 right after Watergate I guess. It was the Ford administration most of the time I was there.

Q: Kissinger was the Secretary of State. Were we comfortable of having this type of government that was sort of dumping on us in the international field but was also keeping from becoming a hotbed of communism. Do you think as far as where the Department of State was coming from that we ought to do something, or had we learned to live with this.

MATTHEWS: Guyana was a backwater in every respect, except their role in international organizations and third world organizations. They were an annoyance to us there. Otherwise they were pretty much a backwater. We wanted to keep a certain interest there particularly once the Reynolds thing was resolved. It was important to the U.S. not so much for the amount of money involved, but if Guyana were to literally confiscate, this would be the second after Cuba. It would inevitably cause a strong U.S. reaction and could push Guyana into a much more formal alliance or into the Cuban-Russian orbit despite Jagan and Birnham's differences. Reynolds Aluminum hired Arthur Goldberg a former Supreme Court Justice and former Secretary of Labor to go down and represent them. He was a lawyer of course and consultant. He made at least two trips down. He negotiated an arrangement. It was very tough negotiating. Reynolds' lawyers there, Goldberg. We kept involved; we were not sitting in on the negotiations, but Goldberg

would brief us on what was going on, and some people in the government would tell us what was going on. I remember, I guess I was chargé again at one time, and I got instructions to deliver another Reynolds proposal. They were wrapping it up at this time, but there still were some issues to resolve.

I called Birnham up at his office. He got into his office at 8:00 in the morning, and I called him up and asked to speak with him directly. The secretary put me through to him. I told him I had this cable that just came in and I was supposed to present it to him. I said, "I realize your cabinet meeting starts in half an hour." He said, "Come on over, they can wait." So, I came over, and I walked down the line. I guess it was about 8:20 when I got there. The cabinet ministers were all assembled sitting in chairs in the anteroom. I walked among them saying hi and so on. I gave this to Birnham and he looked it over. He made some comments and I made some observations. He said, "What do you think about this?" I told him, "I don't think it is going to wash. I think this is really sort of a final position." Whether it was or not I don't know but that was what I indicated. So, we talked for about half an hour, and I came out to all sorts of glares from his cabinet ministers for making them wait outside, but it was Birnham. I said, "Don't you think I ought to get out of here and let you talk to them." "No let them wait. This is the most important thing we have to decide today anyway, and I want to get this fixed." Birnham also would, the man slept about two hours a night. He should go to bed about 1:00 and get up about 3:00 and then he'd get the wireless newspaper articles and that sort of thing. He had the habit of calling people at three o'clock in the morning. On several occasions he'd call me at three, I guess because he felt comfortable with me, having first met me in a bedroom in Trinidad. He'd call me to say, "What the hell is going on Mister Chargé," or whatever, depending on his mood, how he started. I'm sorry, he did not call me Wade. It was Matthews. "Matthews, what the hell is going on here?" I said, "My god PM. What time is it?" "It is three o'clock in the morning and you call me about something some American said," and so on. I could interact with him that way. He would joke about PNGing me occasionally and I would toward the end.

Q: PNG means Persona non Grata.

MATTHEWS: But it was all joking.

Q: Was the Reynolds thing settled while you were there?

MATTHEWS: Yes it was settled on terms satisfactory to Reynolds. In fact this was as I recall the one that was accepted was the one I carried over to him. There may have been a few more little details.

Q: This is basically a buyout.

MATTHEWS: A buyout at a price that was lower than Reynolds wanted to get but at a price they finally decided they could accept. That was what we wanted. We did not want this to be a confiscation. We wanted a negotiated buyout which they had. Well there were problems in Guyana. Once an element in the ruling party put out a contract on yours truly. Supposedly we heard this through...

Q: Would you explain what a contract is.

MATTHEWS: I was to be eliminated with prejudice. The reason I was to be eliminated with prejudice was supposedly because the way we got it and as I say this was through certain sources. The reason I was to be eliminated with prejudice was because I had too good contacts with a sort of pro democratic trade union element which was opposing the government. This was a thuggish group of people who had actually eliminated an opposition figure already. They were in the governing political party but not and this was actually brought up supposedly at a meeting of their Foreign Minister with Henry Kissinger. The foreign minister said, "Oh this was an element and obviously as soon as we heard this element. We immediately clamped down on them." After the foreign Minister got back from a meeting with Kissinger he called me and asked me if I'd come over. Fred Will was his name. I had good relations with him, good within the context. I said, "Are you sure you don't want to see the ambassador?" "No, this is something I need to see you about." I said, "Okay, I will tell him that I am coming over if you have no problem with it." I said, "I don't know what it is for sure but I have a hunch it is such and such." He said, "Yes, I think probably you should go over, but if he gets into a discussion of anything else, let me know because I am here now." So I went over to see him and he said, "Wade, one of the things the Secretary brought up, one of the early things was this item. I had no idea you people knew about it." I said, "Well, Fred," it was a Fred sort of relation then, and he did call me Wade not Matthews like Birnham did. "Fred, we know a lot of things. Well you know immediately the PM and I heard about it we said don't ever raise this sort of thing again, but you know nobody told me that." "If you ever hear of anything why don't you come to me," he said. This was sort of joking I said, "You know Fred, I thought you might be in on it." He said, "What!" "I am sort of joking, but I just didn't feel it was appropriate to come to you with this sort of thing." Of course I couldn't because of the source. It is now long enough after so I can say this in this interview.

Q: What about Jonestown while you were there and could you explain what Jonestown was? This certainly raised the attention of everybody in the world a couple of years later.

MATTHEWS: Jim Jones was sort of a radical religious leader who ended up in San Francisco, California. He was from Indiana originally or something. He had a self centered sort of church of a few hundred members. I think as it developed it was about three quarters black and one quarter white and he took in the dispossessed and the people who had mental problems and stability problems and drug problems and that sort of thing. It turned out his religion was centered around Jim Jones as the savior, almost the second coming. He had met the Deputy Prime Minister, a man who was not that influential in government named Talemey Reed. Talemey Reed felt this was... He was interested in establishing a cooperative where his group Mormon like could emigrate from the repressive United States and form a cooperative commune sort of thing, agricultural commune. Talemey Reed was interested in developing communal agricultural enterprises cooperatives and so on, so this was right down his alley. He said, "Yes, come on. We'll arrange to get you some land up at the Mathews Ridge area," which was an isolated area of Northwest Guyana that they were interested in developing partly because Venezuela claimed that territory as well and they wanted to reinforce that claim.

So he went and he developed this colony there. He had an office in Guyana staffed by two women, one of whom it turned out he had sexual relations with, this sort of thing. When we were

there, Jonestown was not nearly as large as it later became. They had the colony; they had cleared some land. Jim Jones was not living in Guyana; he had visited twice. The first time he visited he called on our ambassador and I sat in on the conversation. He said what he planned to do and so on, and we wished him well and thanked him for coming by and that was all our involvement with it. The local people there in Georgetown were invited to the little American women's coffees. They were several times in my house and the Ambassador's house. My wife and the ambassador's wife invited them over because they had a coffee occasionally for the whole American women's group. It was fairly small. I went up one time to visit Jonestown. The ambassador did as well. It wasn't called Jonestown at that time. It was called the People's Temple settlement at Mathews Ridge.

I went up largely because I have never been there. The Guyanese had adopted a requirement that diplomats, to go to the interior, had to get foreign ministry permission and they weren't giving permission to go to places like that. I found that I could walk over to the Guyana Airlines place and buy a ticket and go, and so my wife and kids and I decided we'd take a vacation there. The main reason we wanted to go was we had all sorts of reports about Cuban military presence. Guyana was a way station for the supply of Cuban troops and munitions to Angola at the time. The planes were stopping at Guyana, refueling and keeping on going. That was a standard route they took to Angola. They did have some Cuban military people there who were training the Guyanese national service and we could not find out how many from any source. The CIA gave us all sorts of differing reports; there were a couple of hundred or two or three or what have you. We simply couldn't find out, so as a part of my purpose was to look into that while I was up there because in Guyana you can do a lot overtly. So, I went contrary to the guidelines from the Foreign Ministry which we didn't like anyway, bought the ticket, went up there.

We stayed in the Guyanese government guest house up there - lack of coordination, you see. They offered us a Guyanese government driver, as they did for most people who were staying up in the Guyanese government guest house. They said, "Where would you like to go?" I said, "Let's go to a national service camp." That is where the Cubans were supposedly training, these X number of Cubans, and there were about three or four Cubans there it turned out. They were fairly open about it. I think two of them were teaching Spanish and one of them was teaching karate and another was teaching I forget what, something to do with counter insurgency but it was real small scale stuff. Anyway we went up and we went by People's Temple. We drove into the People's Temple compound in this Guyanese government land rover, he said, "You know only two weeks ago they opened it up so a four wheel drive land rover could get in. Prior to that, you had to have a People's Temple tractor meet you and haul you in on a trailer. But, we can go in," so we went in unannounced. I was most certainly, our Ambassador had already been there, the first U.S. diplomat to go in unannounced. There were a couple of British geologists or something that came along with us, they were also staying at the government guest house. We went in and pulled up to the People's Temple building. They were sort of bamboo buildings with thatched roofs that sort of thing. The nicest quarters were by the chimpanzee that they had brought down from San Francisco, an abused chimpanzee, Mr. Muggs who had quarters at least the size of this room.

Later on somebody unfortunately gave poisoned Kool Aid to Mr. Muggs in the so-called Guyana massacre. Anyway, we drove up and I got out. I announced myself to somebody who came out

of the thing. He said, "The Reverend Jones is here." I didn't know Jim Jones was there at the time. He was just down on a visit. "Fine, I met him in Georgetown." He went back in the room and I stood out. The other people were still in the land rover because I wanted permission for us to get out. Then a man with a movie camera he didn't come over toward me. He went and stationed himself about 20 feet away. Jim Jones came out in a safari suit with a man with a tape recorder behind. He went over and, "I'm the reverend Jim Jones." I guess I was Chargé at the moment. "Yes, I'm Wade Matthews, the Deputy chief of Mission at Georgetown, and we met at the ambassador's office a year ago." "Oh, yes," he said. "What do you think of the Guyanese government's agricultural policy?" I said, "Well, because it was cooperatives against private land ownership, that sort of thing, very interesting, Reverend Jones. What do you think of the Guyanese government policy?" "Well, what do you think of," and then another sort of potentially incriminating question with the man with the tape recorder and the movie camera going. I fenced around the same way for a moment and then he relaxed. The movie camera went down. We had our Dr. Livingston, I presume, handshake. We went over and sat down. They showed us around the place and showed us what they were trying to do. My analysis at the time was this is the kind of place just as soon as they got it going well, the Guyanese government would come in and take it over and expel them from the country, and settle it with Guyanese settlers.

At the time it was about two thirds white and one third black, Americans all. A total of maybe 65 people. At the time of the massacre there were 800 and some, about three quarters black. When we left, the only complaint I had... No, I'm sorry, we got one complaint about somebody being sort of kidnaped there. We talked with the representative there in Georgetown, and the person came down as I recall and told us "Oh, no, it is my parents. They don't understand." He wanted to be there. Certainly when I visited, the people appeared to want to be there. There was an old black brick layer 90 some years old from Highpoint, North Carolina who wanted to die there, before the massacre. Anyway, the only complaint I had was from the Roman Catholic Archbishop who came by some time earlier. This was Jones' first visit there, I think, to complain that he had allowed them to use the Sacred Heart Catholic church, which was the most popular Catholic church, for an ecumenical service that turned into a faith healing service. He was absolutely scandalized by it. My reaction was, "What are you coming to me for? Did you ask our advice before you did that?" He said, "No." I said, "Had you asked our advice we'd have had to tell you that what you do is your business. We really don't know much about the people. They called on us once and we really know almost nothing about them." He was mollified. He actually bought my car when I left.

Q: Did you have any feel for, I mean was there anything from Washington regarding this or not.

MATTHEWS: Not really except that one complaint about the person being kidnaped.

Q: Wade, is there anything else we should talk about before you left Guyana?

MATTHEWS: In Guyana, no I think not, but let me just mention one thing since we were talking about Jonestown and leading up to that, let me follow on a little more. I left, I was Chargé Oh I forget the last couple of months I was there, and I hosted the big Independence Day Fourth of July celebration. We had all the Guyanese government officials there. Our relations up until the time I left were quite cordial on a personal basis. On a policy basis, they opposed us almost

everywhere we turned. It was certainly successful and I had relations with everybody. I would joke with the Jagans about the CIA, for example. Janet once told me "I know who the CIA people are in your embassy." I said, "Well who are they." She said, "Well I couldn't tell you that. Don't you think I probably know if they are there?" Anyway it was that sort of relationship. I was a member of the Rotary in Guyana. Max Krebs was a member of the Lions; we had good relations with basically everybody. It was a little stiff with some of the more radical elements of the PM. Unfortunately from a policy standpoint, the personal ties weren't always followed through when the individuals who run the country are adamantly had their own reasons. I told you Birnham's basic theoretical reason I think. Some of them had racial reasons, this that and the other, they had been discriminated against when they went to school in the United States. The big thing was trying to get out of Guyana on a visa to the United States. There were visa fraud problems. I didn't mention that. As DCM I was not only political. We had an economic officer who was pretty good representing us in economic and commercial and reporting how things are going which was downhill in Guyana. U.S. commercial interests became very small after Reynolds left. In Consular, I would say half our officers were consular officers there, and we had a terrific visa fraud problem. One officer after he had left post, we found he had been selling visas. He was allowed finally to resign to our disgust without being prosecuted because he agreed finally to resign in lieu of being prosecuted. We had him dead to rights; he had been selling visas. He left shortly after I arrived, so he wasn't selling many visas after I got there. It was partly a man who came in complaining to me that he hadn't been sold for the gold, he hadn't been paid for the gold this officer had bought before he left post. It turned out we were talking quite a few thousands of dollars of gold with the officer earning, I don't know what he was earning at the time \$14-15000, certainly could not have paid, but it was more than that in the amount of gold he had bought. Anyway it unraveled, and a very alert vice Consul was sort of on to it about the same time, and we found out and the security officers came and all that. Anyway consular was a significant problem. Security was a problem, a bad security situation. The guard house was about two blocks away from the embassy, and the marine guard on his way to the Embassy was mugged twice by just walking that block and a half. We finally arranged, we did not have guard transportation, but we arranged to have the aide guard and the marine guard and the consulate guard to all come out on the street at the same time so that they could keep the marine security guard under observation at all times. They would blow their whistle and he would start up and they would blow their whistles and they would start running toward him two of them anyway with their billy clubs had anybody attacked. We got around it that way.

Q: Well then we are going to stop at this point and we'll pick it up, you left Guyana in 1976.

MATTHEWS: 1976. I started on something, one thing before we leave to finish Guyana. I left and turned the post over to John Blacking as chargé. There had been an ambassador, a political appointee who had been sent to the Senate, I think his name had been sent to the Senate. Something had come up, I think it was an income tax problem, and so it was not pursued and his name was withdrawn. Before they could identify another ambassador there was a plane, a Cuban plane on the Angola run that was blown up by Cuban exiles in the fall of '76, right after it took off from Barbados. Birnham came out and roundly condemned the CIA as behind this reflecting Fidel Castro. Henry Kissinger, now this is partly hearsay, but it is true. Henry Kissinger was so annoyed, the hearsay part is I cannot vouch for the conversations. I had left Guyana by that time. He went to somebody in his office and said, "We will not tolerate this; pull our ambassador out."

"Mr. Kissinger, we don't have an Ambassador there." "Well, who do we have there?" "We have a chargé, an FSO-3, John Blacking." "Well, pull the chargé out." They did so. The next person was Dick, I don't remember his name. Anyway he was an FSO-5. Dick McCoy, had been Guyana Desk officer, who was still an 05. He was in charge of the consular section which was FSO-4 grade position. Dick McCoy was suddenly chargé. I mean it was a more senior other agency officer's position. He had to be chargé. So, Dick McCoy remained as chargé. John Blacking sort of twiddled his thumbs back in the Department working on Guyanese and other matters until the Carter administration had been installed and at that time, they felt that Kissinger was no longer there and they sent John Blacking back. He remained chargé until the following summer at which time John Blake got assigned as ambassador. He was ambassador during the...

Q: We have interviews with Dick McCoy and John Blake and his DCM who was Carlton Sharpe who is now dead.

MATTHEWS: In any event this was the transition sort of thing. The Jonestown thing happened under John's regime.

RICHARD MCCOY
Chief of Consular Section
Georgetown, Guyana (1976-1978)

Richard McCoy was born in 1934 in New Jersey. He graduated from Cornell University in 1959. He served in the United States Marine Corps during the Korean War and in the Air Force from 1960 to 1966. He entered the Foreign Service in 1966. His postings include San Jose, Tel Aviv, Adana, Zagreb, Georgetown, and Washington D.C. He was interviewed by William Morgan on March 13, 1989.

MCCOY: I was assigned to Georgetown as the chief of consular section from 1976 to 1978 and not realizing it I found I was the second ranking officer in the embassy. We did not have an ambassador there. We had a charge'. Six weeks into my assignment there was a terrible incident that took place on a Guyana airline plane that was blown up over Barbados in which a number of Guyanese were killed. Apparently ten or twelve years previously there had been some very minor connection between CIA and the organization, a Cuban exile organization, which was responsible for blowing up the airliner. Consequently, because of the loss of life and the dramatic occurrence, the Guyanese Government really had some harsh words for our government as a result of which our charge was pulled out in protest. And there I found myself Chargé of a Class III embassy with a fully operational CIA/AID/USIS operation as well as the traditional Foreign Service sections. I was Chargé there for three and a half months.

We had some very interesting times. For example, we had threats against the embassy, to blow it up, burn it down, and in a wooden embassy building that's a real threat. There were even threats to kidnap certain of our dependent children, to take them to the interior.

Interestingly enough saner heads prevailed within the government and no outright breach occurred. At one point, we really thought we were going to have to shut the mission down and leave. Fortunately that did not occur, but there were some very tense times.

Q: What kind of support did you get from Washington from both State and other agencies?

MCCOY: Very little. Initially there was a lot of support, although it's always interesting when the country in which you are represented, where you are, is in bad odor in Washington, somehow that translates itself to the embassy people. So it was fascinating to get these cables directing me to either have no contact whatsoever, which, of course, is impossible or to make some very strong protest in language which was quite frankly uncalled for. One example that I had to confirm was when our Press Spokesman called the Guyanese Prime Minister a bald-face liar.

So that was my first experience in how I was going to have to run this embassy, by dealing with a government which I wasn't suppose to be in contact with, in a society where our embassy was being threatened, in which the policies, of course, were non-responsive and our embassy personnel were under some indirect threats.

Q: It sounds to me as if the buck ended up on your desk. Therefore, your dependency on the rest of the embassy and the other parts of the mission was vital. How did you work with them? What kind of cooperation did you get? What were some of the trouble areas?

MCCOY: Actually I had great cooperation from all political elements in the embassy as well as the USIA director who was a man of some experience in the country and, interestingly enough, from my Canadian and English colleagues.

Q: Were they fellow sufferers?

MCCOY: In a sense, yes. The result being that I found myself though, having to deal with primarily the substantive problems of the reporting which was simple. The real problem I had was between my admin officer and GSO. They didn't get along at all. And so that was creating some very serious internal problems within the embassy. But fortunately, having had the experience of both being a GSO and an admin officer, I was able to resolve those problems.

Q: Without exception there wasn't any real serious problems of mission objectives under you?

MCCOY: Well, I like to think there weren't. There were some serious problems within the mission of people panicking because of the threats they felt, against their families and in some instances we did allow some people to leave.

Q: Did you have to make those decisions?

MCCOY: Yes, the Department was helpful in that respect, in helping me make the decision in that regard.

Q: Then finally one day you were no longer charge'.

MCCOY: That's right. The situation stabilized. Things calmed down. We had a presidential election. The outgoing administration decided to leave things as they were. When the new administration came in, they decided to try and resolve the problems, and they did so by returning the Chargé.

Q: Then you could go back to your consular section and focus on, not that you weren't before, but focus seriously on any developing issues out in the hinterland which, indeed, there were. Do you want to tell us about those?

MCCOY: Well, yes. That was, of course, the People's Temple. When I first arrived there, the People's Temple was a very small organization. It later developed into a larger organization in the summer of '77 when, for some reason, presumably because of problems in the United States, large numbers of Temple members began an influx into the country.

Q: Tell us what the Temple was just briefly.

MCCOY: People's Temple was a pseudo-political authoritarian organization run by a thwarted minister who developed, in effect, what was a cult or a cult-oriented organization.

Q: And this was back in the period in which cults were almost the thing?

MCCOY: No, this is when cults were almost unknown in the international area. I mean, in a sense, that it was not something that we, in the Department, ever had to deal with. I presume there are always groups of people, but they had never really come to our attention in any manner.

And, of course, the Temple initially had the Reverend Jim Jones, its titular head, who had initially been the head of the San Francisco Housing Authority. He had developed a very tightly organized cadre, around him out of about ten to twelve people, and then had an organization of probably 1500 members. They developed an area in northwest Guyana with the help of the local populace, and had cleared an area of about 450 to 600 acres. They were developing quite an agricultural community. They had electricity. They had refrigeration. They had chickens and pigs. They had set up prefabricated housing. They were trying to be self-sufficient.

Q: They had the support of the government then. Why? Why would the Guyana Government want them there?

MCCOY: The government wanted them there for two reasons. One, the government was having a very serious problem with finances. At least one percent of the entire population of 800,000 people were listed with us for immigration to the United States and that didn't count those leaving to go to Great Britain or to Canada. So, consequently, the fact a group of Americans would come to Guyana and wish to live was a great propaganda ploy for them. Also, the government of Guyana purported to be a Marxist government. The People's Temple organization claimed to be organized along Marxist-socialist lines and had a political philosophy very akin to Marxism. And so, as a result, both from a political and public relations standpoint, the People's Temple was very welcome.

Q: At what point did you start finding yourself really involved with the group, what they were doing?

MCCOY: My initial contact came when I was Chargé in December, 1976 when Reverend Jones came in with the Lieutenant Governor of California, a man who's now a member of Congress, Mervyn Dymally. He wanted to visit the community because it was made up predominately of people from California. As Chargé, because he was Lieutenant Governor, I went and paid a call on him and Rev. Jones. The situation vis-a-vis the People's Temple at that time, seemed relatively normal.

Then in the summer of 1977, large groups of Temple members began coming to Guyana, and certain members of the security immigrations services of Guyana began to be a little bit concerned about what their overall motive was. This suspicion was, I think, primarily because they couldn't believe Americans would really, truly want to come and live in Guyana. So they considered there was an ulterior motive behind this entry of large groups of Americans.

In addition to that, we began to get press reports about the People's Temple and its organization relating to such things as threats of intimidation, coercion, and physical abuse. And I began to get letters from relatives of members of the Temple who were in Guyana to please check on them to see if they were all right.

As a result of this, I made my first visit to Jonestown in, I believe it was, August, 1977. This was a first of several visits. I recall going up into the Northwest District. Now, one of the things you have to understand is when you go into the Northwest District of Guyana, it's not like getting into your car and driving 150 miles and going somewhere. Guyana, outside of the Georgetown area, is very isolated and remote. The only way you could get there was by airplane because you crossed about 100 miles of truly trackless jungle because, after all, you're in the Orinoco Basin there. It's right up near the border of Venezuela, which brings another point to mind.

The Guyanese were also very happy that this American group moved in where they did because they were very concerned about Venezuelan territorial claims against that part of Guyana. They felt that this would create a buffer zone for them in that regard.

So I flew to Northwest District, met with the regional officer of the government there who proceeded immediately to tell me that he had a member of the People's Temple in their local clinic who was claiming that he had been mistreated and abused by members of the Temple.

Q: Was the government official helpful, responsive to you?

MCCOY: Yes, very much so.

Q: He wasn't fighting your being there?

MCCOY: Oh, no. They were very concerned. He was very concerned. So I went and talked to this man. He, of course, denied any abuse on the part of the Temple, claimed that the scars he

had were from handling rough lumber. He had some scars on the top of shoulders and cuts there. So I asked him if he wanted to go back to the United States. He said, "Yes." I said, "Fine." And I did arrange for him to go back to the United States, at People's Temple expense, I might add. And so the Temple arranged for him to return to the United States. However, the regional officer there still had some lingering suspicion that things were all not well.

Q: What was your first impression of the physical layout of the camp?

MCCOY: The first impression you have is that it's quite an impressive undertaking. I mean, this is a very rough, underdeveloped country where the climate was not too bad because you're up 2,000 feet there, but still it's heavy jungle with all the problems of the climate, wild animals, etc. They had obviously made quite an investment there. They had their own mill where they could make these prefabricated houses where they had tin roofs and wooden floors and things. And they were pretty well built, not something maybe you or I would like to live in, but certainly, in terms of that area, quite substantial. Some of the other things they had were a refrigeration plant and egg hatchery and things of that nature.

Q: So then over the next few months, or whatever period it was, you began to get more reports and was it always you going there or did you send someone else?

MCCOY: No, I always went. The ambassador decided it was important that I go because my vice consuls were all first tour junior officers. He and I both decided that this was a very sophisticated problem. After all, up to now there had been no examples in the Foreign Service, that anyone knew, in dealing with this kind of situation. We were dealing with American citizens. We were getting complaints about American citizens being abused by other American citizens. Plus when you have the new passage of the Privacy Act, the Freedom of Information Act, this created in itself some very difficult legal problems for us.

Q: Let's stop the clock there before we get into the full tragedy of that. What kind of support and advice were you getting from the Department? I sense good support from the ambassador, but again what kinds of support from the mission itself as well as the ambassador?

MCCOY: As I indicated to you, the ambassador was extremely supportive. He was a very experienced career professional who had arrived in Georgetown in the summer of 1977 and who realized that service in the Caribbean meant that the consular function was a very important element within the embassy overall because of the nature of our bilateral relationships created by this heavy demand for visas.

So when the People's Temple issue came up, we consulted almost daily because there were some other ancillary problems. For example, there was a child custody case that was going on at the same time which was creating a great deal of interest in the government. The Temple was on one side opposing the parents who were trying to get their child back and who were former senior Temple members. That was one side. Then we were getting an increasing number of requests to look into allegations of abuse up at Jonestown. So, consequently, I made another trip.

One of the things that I decided early on, because of the uncertain nature of what this was all about, was that when I would go into the camp I would never stay overnight. I would always go in with a representative of the government of Guyana, and I would always go in with Guyanese government transportation, not that they had a lot, they didn't. But what they had they loaned me. I always made it a point when I talked to these people to make sure I checked their passports independently, and when I talked to them, I always talked well away from any outside interference on the part of Temple members. This was to allow the person that was talking to me to speak without fear of intimidation or being overheard.

Q: This again goes back to the word you used before, "privacy" and my question about support from the Department, what kind of advice were you getting on how to work with sort of a middle-ground on privacy versus what turned out to be a real tragedy.

MCCOY: I really didn't get much advice at all initially because, I suspect in part, the Department really looked at this as just a simple protection and welfare situation. But as the nature of the problem began to grow, for a while I received some very good advice from Elizabeth Powers who was, at that time, in Welfare and Whereabouts in the old organization before OCS/EMR, what is now the Overseas Consular Services/Emergency Center. She was very good. Unfortunately after she left, in the spring of '78, it then got a little chaotic because there was about a four month period there when I had really no guidance at all. Unfortunately, the airgram that was prepared by the Department on the Privacy Act and on how to deal with this situation under the Privacy Act for some reason never was sent to any of the Caribbean posts. It wasn't until a consular conference was held in May of 1978 in the Department that I realized this.

Q: And there was nobody that sort of could pull this all together for you? The right and the left hand were . . .

MCCOY: What happened at the Conference, Michele Truitt, who I believe at that time was working for Assistant Secretary Watson, had helped draft this airgram, and she came in and briefed us all on it. So after that I was able to talk to her and get some specific information on how to handle this situation under the Privacy Act. Fortunately, she was aware of the problems that were going on relating to the Temple.

Q: But basically you were just using your good sense on how to deal with the individual's rights and answer questions under the Privacy Act.

MCCOY: The problem you had here was the rights of privacy of an American citizen as opposed to whether or not they were breaking the law. So, at that point, the ambassador decided that what he would send a cable to Washington, because this was a very unusual situation, requesting the Department's approval for us to go to the government of Guyana with a diplomatic note asking them to please investigate the situation at Jonestown with a view to making sure that no American citizen's rights were being abridged by other American citizens, which as you can see, is a really unusual situation. The Department came back and said they saw no reason to do that.

Q: This was presumably from the geographic bureau.

MCCOY: No, this originated between CA and L/CA (Office of Legal Affairs: Consular).

Q: *Oh, I see.*

MCCOY: The geographic bureau really played very little role in this which later to their chagrin they were severely criticized for.

Q: *Despite the ambassador's obvious sensitivity to it, he couldn't shake up the political side of the State Department?*

MCCOY: He was quite irritated with his desk officer which presumably we will get into, I know, later on, which is one of the reasons why the ambassador recommended I go back as a desk officer.

Q: *Let's then get into this peak, if you will, of the drama.*

MCCOY: What, of course, then occurred was, I made one more trip to Jonestown. I took the DCM with me at that point. Conditions in the camp in terms of the physical layout had improved but I felt the good Reverend Jones was deteriorating physically. But I wasn't sure what kind of role this was going to play.

Q: *This is now maybe a year had gone by?*

MCCOY: Yes, it was close to a year. I then was not able to go back. I had planned a trip up there just before I was reassigned out of Georgetown back to the Department. I couldn't get back up there because of bad weather. We didn't have a landing site because it was muddy and wet, and you couldn't land nor could we get over land from the one place where we could land because the road was impossible.

I left in August of 1978 to come back to the Department and at that point a U.S. Congressman from California decided he wanted to visit Guyana. I was detailed to brief him and his staff on conditions and what they could expect and so on. Of course, what it came down to, I told him, if they went there with the press they could expect a hostile reception. Now, I obviously didn't anticipate that the hostility would result in them being killed, at least the Congressman being killed. They asked me that specifically if the people would get violent against them. And I said I really didn't know. They hadn't gotten violent toward me.

Q: *You had seen no real signs of violence before?*

MCCOY: No, not directed against me personally. And so the result was that I just had to qualify my answer to him. I said, "But if you go, and take press with you, probably what they'll do is not let you in" which is what occurred initially. And then apparently Congressman Ryan who is the gentleman in question was able to negotiate his way into the camp with the press. Then the situation became hostile and, of course, the rest is all history.

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, ARA
Washington, DC (1977-1982)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997.

Q: You were involved in the Jonestown tragedy. How did that situation in Guyana evolve?

BUSHNELL: If a settlement of Americans in a frontier area of Guyana had been mentioned to me in early 1978, I had not paid attention. In the middle of the year at a meeting of a Caribbean Development committee a couple of officials, I think from Barbados and Trinidad, who happened to be seated next to me at a lunch, asked about a settlement of Americans in Guyana which had close links to the Cubans and Soviets. I knew nothing about it, but, when I got back to Washington, I asked and the desk gave me a briefing on the consular problems in Guyana concerning a group of unhappy Californians who had obtained land from the government of Guyana for a largely self-sufficient frontier settlement commune. About that time Dick McCoy, who had served in Costa Rica with us and had been a consular officer in Georgetown, asked to see me. I recall his interest was a job in ARA, but I took advantage of the meeting to get a good brief on Jonestown as the Americans' settlement was called after the head of the cult, Reverend James Jones.

Dick had visited the settlement several times. His focus was consular problems. The Rev. Jim Jones had led a group mainly from his California church, the People's Temple of Disciples of Christ, to Guyana and set up a settlement in a remote jungle area near the Venezuela border which was accessible mainly by small boat. Most of the migration was in 1977. Jones claimed to have been persecuted in California, apparently by local law enforcement; Dick did not know what the nature of these claims were. However, a number of parents had taken children to Jonestown although the other parent had, or obtained, legal custody. Parents or other relatives of young people in the Jonestown community were also very concerned about the well-being of their children, who they claimed had been brainwashed by Jones' cult. Dick had talked with quite a few of these children and young people. In a couple of cases he had taken the young person out in the fields where no one could hear and explained that the person could go with him and the Embassy would buy a ticket and safely put the person on a flight home. None accepted these offers. Some had complaints about the food or other aspects of the living conditions, but most seemed generally happy Dick said.

The settlement was run as a commune, and all members had duties or jobs. Dick said he was particularly impressed by an old man in his seventies who was building chairs. Dick noted that the man was receiving social security and asked why he was working. The man said: "In California nobody cared about me; I was just left to die; here I am making a contribution. See all the chairs here; I have made them all. I feel useful and wanted." I asked Dick about the Cuban/Soviet connection. He was surprised; he said he had never seen any Cubans or Russians there, at least not that he identified as such. Then he recalled he had heard some leaders of Jonestown would visit the Cuban Embassy when they came to Georgetown although Dick could not convince them to come to the Embassy and register as resident Americans. Dick explained that the State Department and the Embassy received a couple of letters, or more, each week concerning members of the commune. Some letters demanded that the Embassy rescue the loved ones; some attacked the Embassy for stealing the American citizens. The Embassy also had to answer numerous Congressional enquires on behalf of family of Jonestown residents. Dick wrote to many families to indicate he had visited their loved one and the person was fine. At one of the regular weekly meetings Vaky and I had with the CIA chief for Latin America, I asked about the Jonestown/Cuban/Soviet connection. He said it was the first he had heard but he would look into it. I never heard anything on this from him.

In October Mike Finley, the DAS for the Caribbean, told me Congressman Ryan was going to lead a delegation to Guyana to visit Jonestown during the November Congressional break. He said there were a dozen or more important constituents of Ryan who wanted him to bring their family members home. I said: "Wait a minute. A Congressperson can not just march in and kidnap Americans in a foreign country." I told Mike how McCoy had offered to take people out of the commune without success. I asked him to check with Consular Affairs and our lawyers and see what limitations we had to warn Ryan and his staff about. Mike reported back that he had reviewed all the problems with the Congressional staff but the Congressman was determined to go and was even taking members of the press and family members of commune residents with him. Mike had heard that the commune had fired guns at some press and family that had tried to visit.

Following considerable back and forth with the Hill, I met with Congressman Ryan and his staff in my office. After he indicated he was trying to serve the interests of his constituents who thought this Guyana commune was stealing their family members and brainwashing them, I pointed out that no US official had any authority in Guyana. Moreover, there was not even a police station anywhere near remote Jonestown. There were as many as a thousand residents of the commune, and we knew they were armed. Any official visit there was dangerous. The commune seemed to have an abundant dislike for press, and taking press, especially camera-persons, with him would increase the risk. I urged him to reconsider the trip and offered to have Embassy officers talk with whatever list of commune residents he provided and make any particular points he and the families wanted. I hoped this offer would give him enough to show his constituents that he would cancel. However, he said he was determined to go and he thought I was exaggerating the risk. He asked if an Embassy officer would accompany them. I said that would be up to our Ambassador and the availability of a volunteer; I would not forbid it nor order it. I only learned after this frustrating meeting that Ryan's upcoming visit was already getting daily press play in the San Francisco area.

There were lots of other things going on in ARA in November as the Nicaraguan mediation was coming to the decision point, and I paid no attention to the Ryan trip after my meeting with him. On the Saturday before Thanksgiving my family was at a neighbor's for the afternoon and dinner. We had not been there long when the Operations Center called me. Our Embassy in Guyana had passed on an unconfirmed report that the Ryan party had been attacked at the small grass airstrip near Jonestown and there were casualties. The ops center could not establish phone contact with the Embassy which was closed for the weekend. I told the ops center how to get home numbers for Embassy personnel and told the duty officer to call me back when he had more information. We had not yet begun dinner when the ops center called to say the Guyanese government was telling the Embassy that Congressman Ryan, the Embassy DCM, and others had been killed. The ops center was establishing an open telephone line to the Embassy, which was mobilizing its staff. I said I would come to the ops center immediately.

Q: Why were you called by the ops center instead of Assistant Secretary Vaky?

BUSHNELL: I don't recall. Either Vaky was traveling on business or he had family activities that weekend and asked me to take the duty. It was a chore to keep the ops center informed of one's whereabouts all weekend and to take the calls at all hours of the night. Thus with all three assistant secretaries with whom I served we alternated the duty, although they had it more than I did.

Q: What did you focus on when you got to the ops center?

BUSHNELL: Those few days are a bit of a blur. At first we were most concerned with rescuing any of the Congressman's party who were alive and getting treatment for wounded. At least one of the pilots of the CODEL's small rented planes was able to make radio contact with the authorities and call for help for the wounded, some of whom were evacuated on the CODEL aircraft. The Guyanese quickly sent other small planes to the isolated air strip where the attack had occurred to pick up wounded and survivors. The Embassy arranged for emergency care, and I worked with the Military Command Center to evacuate the wounded to Puerto Rico, because it had the closest US-style hospital, and the United States. A C-141 Air Force plane was on the way with medical personnel and equipment even before we knew how many wounded there were and the nature of the injuries.

My second concern was to capture those responsible before there were more murders. The Guyanese authorities told the Embassy they did not have the airlift to move a substantial force to the area quickly. They had managed a quick in-and-out operation to complete the evacuation of the visiting party without meeting any resistance. But the CODEL reported it was attacked by a substantial force. The Embassy believed there were about 1000 Americans in the commune and most of the adults might be armed. I wanted to get American military or law enforcement officers on the ground to protect the innocents in the commune and to help the Guyanese capture the murders. Helicopters were needed as the grass strip near Jonestown could not accommodate military planes. It took a couple of days to get helicopters and US personnel into the area. In the meantime the Guyanese overflew Jonestown and reported there was no sign of life there. Thus we assumed most of the commune members, including the many children, had fled into the

jungle, and we began preparing to look for them and to talk them out of hiding places. The weekend was spent on these issues.

Debriefing the survivors gave us a picture of what had happened. The party was treated reasonably and even invited to spend the night, although Jones objected to any picture taking. The commune members provided evening entertainment. About a dozen commune members indicated a desire to leave with the party including children of a couple of private citizens in the CODEL. Saturday around noon the CODEL and this group that wanted to leave walked to the airstrip and were preparing to board the two small private air-taxi planes that had come for them when they were ambushed by a couple of dozen men with rifles and shotguns. The crew of one plane was able to radio for help and, according to some reports, to takeoff. The attackers, some of whom were recognized as commune members, appeared to have concentrated on hitting Congressman Ryan and members of the press. The commune did not send people to help the wounded although there were doctors in the commune. Fortunately the attackers did not return to finish the attack. We learned later that Jones was disappointed when the ambush party returned and reported that some members of the CODEL group had not been killed. According to eyewitness reports and an audio tape found later, Jones then called for implementation of the suicide pact. Some people can be heard arguing that the commune should move to Russia as Jones had promised instead of committing suicide. But Jones said there was not time to do that and called for the entire commune to be martyrs to socialism. Most drank the Kool-Aid, but some apparently injected a poison. A number, including Jones and other leaders, had gun shot wounds; it was never clear, at least to me, who inflicted these bullet wounds and whether or not some of the people including Jones may already have been dead. Some adult bodies with gunshot wounds were found in outlying areas around the main camp.

In addition to Congressman Ryan four members of the party were killed – a NBC reporter, a NBC cameraman, a *San Francisco Examiner* reporter, and one defecting commune woman. At least nine were wounded including Richard Dwyer, a FSO who was DCM in Georgetown. Once the wounded were evacuated and the Guyanese authorities had established positions to prevent the murders from escaping, we began to worry primarily about the innocent commune members. During Sunday and Monday members of the group I had pulled together in the operations center, including several volunteers from the Consular Bureau, talked with family members and some people who had lived in the commune during the previous year. Several reported that Jones had had the commune practice suicide by drinking Kool-Aid spiked with cyanide; they also suggested there was heavy drug use in the commune. By Sunday evening there were press reports from Guyana that there were 300 dead in the commune, but we could not find any reliable source for this information. One Guyanese police officer apparently had reached the edge of the commune and seen many bodies, but there was no count. Members of the cult in California told my Task Force they had not been able to establish radio contact with Jonestown for a few days; such lack of contact was very unusual.

On Monday morning before I went down to do the noon press briefing CICNSOUTH called in a report from a Guyanese police party in Jonestown that there were 405 dead in the commune. I used that figure in the noon briefing, indicating that it was preliminary as American military officers were just arriving in Guyana. Even with this number of dead there appeared to be some 500 or more Americans missing and presumably now in the jungle for a couple of days. The

Guyanese had arrested a couple of dozen people making their way toward main roads from the camp, some with weapons. The Embassy identified a few additional commune members, but these had either been away from the commune in Georgetown or with the CODEL party departing the commune. Over the following couple of days we intensified the search for survivors using the US helicopters and US military now operational in Guyana as well as Guyanese military and police. The helicopters were flown in dangerous rain and wind storms because we believed a substantial number of Americans were by then in difficulties in the jungle. We found only a couple of people and no children.

On Wednesday morning I talked through a poor radio connection with the head of a US military mortuary team that was just arriving in Jonestown to recover the bodies. He reported there were considerably more than 400 bodies, at least 550, but they were just organizing a count. I repeated this report early in the noon press briefing as one reason we were not finding survivors. About 20 minutes later a member of my Task Force brought me an update from the team on the ground stating that the preliminary count was now 708, as children were found under the bodies of adults. I was embarrassed to be changing the body count so much within the hour span of the noon briefing. I tried to explain I could only report what people on the ground in difficult conditions were reporting to the Task Force at State. Within another couple of hours the count was up to 775, and over the next couple of days the count expanded to some 910 as additional bodies were found in buildings and away from the main central area where the mass Kool-Aid suicide had occurred.

By Wednesday the Task Force phones were ringing off the hook with calls from commune family members and friends. The Task Force phone numbers had been published. I recruited additional personnel from ARA and the Consular Bureau, and set up shifts so that everyone got either Thanksgiving lunch or dinner free. The military needed help for the process of identifying bodies so the calls were welcomed from those who might be able to provide identification information or obtain dental or other health records. Fortunately the ops center was able to provide many additional linked phone lines immediately. By Thursday, as I recall, the main work of the Task Force was the family phone calls as the military by then had sufficient resources on the ground in Guyana. At the peak we had about 225 US military in Guyana, including the 50 man mortuary team but not counting any air crews that might be there. The Justice Department finally recognized that killing a Congressman was a US crime even though the event occurred outside the United States. By Thanksgiving some FBI agents were arriving in Georgetown, although, despite my request, none were assigned to the Task Force in Washington. I was able to go home for a late but uninterrupted Thanksgiving dinner.

By the weekend the bodies were all in Delaware, and most of our military had returned to Panama or the United States. The Guyanese charged several men with murder, including an ex-Marine member of the commune who slit the throats of his girl friend and her young children and a couple of leaders of the assault at the airstrip who had not committed suicide with the commune. The Task Force became a consular operation, and I largely returned to my other duties.

Various pieces of information surfaced during this tragedy demonstrating the cult's close connections to the Cubans and Soviets. A few men carrying a large truck filled with cash and US

government checks were intercepted by the Guyanese authorities. The men said Jones told them to take it to the Embassy, implying the American Embassy. But there was a letter in the trunk addressed to the Soviet Embassy indicating the funds were for future cult expenses. Family members and survivors indicated Jones was making plans to move the commune to Russia. Russian language training had been made mandatory for some cult members. Documents found in the commune indicated that on some occasions the Cuban Embassy had intervened with the Guyanese government on behalf of the commune. Two Guyanese lawyers who were picked up in the jungle near Jonestown and claimed to represent the cult had close ties to the Cuban Embassy.

Several aspects of the cult's involvement in politics in Guyana and in the U.S. were exposed by the press which devoted a great deal of coverage to this terrible incident. In Guyana the opposition took advantage of every opportunity to point out the cult's close ties with cabinet members of the ruling People's National Congress Party. The press also made an issue of the fact that about 800 members of the cult had migrated to Guyana in 1977, far more than had been authorized by the government. In the course of protecting itself the Guyanese government pointed out that Jones and his group had been recommended by many senior people in the U.S. including Rosalyn Carter and Vice President Mondale.

Naturally the US press jumped on such information. Where copies of letters were found in official files, they were bland and general, but such letters were written on behalf of Jones and the commune – fortunately none involved the State Department.

Probably the biggest issue I had to handle was what to do with the bodies. By the fourth day when we had quite a few military on the ground and began to understand the situation, I discussed handling the bodies with our military and the Guyanese government first thing in the morning. Remember Guyana is almost on the equator and damp; the bodies were decaying fast. The US military officers whom we had finally gotten on the ground in Guyana, apparently in consultation with the Guyanese military, proposed burial in a mass grave and then constructing a suitable monument there in the jungle. The military were looking into contracting bulldozers and other equipment. Immediate burial in Guyana seemed to me quite an acceptable proposal and the only option that seemed practical. Some consular members of the Task Force pointed out that a number of family members in the U.S. would be unhappy with burial in Guyana, particularly if they were not sure whether their relatives were among the deceased. Few bodies had been identified; in fact we had no practical way of identification in Guyana, although I had asked the military to search for any records of the community that indicated who was there. I also talked with a member of the Guyanese cabinet who seemed to approve of this plan, but he asked me to wait a couple of hours because he wanted to raise it in a cabinet meeting which was about to start.

Since I had a couple of hours, I asked the military reps and the consular officers on the Task Force what would be involved if the Guyana government wanted the bodies removed and what emergency resources we could deploy to Guyana to identify bodies before burial. The military quickly replied that there was a military facility in Delaware which had advanced techniques for identification in which dental records and other sophisticated means could be used. This facility could handle over a 1000 bodies although identification might take weeks in some cases; it had handled the bodies from the 1977 crash of two jumbo jets in the Canary Islands. Body bags were available, and airlift could be arranged although it was far from clear how bodies would be

moved from Jonestown to an airfield that could handle large US planes. After talking with the commander of the Delaware facility, the military assured me that neither he nor anyone else in the military had the capability of deploying to Guyana to make identifications. The consular officers could find no such resources which could be deployed by the Red Cross or anyone else. But they reported many family members were now asking how they could claim the bodies of their loved ones.

About mid-morning I received a telephone call from a Guyanese minister, the foreign minister I believe, who said the cabinet had debated the burial issue at length. The Guyanese view was that the last thing Guyana wanted was a memorial in its jungle attracting lots of foreigners coming to mourn a situation which had little to do with Guyana. The cabinet strongly urged that the U.S. arrange to take the bodies home to the relatives. Guyana would cooperate in any way within its limited capabilities with such an effort. I said such a removal operation presented lots of difficulties but I would see if we could do it quick enough to deal with the situation on the ground. I asked the minister to have his people work with ours on the problem of transportation between Jonestown and a major airstrip.

I discussed the Guyanese position with the Task Force. The biggest issue was who was going to pay for what would be a major and expensive airlift and then identification effort. I suggested, as was my wont on military things, that we make this a training exercise because it was not often that the people who might have to do this sort of thing with a large number of bodies in a wartime situation would have an opportunity to practice in peacetime on Americans. Training exercises, of course, are funded out of the military training budget. However, if the military did this operation as assistance to another country or to a US group, including to another department of the government, the military would have to be paid for its costs, including even the cost of its personnel already on duty. The cost of sending down body bags, loading them on planes, bringing them to the facility in Delaware, and identifying and sending them to relatives would be many millions. The military reps on the Task Force put me on the phone to the commander of the Military Command Center, who was already advanced in drafting the tasking for the operation should it be ordered; he thought it could be done and liked my training exercise idea. He passed the call to financial people in DOD who did not like the training idea. Finally, since we had to take action, I told the military to go ahead and we would sort out the financing issue later.

Earlier that day Assistant Secretary Vaky had talked to Secretary Vance about the Jonestown bodies. Vaky told me the Secretary had said to do what the Guyanese wanted. Thus I felt I was within State Department guidance in ordering this major operation even if funding issues were uncertain as they had been for the other military expenditures on Jonestown. Subsequently the financing became a major issue because the military didn't do any of the Guyanese operation, or at least very little of it, as a training exercise. The military wanted to collect a large amount of money, something like 10 or 12 million dollars. This financing issue was debated for a couple of years. We actually recovered quite a significant amount, some millions of dollars, in trunks which some Jonestown leaders were carrying when they tried to leave the area. Many people in the Jonestown community received Social Security checks and California welfare payments and various other income, all of which was turned over to the leadership. There was another debate as to whether that money belonged to Guyana, to the families, or whether it could be used to

cover these military costs. Eventually some of it went to the military. We also heard that Jones and the commune had millions of dollars in Swiss and Panama bank accounts. Such accounts with several million dollars were blocked, and these funds too were used for expenses of the Guyanese, US military, wounded CODEL members, and commune survivors. However, most of the US military costs were taken out of an AID contingency fund after much debate and testimony in the Congress. I was not directly involved in these financial debates. At times some of my colleagues in OMB and AID, who were involved, kidded me, saying I should pay these costs since I had agreed to undertake them.

The Guyanese affair was a unique situation for the State Department because it was essentially a US domestic situation which happened to find a foreign locale but had little to do with the local authorities. The Guyanese authorities rather intentionally, I think, had little to do with Jonestown. Jones and his group were given this substantial remote jungle area, which was not being used, to build their community. The agreement was that Jonestown would not put a strain on Guyanese facilities. Jonestown would not ask for schools, police protection, electricity, roads, or other social services; all these things Jonestown would take care of itself; and for a fairly modest periodic payment the Guyanese would let them do their thing. There were suspicions about some corrupt payments by Jones to some people in the Guyanese government. As far as I know, such payments were never proven, or even investigated. Jones violated the agreement with the Guyanese by bringing in far more commune members than had been indicated in the agreement. Records were also found indicating that Jones and other Jonestown leaders tried to intervene in Guyanese politics even offering to have all the commune members vote for the government party in an election, although as foreigners they had no right to vote.

Q: Explain who was on this task force, who appointed it, whom they reported to – the mandate?

BUSHNELL: When there is an emergency or crisis which requires pulling together a lot of different inputs from throughout the State Department and the rest of the government or requires unusual communications and round the clock staffing, the State Department Executive Secretary, who controls the regular work of the operations center, after talking with the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary, decides to set up a task force. The Executive Secretary then asks the bureau which seems most involved, usually the geographic bureau responsible, to appoint somebody as the head of the task force. Other parts of the department and of the government are then asked to support this task force; many bureaus and other agencies have established procedures to detail people to such task forces. Fortunately the Operations Center at the State Department is physically set-up for such task forces. There are rooms with a large table and many phone lines in a secure area. The cable room is nearby. There are military and CIA officers assigned to the Operations Center who can work on task forces at least until other specialized officers from these agencies arrive. These officers know how to contact command centers and watch rooms throughout the government. These positions are manned around the clock. There was even a back room with a cot where the head of the task force could sleep. I spent only one night there, and there was not much time for sleeping; I strongly preferred to go home, even if only for a few hours interrupted by phone calls.

I headed or served on task forces in the operations center several times, and it really does assist in a crisis to have the communications support and a group with varied skills and contacts around

the table that can be consulted immediately to get answers from almost anywhere in the government quickly. Officers in the Operations Center have a great deal of expertise and contacts in communication and are able to get through by phone when the desk officer can be dialing all day without getting through. A task force also generates a better reception, let's say, from other agencies around the government. When a task force is set up, CIA wants to be on it; the Military Command Center wants close contact. Setting up a task force shows the Secretary of State thinks there is an emergency, and other agencies respond to this signal. A task force also gets the members away from their desks, their phones, and their routine work so they can concentrate on the emergency.

I don't want to give the impression an Ops Center Task Force makes handling a crisis easy. When we had a Congressman and other officers and citizens wounded or dead on a small remote airstrip in Guyana and were trying to get US resources on the ground in Jonestown, the task was not easy by any means. I talked many times to the generals who were in charge of the Military Command Center. Quickly the military assigned prime responsibility to CINCSOUTH in Panama while keeping the Washington Command Center in the loop to address issues the CINC could not handle. I then was able to get the State Department representative at CINCSOUTH on an open telephone line and work with him and the CINC to find and send resources from Panama. Lots of the problems that arose were technical. For example, the military couldn't fly helicopters from Panama to Guyana over the sea because the distance was too long. The CINC suggested dismantling the helicopters and putting them in planes, obviously requiring quite a few additional hours or days before we would have operational helicopters reaching Jonestown. I suggested staging them with refuelings in Trinidad and Venezuela. The CINC planners immediately checked the route and availability of the proper fuel. I agreed to get the needed clearances from those countries. Within a minute an ARA officer and a military officer assigned to the Task Force were working the phones to these countries.

Q: Did you end up with a written report or otherwise conclusions and recommendations?

BUSHNELL: I don't remember any final report with conclusions and recommendations. One of the jobs of the Task Force was to prepare frequent situation reports to keep the State Department principals and the President informed on the emergency situation. When there was a lot of activity, we did three sitreps a day. There was a situation report to be ready by 5:30AM or so to go in the Secretary's morning brief and perhaps to go to the White House, then another one by noontime, and one toward the end of the usual work day. I always assigned an officer on each shift to do the sitreps, which were edited by the Ops Center Duty Officer. Other agency personnel would send the sitreps to their agencies. I would have them cabled to the interested embassies or all of ARA. Of course, there was press guidance that had to be prepared each day. However, there was no wrap-up report other than comments in a final sitrep as the Task Force closed down and everyone went back to normal duties.

Another procedure was established and refined later, partly as a result of my recommendation to the head of the Ops Center after the Guyanese and then the Nicaraguan task forces. Everybody on the Task Force was so busy that record keeping beyond the sitreps was ignored. I recommended and adopted as an ARA procedure, subsequently adopted by the Operations Center as a regular task force procedure, that an officer, generally a junior officer, be assigned

the duty of keeping a timed log, noting down what was being done as best he could, what was coming in over the phone lines and in cables, what decisions were being made, what tasks assigned. This written log with the time of each event or action records a good picture of the task force's operation provided the head of the Task force and other officers keep the log-keeper informed. I served on a task force having to do with Trinidad in 1991, and this log-keeping procedure had been established as a useful regular operating procedure.

The other element on which I tried to get guidance established, largely without success, was the whole question of funding. Many task forces are likely to face funding needs, and it would be useful to have an established procedure to handle funding questions from the military, private contractors, or others. I even talked with my friends at OMB about this. They were receptive to the problem, but their view was that the State Department should make a proposal. I don't think anything was ever done on it.

Q: There was subsequently a Congressional hearing on Jonestown. Did you testify at the hearing?

BUSHNELL: I don't recall testifying.

Q: Someone from the State Department...

BUSHNELL: Ambassador John Burke, who was the Ambassador to Guyana at the time, was called to testify on what we had been doing about Jonestown before the Ryan visit. I remember him coming to talk to me about the events and the actions of the Embassy. There was a view that the Embassy or the State Department should have done something to prevent this terrible loss of lives. But, of course, this was a group of American citizens who actively didn't really want consular services, or at least a minimum of US consular services. They would not go to the embassy and register, as Americans abroad are asked to do. I recall reviewing what I think was a draft report or a letter rather than testimony, -- the history of Congressman Ryan's and his staff's contacts with the State Department, the advice not to go, not to take press or cameras.

Q: Well, it was certainly a weird and tragic but fortunately unique event. Any further comment on it?

BUSHNELL: The Jonestown situation was really in the area of a consular problem although such problems can become major political issues here and abroad. However, the consular role is more limited than many Americans think. Embassies do not enforce US law overseas, particularly civil law. Custody of children and other family issues are not supposed to be enforced by embassies which, of course, have no police powers. The laws and enforcement of the host country apply. However, many Americans, including judges and law enforcement officers, apparently believe that, if a judge in California said that the wife has custody of this child and the husband has him/her in another country, the US embassy in that country ought to do something about enforcing this California judge's ruling. Of course, such action is not allowed in our consul conventions. The embassy might raise the issue with the local government or, if the child appears in the embassy, arrange an airline ticket or something like that. But the embassy has no authority to take custody of a child in a foreign country and change it to another parent because a judge in the U.S. says so. In recent years State has focused more on this issue,

perhaps because the problem has become more widespread, but the focus is on agreements with other countries to facilitate access to their legal procedures by aggrieved parents.

Q: Any further comment on Jonestown?

BUSHNELL: One of the more difficult duties as head of the Guyana Task Force was doing the State Department noon press briefing on this issue, because at first it was breaking so fast it just wasn't practical to bring the press spokesmen up to date. There was so much interest in the Jonestown situation that I am told I hold the record for the largest attendance at a State noon press briefing. The fire marshals finally came and were actually trying to kick people out because there were more people in the auditorium than was allowed by the fire regulations. Not only was every seat taken, but everyplace to stand was taken by either people or television cameras. Because this was more a human interest or crime than a foreign policy story, generally the reporters assigned to cover it by the media were not those who regularly covered the State Department but reporters who did black issues, human rights issues, or some other domestic beat. Thus the normal State Department contingent was there plus all these people who were covering this issue, and it was a big issue not only in the U.S. but worldwide. Moreover, the place for all reporters to get the Jonestown story was unfortunately, as too often in my view happens, the State Department auditorium. There were no foreign press-persons in Guyana, at best a couple of local stringers. Guyana wasn't an easy place to get to quickly. Even if you got there, you would be in the capital which was far from Jonestown. In addition, the Guyana authorities together with our military closed off the entire surrounding area while they searched for Jonestown people who might have escaped into the jungles. For some time the press didn't have a way of covering this story except from the press conferences we gave and the background the press could find in California from the families. The families' current information all came from phone calls with members of the task force, but the families did provide a lot of background on the community.

I encouraged the Guyanese to make information available to the press. After a couple of days the Guyanese government did do some press briefing, which was, of course, directed mainly to the Guyanese press. Thus I was in a difficult position, particularly for the first few days, because our own information was so uncertain. We really thought most of the Jonestown people were out there in the jungle somewhere and the issue was to find them. CINCSOUTH was organizing loudspeakers for helicopters to use while flying over the jungle, although I never understood how anyone could hear a loudspeaker over the helicopter noise. The military planned to tell people to go in certain directions, toward roads, and to give the people some security that nothing would happen to them, trying to talk them out of the jungle. It was only after our people got on the ground in Jonestown and began to move the stack of bodies that they found the number of bodies was close to the total number of people that were there. That was a very difficult part of the operation where it would have been nice to get the focus off the State Department. But, as long as it's our communications and our people on the ground, it's almost inevitable that we become the link to the press. Sometimes in a diplomatic situation that's desirable. In this situation, it might have been better if the news could have come in some other way.

One of the most undesirable effects of having my name and face so publicly associated with the Jonestown tragedy was that my wife received phone calls asking her how you liked being

married to a mass murderer. Of course I had never expected there would be such a problem with having a listed phone number.

DONOR M. LION
USAID Director
Guyana (1979-1981)

Donor M. Lion was born in Manhattan and raised in Brooklyn. He attended Erasmus Hall for secondary school. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard University. He then earned a master's degree in Buffalo before returning to Harvard to obtain his Ph.D.. All of his degrees were in the field of economics. His first overseas assignment was working with the Marshall Plan in Norway. He has also served abroad in Brazil, Jamaica, Guyana, Peru, and Thailand. He was interviewed by W. Haven North on June 25, 1997.

Q: You were going to Guyana, right? At this point?

LION: After Jamaica, yes. Edna was called out to be head of personnel in Washington so Guyana opened up. Alex Shakow was the PPC guy at the time. At my swearing-in, you know sometimes the PPC chief or whoever is the host makes a few comments. He said, "Couldn't think of a better person to send to Guyana." The place just roared. Sort of like Siberia or something.

Q: What was Guyana like? What was the situation you were having to deal with?

LION: We were dealing with a government that was terrible in terms of policy. A government that was dominated by an Afro-Guyanese Mafia, some people in the party who were really nasty people--Mafia types. You were dealing with the kind of person who said, a man by the name of Frank Mann who was the Guyanese ambassador to the United States, he said, "elections are not for the squeamish." Which tells you what they did with elections there. They were very anxious to keep the Indo-Guyanese out of power. The population breakdown, I forget what the percentages were, but I think it was like 53% - 54% Indo-Guyanese from India and maybe 40 to 43% Afro-Guyanese who were in the urban areas. The Indo-Guyanese were in the rural areas. The urban people controlled the place. There were some Chinese, some Brits.

So the political environment and the policy and orientation of the government was Burnam and his party colleagues. All of that was very unproductive and very bad. But the individual Guyanese including many government officials, technical people, were first-rate. Good people, competent people anxious to do the right thing. We had a kind of funny relationship in that situation. We had very good friends with a lot of the Guyanese government people and we were able to do some decent things with them. But overall policy? Couldn't change.

I pushed an approach by our government there that depended on performance. If they did well, we would make some useful, substantial assistance offers. And if they didn't, we wouldn't. But that didn't sit too well with the government.

Q: What kind of policies were you trying to promote?

LION: It had to do with a number of macro initiatives, although maybe not as radical or extreme as the IMF or the World Bank. Maybe we would have paced these policies, stretch them out a little longer. I don't remember precisely what specific things we were pushing but they had to do with the budget, fiscal policy, monetary policy, trade policy. The ambassador was very supportive, George Roberts, of that policy. At the end, when it was my time to go, after a tour, our program was down to about nine, ten million dollars a year.

Q: What had it been before?

LION: I had it grown to 20 or 25, including PL 480.

I wrote another tour report which emphasized the performance approach. Peter saw it and that was what led him to ask me to go to Pakistan. Although there was an interesting interlude with Peter. I was one of the candidates they were thinking of for the Pakistan job after the US had decided to resume aid to Pakistan, substantial aid. I was coming in for an interview on Saturday morning, 11:30. At 8:00 in the morning I had just picked up Linda from the hospital where she had delivered one of our two girls. I brought her back to her sister's house, made sure she was comfortable and scooted into Washington from Columbia, Maryland. I sat down with Peter and the first thing he says to me is, "Donor, I hear you're too liberal."

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it's just someone who speaks out or is frank. Actually, I was told recently that somebody had slipped a note under Jay Morris' door (Jay was Peter's deputy) saying that I was a communist.

Q: Were you unsympathetic with the administration interest in the private sector, in the private business and all that sort of thing?

LION: Absolutely not. That was no problem. That's one of the things we tried to push in Pakistan. Try to develop a private banking system, for example. The banking system was entirely in the hands of the government.

Q: Was there anything else on Guyana that you want to add about the kind of programs you had before we go on ahead to Pakistan?

LION: We tried to do some work on the population area and did some but the government was pro-natalist, or whatever the expression is. Forbes Burnam got on national radio and blasted the "SOBs" who were pushing population plans. That's exactly what he said: "SOBs."

Nevertheless, we were able to work with an NGO and do some work there. I can't remember exactly what it was but we had a very good relationship with the second and third level people in

the ministry of health. We had a very good relationship with the IDB rep who was a person of substance, a Canadian fellow. And with the European Union rep, a wonderful guy, an Italian, a wonderful bridge player--we played a lot of bridge--Nico. I enjoyed the multilateral coordination aspects of the job which really meant trying to keep, trying to put Forbes Burnam's feet to the fire. The three of us were trying to do that. It was nice not to be the only person in town who was pushing for reform.

After I left, somebody in AID got a letter from the minister of finance who said that they would appreciate someone who was more agreeable than Donor Lion. Who wouldn't insist on policy reforms. I was not the only one who articulated it to the government. It was also our ambassador. There is no reason why the AID person can't do it but there's also no reason why the ambassador shouldn't do it. George wasn't appreciated either because he took that stance.

Q: So the government wouldn't budge.

LION: Words, words. Promises but no delivery. Subsequently, the minister of finance, who made a lot of promises about encouraging the private sector, which we were pushing as hard as we could, he became the prime minister, or president--whatever the title is. Apparently, he persuaded the US government that he meant business about doing good things so the program was renewed.

Q: Why, had the program closed down?

LION: Pretty much. I think there's still a mission there. It can't be a very big program. They have all of 800,000 people. If the trend is anything like what it was when we were there, then the population has been declining. When we were there, out-migration exceeded the natural growth rate.

Guyana is an interesting country from not only an ethnic point of view, or political point of view. In the early '60s when it became independent, the US backed Forbes Burnam against the then Indo-Guyanese opponent who was a Marxist. We may have done the right thing then, I don't know. Burnam subsequently became undesirable in terms of national leadership. The guy who is in charge now is the guy we opposed then, the Indo-Guyanese. Anyway, the program was resumed and they agreed to reform, this ex-minister of finance no longer there.

So there are a lot of things interesting about Guyana including the political history and the ethnic issues, the rural-urban split. Guyana has substantial natural resources. Probably per square-mile has more forest resources than any country in the region. Tough to get to. When we were there, there was one road in the country, a coastal road. There was a waterfall which I could show you but I won't because I haven't made the bed in the bedroom. It's about 700 feet high, it's one of the three or four highest waterfalls in the world, a tourist attraction. But if you try to get there over land, it takes you about three or four days. If you fly there onto a crude airstrip, it takes you 20 minutes. So the forest is a potential wonderful resource. They also have a lot of bauxite. They were one of the important bauxite exporters. Bauxite prices haven't been good for many many years so that's not too helpful.

So they had natural resources. They have wonderful people. And, they've had lousy government.

Q: Back to the old issue, lack of adequate government.

LION: It's too bad. Why can't there be more enlightened democrats, small "d," who are willing to do things we think are right.

JONATHAN B. RICKERT
Desk Officer, Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam
Washington, DC (1980-1982)

Jonathan Rickert was born and raised in Washington, DC and educated at Princeton and Yale Universities. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963, serving tours in both Washington and abroad. His foreign posts include London, Moscow, Port au Spain, Sofia and Bucharest, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments Mr. Rickert dealt primarily with Eastern and Central European Affairs. Mr. Rickert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: It looks like in 1980 you came back to Washington and what was your assignment in the Department?

RICKERT: One last footnote which isn't about Trinidad. Before I left, I did a TDY in Surinam because when I was coming back to Washington I was going to be in the Office of Caribbean Affairs, ARACAR, with responsibility for Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname. Suriname was an even smaller embassy. Nancy Ostrander was the ambassador there. The DCM had to leave or his political officer, the DCM, had to leave on short notice for personal reasons not permanently but for a period of time. They just had a military coup there. So ARA agreed to my going down and filling in as a TDY political officer. So I had a good introduction to Suriname before taking over the Suriname desk. It was a lot of fun, it was a much more open society in terms of willingness to be able to talk to people. In Trinidad you can meet with anybody but they wouldn't say much. In Suriname, they would not only meet with you but they were very open. In the three weeks I was there I met the President, the Prime Minister, about half the cabinet, the trade union leaders, Alcoa had a big operation there and the union worker Frank Darby was later murdered ... and also Desire Bouterse or the corporal who had staged the coup and a number of his thugs and others.

Nancy and I went one time to meet with the Prime Minister, Chin A. Sen. He was of Chinese origin and he was very despondent about the way things were going. Nancy and I convinced him not to resign which I thought was because he was viewed in Washington and by the embassy as a stabilizing force. You don't think as a mid-level officer that you were going to be involved in trying to convince prime ministers not to resign. The scale of these countries, there is only, roughly, 350,000 people in Suriname. There are more Surinamese in Holland than there are in Suriname.

In any case, then when I left, I came back to Washington, took over as desk officer and had responsibility for those three countries to start with.

Q: Now, did you spend any time in Guyana?

RICKERT: Only one visit on the way back from Suriname. I stayed with Dick Dwyer who had been shot at Jonestown. He was DCM there. That was kind of a scary place, I have to say; much poorer and much more lawless than either Trinidad or Suriname but part of the same Caribbean culture with the same tradition of colonialism and sugar and other tropical products and exploitation of slave labor and all the rest. So one could feel at home culturally in Guyana very easily if one had lived in Trinidad or other parts of the British West-Indian empire.

Q: So as the desk officer for Trinidad or Guyana or Suriname you did the usual desk officer things, you liaised with the embassies in Washington and went in the field, made recommendations up the line ... Anything particular about this period which was at the end of the Carter Administration and the beginning of the Reagan administration?

RICKERT: Well, I don't know where you were at that time but our assistant secretary was Bill Bowdler. One of the lessons that I learned very quickly when the Reagan Administration came in was what happened to people who were on the wrong side of the new administration because Bowdler was there one day and he was gone the next. There were no farewells or anything else. He was out the door because, I gathered, of the position that he had taken legally, correctly, honorably, on behalf of the previous administration on Central America. So he was an immediate casualty who was eventually succeeded by Tom Enders.

Rob Warren was our office director when I got there. Richard Howard was the deputy. We had a number of good desk officers. Marsha Barnes who took over Guyana at a certain point is now Ambassador of Suriname and later was director of Caribbean affairs. Her first tour in the foreign service was in Guyana. She spent a fairly significant chunk of her career down there. When Tom Enders came in, as I understand it, there were pressures to have a bunch of DAS [Deputy Assistant Secretary] including political ones. He insisted on having two DAS's for ARA. One was Steve Bosworth and the other was Ted Briggs. They really had their hands full because, I've forgotten the exact number of countries, but it was in the range of 25 or so countries in ARA. Just with reasonable travel, that meant that there was usually one DAS. The assistant secretary was gone and the two DAS's were there or one of the DAS's were traveling. So it was tough, but that's the way Enders apparently wanted to do it.

Q: ...and the U. S. military action in Grenada came well after you left.

RICKERT: That's correct. One other little incident that was one of the less attractive sides of the Foreign Service – and I might want to edit this when I get to it – I had a call one day when I was still on the Guyana desk from a gentleman whose first name I can't remember, but his last name was McCormack, and he later became assistant secretary for EB (Economic Bureau).

Q: Richard...

RICKERT: Richard something. I can't remember for sure. But he called me up as the Guyana desk officer and chewed me up one side and down another because of the problems that a businessman who had gone – he was a staffer for Helms at the time...

Q: McCormack was.

RICKERT: McCormack was and he had a fellow who was dealing with the Guyana government and the embassy hadn't helped this guy. This was an African American fellow who was taking advantage of some kind of a set-aside to provide rum to American Commissary, military commissaries, and I had met and spoken with the guy. He had essentially a trade dispute with the Guyana authorities. He claimed that he'd been ripped off and he'd been cheated, and so forth and so on. And McCormack really tore a strip off me in the State Department for our failure to get this guy's money. He was loud, abusive, obnoxious over the phone. I put the phone down shaking and immediately typed up everything I could remember and sent it to Steve Bosworth. No one wanted to have someone be blindsided at a higher level by this. And after I calmed down, a couple of hours later, McCormack called back and, in a sense, apologized, and said, "I'm sorry I had to do that, but he was sitting in my office, and I had to put on a show for him."

Q: Thanks a lot! Anything else? We haven't, other than this trade dispute, haven't talked much about Guyana, and you mentioned Jagan coming to see you. Is there anything else...

RICKERT: There was not much. Guyana was in a quiet period then. The name of the prime minister who was somebody that we favored over Jagan escapes me, who later became a tin pot dictator of his own. He was running dishonest elections and persecuting the Indians there mostly through disenfranchising them to a sufficient extent yet reelected though the Indians were the majority in Guyana by that time. And Guyana was of interest, but I don't recall anything of particular note had to do with our relations with Guyana during the talks the year that I dealt with it.

DAVID C. MCGAFFEY
Chargé d'Affaires
Georgetown (1986-1990)

David C. McGaffey was born in Michigan in 1941. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Detroit in 1964. His career has included positions in Farah, Manila, Kabul, Tabriz, Isfahan, Teheran, and Georgetown. Mr. McGaffey was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 1995.

Q: When you arrived in 1986 in Georgetown what was the situation there?

McGAFFEY: Burnham had just died. He had been in the practice of rotating his vice presidents. He had people in for about four to six months and then would get somebody else from the cabinet, from the party, explicitly to prevent anybody from having a power base. There was a

man, a former minister of finance, who was vice president at the time of his death, who performed, became president. He was a man who had no particular strength in the party. Nobody had strength in the party because it was Burnham and then everybody else. It was very deliberate policy, very similar to the Shah's policy. He had no particular strength, he was a bureaucrat, a technocrat. He was an acceptably competent finance minister and suddenly he is president. He headed a minority party.

Politics in Guyana was racial, and still is, and every president denies it. He headed the black, the Afro, party which was an urban party heavily concentrated in government. A devoted Stalinist style communist headed the opposition party, the Indo [East Indian] party, based on the very militant union of sugar workers, sugarcane cutters. They had been out of power since Burnham came in, since independence. The Indian origin population was the majority, and except for the sugarcane cutters, was basically middle class and dominated small shops, professions, teaching. They were very much not communist, not Stalinist, but Cheddi Jagan was the symbol of opposition so all of the Indo-Guyanese supported the party of Cheddi Jagan even though they didn't support his politics.

This new president was trying to figure out what to do with a country that had no experience with politics and what to do with himself and his party. There was a third party that had tried to get started on a non-racial basis and was dismissed as the party of the "Douglas", the mixed race. They were basically progressive and had the right ideas but just no structure. Whenever the president tried to move things toward a more democratic basis, the militants within his own party would object and the militants within the Indo-Guyanese party would take advantage of any evidence of weakness. He was trying to build something in a country that had not only no experience with politics, but very bad experience with independence.

At the time of independence, Guyana was judged to be the wealthiest country in the Caribbean. Even though it is on the mainland of South America, it was considered one of the Caribbean islands and was in fact the headquarters of Caricom, the community of the English speaking Caribbean. It was probably the wealthiest, by statistics at the time certainly. The city was built wealthy. Every house was Victorian gingerbread with indoor toilets, running water and all cooking by electricity. They had one of the best school systems in the Caribbean. As a matter of fact Guyanese graduates dominated the senior professions throughout the Caribbean. When they had that big trial in Grenada and put the head of the leftist party on trial, I found to my interest that both the prosecuting and the defense attorneys, and four of the five members of the Grenada Supreme Court were Guyanese and graduates of the school. But that was 30 years earlier.

Burnham came in with the radical socialist policy of service to the people and distribution of wealth from these nasty capitalists and had spent the 30 years spending the capital of Guyana. About half of the industries which had been taken over by the government were now closed because equipment had failed, it had not been maintained. There was electricity about four hours a day and this in houses that had no other source of cooking or lighting than electricity. There did not exist a market of cooking oil, cooking stoves, coal, anything else, it was all electric. Water was intermittent, this in houses where there were no wells where there were just running pipes water and you would turn on the tap and nothing happens.

It had gone from being the wealthiest to a condition of desperate poverty where it was now considered to be only above Haiti. There was no obvious sources of wealth except the rain forest. The rain forest had been given to the Amerindian tribes in perpetuity which meant private exploitation but no general exploitation. So the country was dead broke and the capital infrastructure was in shambles and now the president for life was dead.

One of the most disruptive policies of Burnham had been a decision that because importing food allowed other countries to control you, he passed a law saying no food may be imported. This was not too bad for the Afro-Guyanese because their culture was basically built around rice which grows well, but the Indo-Guyanese culture was based around wheat and wheat does not grow there. The effect had been that they started smuggling wheat. They quickly found out that when you don't pay taxes on smuggled goods, you make a greater profit so they started smuggling other things. By the time that I got there a government minister estimated that 70 percent of the economy was based on smuggling. It had now expanded to include cocaine and other things from the Andes, using Guyana as a way point. The government was surviving on remnants.

One of the first things that Desmond Hoyte, the new president, did was work out a reopening of the U.S. PL480 program to start bringing in wheat. I was seen as negotiating this program and providing wheat to the Guyanese and my picture was on the front page of every paper. People used to stop me on the street, clasp my hands and say "Thank you for my chapattis." We brought it in under the PL480 Title Two program which meant that it was sold for Guyanese dollars, for local currency, and the local currency went into a pot which we at the embassy could use for local developmental projects. There was an immediate benefit; wheat was there, which gave a glow to this new regime plus a flow from developmental projects which meant an increase in optimism. This enabled Hoyte to open up negotiations on joining the Caribbean Basin Initiative which was a U.S. sponsored program to give preferential trade and some development assistance benefits to countries that qualified. While I was there they managed to join CBI.

It was a fascinating period because there was a real feeling of growth, of change, of development, and of improvement, against the background of continuing total political uncertainty because the people in Hoyte's party did not like these changes. These were things that Burnham had fought against so they were increasingly seeing Hoyte as a betrayer of the party. Cheddi Jagan did not like these things because as a staunch Stalinist communist he was anti-American and did not like the PL480 program which increased U.S. popularity. He did not like the CBI and wanted increased ties with Cuba. So you had a continuing weak president with a party that was not supportive of the party's programs because it was as a party, not getting any benefits from these popular programs. But the opposition was equally negative. Every time an investor came in, and they started to come in in good numbers, Cheddi Jagan's party would demonstrate against them because this is exploitation by foreign investors. There were all of these changes, and all of this opportunity, but no idea how it was going to work out politically and nobody was willing to make any predictions about where the future would be.

Q: Cheddi Jagan is probably the only reason why most people in the United States know of Guyana because he was always held up with his American born wife and all and he was sort of the personality from Guyana.

McGAFFEY: You are forgetting Jim Jones.

Q: Jim Jones, yes. That was '77. That was horrible. A religious group that committed mass suicide there. Tell me about Cheddi Jagan. What was your impression of him and dealing with him?

McGAFFEY: He was personally, very personable. He was polite, courteous, an interesting conversationalist but his mentality seemed to be frozen in a time warp. He would just not acknowledge any of the changes in the world that had taken place, not acknowledge what was happening in the Soviet Union, not acknowledge what was happening to socialism worldwide. He was waiting to restore things to the way they had been when he was young. His wife Janet seemed to be in my judgment his intellectual superior. She also in her ordinary comments reminded me of listening to radical SDS students in my youth. The two of them had been politically prominent and yet out of politics for 28 years and they were in a holding patterns. Cheddi's brother, also a dentist, was my dentist and he used to fill my mouth full of things and then harangue me so that I couldn't talk back. We dealt with him on a regular basis and his politics in world terms was, as I said, frozen in the past.

What was active politics was race. Everybody identified everybody else by their race and knew mixing to the sixteenths. It is a very small community and so everybody knew everybody else. The democrats who were mostly of mixed race because they couldn't get into the other party, were intellectually stimulating but largely ineffectual. The Catholic church was a radical opposition to the government but criticizing only and not putting forward any particular social programs of its own. It was a country that was going through so many changes that everybody was uncertain and it was fascinating.

Q: What were American interests during this '86 to '90 period?

McGAFFEY: Basically I saw American interests as trying to move Guyana away from a reflexive anti-Americanism to participation in local regional politics, a normal association with the United States and with its neighbors, ending the state of war with Venezuela which had been going on since I think '35, activation with Caricom which had become just a name with no activity, and ending the drug stream that was beginning to become quite prominent. The Heritage Foundation in Washington, just about the time I went down there, came out with an article that said there were dozens of airfields hidden in the jungles of Guyana which were going to be used for an invasion of the United States.

Q: Heritage being a right-wing political organization.

McGAFFEY: Very right-wing and like many other things this particular article had a few fragments of fact. Guyana had been a principal part of the U.S. air bridge to North Africa during World War II. It's on the edge of South America and it's a short hop across the Atlantic to Africa. We had built most of these air fields so the air fields did exist. They were in use and were a matter of concern because they were being used by small planes smuggling cocaine or marijuana, but mostly cocaine. Guyana did have a left-wing politics and was very pro-Castro but to add the

three together and to talk about a security threat to the United States is ludicrous but it was real. Since for 30 years every time that anybody in the United States looked at Guyana there was a president who immediately said something anti-American, it had a lot of resonance in Washington.

As chargé I felt that my job was to fight people in the Department of Treasury, Department of State, Department of Justice, Department of this, that and the other thing, who wanted to have nothing to do with Guyana. They wanted to have no connections because Guyana was the enemy, the bad guys. I wanted to bring people into the 20th century. It was eventually successful. Guyana reestablished its relations with the IMF, joined the CBI and was turning itself around economically.

Desmond Hoyte, after I left, lost the election because his party didn't support him. Cheddi Jagan won and became president. Again an illustration of the way that he was frozen in the past, it was not until after he was elected that he realized that he had nobody in his party with any experience in governments. He ended up turning to the middle class, non-party people, mostly Indo-Guyanese but even that not exclusively, to staff his own government. He ended up with a technocratic government behind him that did not follow his own policies so the country has continued to grow. Cheddi died and now his wife Janet has been elected as president. As I say, I think that she is the intellectual superior of the two and I think that she has been persuaded by these technocrats to continue these basic policies so Guyana has now changed directions and has moved into the mainstream. I think that is valuable to the U.S.

Q: When you arrived there was the American invasion of Grenada sort of hovering over? Was there concern that if things went too much left that the United States might do something? Did you have to deal with that or not, or was that over and past?

McGAFFEY: It had just occurred and so it was a matter of intense interest but for some reason there was no paranoia, there was no feeling that it had anything to do with Guyana. It just had to do with the United States and what kind of a country the United States was. It interfered particularly within the Hoyte party, the Afro-Guyanese party, when Hoyte and I talked about these new programs, he would talk about how that affected the willingness of people in his party to trust the United States but it was one of a number of obstacles to overcome.

Q: What about the Cubans, how active were they there?

McGAFFEY: They had been extremely active and they had a very large presence. But Burnham died because he had a fairly minor medical problem and rather than go to for example the United States or Europe to have it treated, he asked for a Cuban doctor to be flown in to operate on him in Guyana. He died on the operating table. That can happen but that put a severe negative slant on attitude toward the Cubans. They were suddenly seen as incompetent, like Burnham. Now that Burnham was gone people were able to say that he had been incompetent and the Cubans were seen as associated with that bad period.

Q: What about UN votes, was that a problem for you all at that time?

McGAFFEY: No. Basically Guyana could not afford to have much of any presence in New York. Very often there was nobody in its mission. When it voted it tended to vote as a block with the G-77 and it was not seen as being a leader in any sense. If we could persuade the G-77 to back off on this, then Guyana would back off. It was just a follower.

Q: How about the drug interdiction campaign, were you able to do much there?

McGAFFEY: There was perfect willingness of people to participate in the drug interdiction campaign. There is not a drug culture in Guyana. There is a small group of Rastafarians who use ganja, or marijuana, but basically it is a middle class Victorian kind of an attitude and they look down on drug users. What you had was South American drug dealers who were paying off individuals and using secluded air fields or inlets to meet and greet and exchange. The government of Guyana literally had no infrastructure to combat this. They did not have airplanes, they had no boats for a customs service. We supplied them with two used boats which delighted them and they immediately set out catching small boats that were running drugs and other things. The problem came when they were trying to figure out how can you stop drugs without stopping the people who were bringing in bread and wheat.

Q: Because you are talking about the smuggling.

McGAFFEY: Yes. Since the smuggling was universal, they had to learn how to figure out how to distinguish. We supplied them with a number of GPS, global positioning system, receivers to put on small planes which was the only way some of these communities in Guyana had any connections. Every year they had been losing two to three planes and passengers somewhere in the jungles, somewhere in the rain forest. While I was there we discovered three World War II U.S. aircraft with crews suspended 300 feet high in the canopy. They crashed, gone under the top leaves and they were invisible. They were too high up for people to get down and the pilots and crews that survived, starved to death. This was still happening every day because they would get a radio signal saying I'm going down and then they were visually trying to search 500 square miles of rain forest. GPS meant that they could go out and not be afraid of crashing so they were willing to risk their planes and so they shut down a number of these airfields.

The willingness was there. Once they had the equipment they tried but again what they could do was reduce it. Most of these airfields are nothing but a grassy strip someplace and unless they happen to have a plane there at that time, a small plane could fly in, land, they didn't have radar coverage. Everything was makeshift and very poor but the capacity and willingness was there.

Q: Did the collapse of the Soviet Union which happened just towards the end when you were there, have any repercussions?

McGAFFEY: No. Cheddi Jagan didn't believe it which meant that the Indo-Guyanese didn't believe it. The government was too occupied to have it concern them. They were focused on their Caribbean neighbors and on the United States now. Yes, Desmond Hoyte said it made it easier to make his arguments with his cabinet.

Q: Did an ambassador come in while you were there?

McGAFNEY: Yes. Right towards the end, and this was a career mistake on my part, an ambassador was finally named after Guyana rejoined the IMF and the CBI. She named her own DCM but then the State Department asked me to stay on for a few months. I agreed to stay on for four months and it was a very difficult period. It was her first assignment as an ambassador. She had fought her way up against a very sexist Foreign Service and was still in a competition mode with everybody. She felt that I was competition, that her political and economic officers were competition, and that her whole staff was, and she had to prove herself better than anyone else. It was a very difficult period particularly because just before I left we had an inspection and the inspectors came down and were very rough on her. At that time she was thinking of resigning but she did not and now she has gotten another ambassadorial post. I hope that she's learned to be an ambassador and not a competitor.

THERESA A. TULL
Ambassador
Guyana (1987-1990)

Theresa A. Tull was born in New Jersey in 1936. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland in 1972. Her career included positions in Brussels, Vietnam, Washington D.C., Philippines, Laos, and ambassadorships to Guyana and Brunei. Ambassador Tull was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 2004.

Q: Well, then, let's get when you were, you were in Guyana from when to when?

TULL: '87 to '90 and roughly I guess it would have been August.

Q: What was the embassy like, your DCM and how big was it and what were they doing there?

TULL: It was a decent size. Unfortunately I had a DCM who was already on the way out of the service. He had been low ranked, so he was finishing what was going to be his last, well, he maybe got one more tour after that I don't think so. He was known to be a loser. Pleasant, but he knew the handwriting on the wall, too so he wasn't going to kill himself. Pleasant, knowledgeable. I think all told we maybe had about 25 Americans there at that time. We had a large consular section because half of Guyana was trying to immigrate to or visit the States one way or another. It was a horrendous consular load. I think we had five consular officers. We had a USIS operation and a very capable USIS officer, a library, decent programs being run, a nice center there for USIS. I had two economic officers, political officer, security people, a couple of communicators, Marine Guards, the whole nine yards of a decent sized post. We didn't have Peace Corps and we didn't have AID and even though we were administering this PL-480 program which did so much to help the Guyanese.

Q: That had been reinstated after Burnham died.

TULL: After Burnham died, yes, under the initiative of my predecessor.

Q: Who was your predecessor?

TULL: Clint Lauderdale. It was a wonderful thing to have done and he was able to get it organized and it made quite a difference in the lives of the ordinary Guyanese to have flour coming in and they could have bread again and it certainly went a long way toward shaping attitudes, which had been very leftist there, shaping attitudes more favorably toward the U.S. At the time I was there, there was a huge Cuban presence, large Cuban health presence with doctors and nurses. A large Russian presence. A large North Korean presence, very heavy diplomatic presence on the leftist side. There were some elements in the U.S. government some individuals anyway who thought that Burnham was a communist, none of this socialist nonsense, but everything we had indicated no he was not a card carrying communist, he was an extreme left wing socialist who just didn't like the U.S. and if he could get anything from the other side, fine, that would be good. At any rate, we had a decent-sized staff.

Now, what it was like was at that point our embassy was an old wooden house right on the sidewalk of one of the main streets in Georgetown. It was a firetrap, a cigarette, a thrown cigarette would have been our biggest terrorism problem. It was bad. One of the things that had been hanging fire for several years was to build a new embassy in Georgetown. The money had been appropriated and it had been going through the various planning and approval stages. The plan was to build a really beautiful state of the art embassy meeting all of the new security requirements: setbacks, walls, everything and the decision was made before I got there, not that I could have influenced it, but the decision was that they would take the property of the ambassador's compound for this building project. There were two or three houses plus tennis court and swimming pool, plus the ambassador's residence on this plot of ground. The decision was that that would be an ideal place to build this big embassy. They were in the process when I got there of cranking up. A contract had been awarded and the contractor was due about the same time as I was. One of my jobs was going to have to be overseeing the construction of this embassy in a loose way. The ambassador, my predecessor, strongly disliked the ambassador's residence. It was an old Georgetown style colonial house. I thought it was great. It was a big, wooden place with the Georgetown shutters.

Q: Big verandas?

TULL: No, actually the verandas were inside, but you'd open these shutter type things to get good cross ventilation. It had good representation space, but since the theory was that the new embassy was going to be built just about 18 inches from the wall of the residence that they would get another residence and the existing residence would be the headquarters of the contractor and eventually we would tear it down. I believe ultimately the Guyanese government said, no you don't tear that down, it's a historical house. So I don't know what they use it for now. At any rate, Clint Lauderdale and his staff then had to find a residence for me. They did not have very good luck with it. Housing was at a premium in Georgetown so when I first went down I spent the first couple of weeks in the old ambassador's residence until the contractors came because the contractors weren't sleeping there. In fact even after they came for a week maybe I was still there, they would use what had been the living room as their offices and I would be on the

upstairs floor. That's where I started in the old residence and what Clint had in mind was that I would move to the DCM's residence and they got a new residence for the DCM.

I ended up moving over to the DCM's residence, what had been his. I disliked it intensely. It was inappropriate. It was next to a hotel, using the word hotel loosely, more like a boarding house where people would come in from the country on the weekends and carouse and carry on. My residence was only a driveway and an alleyway from this hotel so you'd hear all this noise, the music and everything else. Across the street there was a vacant lot where people dumped their trash and horses occasionally grazed. It was not very nice and that was to be the ambassador's residence. I didn't like that so I checked out the residence that they had found for the DCM and by my standards it was light years better. None of these places met any security requirements for anybody. Everything was right on the curb, no set-backs. This residence that he had found was next to a compound owned by the Guyanese Sugar Company, Guysuco, where they had a couple of guesthouses for their executives and visitors. There were a couple of decent looking houses in a compound with some grass, well-maintained. The house for the DCM was again an old house. Again it wasn't very big, but I was one person and I figured while I was looking for a decent residence that this would serve the purpose. It had, you talk about a veranda, it had a screened in porch. The first room you went into was a screened in porch and then there was a very large living room, dining room combination, just one big room, not air conditioned and there was a kitchen that was adequate and there was as I recall two bedrooms. There might have been two baths. I'm not even sure that there were two baths. The only rooms that we were able to get air conditioners in were the bedrooms. On the ground level, there were pathetic holes in the wall for the servants. They didn't sleep there, but they could rest there during the day and there was a shower, whatever. I looked at that and I thought this is much better because you were on a main street and there was a canal, so naturally you're going to have odors, but there were rice paddies. You had a view. You weren't looking at trash. You weren't hearing all this raucous noise from people coming on weekends. I exercised my prerogative and said, well, that's the house I want compared to what we've got so far. The DCM for some reason, I don't think he wanted to go back to the house that he had been in. I think we gave that to the admin person.

At any rate the DCM eventually found another home, but in the meantime, with all the ramifications of arranging the purchase of this place, getting it painted up, getting it fixed, I lived in five different places as ambassador. I ended up back in the residence for another week or two. They put me in a hotel for a couple of weeks. That was a total disaster because again the noise level was ridiculous. They had one decent hotel in town and this was a so-called decent hotel, using the phrase loosely, The Pegasus, but it ended up not working out. At any rate I finally ended up in this house and I was able to get the Department to cough up a few dollars to get some decent furnishings and it worked out. It worked out for me, not meeting anybody's requirements for security. In the meantime I had my staff looking to see what's available because I resolved I would never do this to my successor. I know its going to take forever to find a decent place, but there's got to be something and to jump through all the hoops that the Department posed would take time. My admin staff launched an effort to find another residence. Anyway, visions of glory of being ambassador and having a nice residence did not apply.

Q: Well, how did you find dealing with the government when you got there? Were there any particular issues?

TULL: I got along, I think I got along pretty well with them. The issues that were high on our list were political reform and economic reform and you don't make a lot of buddies when you're pushing for political reform, but I did so. Likewise we and the British and the Canadians with whom I had marvelous relations, excellent people at that time, we were pushing hard to get the Guyanese to agree to a structural adjustment program under the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund. That was the I'd say the principal focus of my work there, getting them into a structural adjustment program and encouraging political reform by whatever means I could.

My biggest struggle internally with the U.S. government was maintaining the PL-480 program. After this program was established apparently without a great deal of difficulty a new individual, over this desk in USAID in Washington and he had been among the USAID people who had been thrown out of Guyana by Forbes Burnham. There was no way that you could convince him that anything had changed in Guyana and it was ridiculous to have restarted the program and it was going to stop, thank you very much. I had to fight and fight to keep that program. He kept insisting that you can't have that program without a USAID officer on the scene and we don't have any USAID officers to send you so therefore the program is finished. We fought and fought. I would have to go to higher levels and spend a lot of time writing cables and be on the phone trying to get around this guy. If he had been in place when Clint wanted to start the program, I wonder whether we would have gotten started because he just felt nothing had changed. We were all being hoodwinked, nothing will change in Guyana, it's not worth it. I had many heated arguments, impassioned discussions to keep this program going. Now, the USAID people in Barbados would have been very happy to have sent somebody to Guyana. They were anxious to get back in. They could have backstopped, but they were forbidden from doing so, but they offered to get us as much help as they could within their limits.

Fortunately for me the young economic officer I had at post, James Dudley and I suspect he must be going to the top, he was an absolutely superb young man, he handled this program beautifully, capably. He wrote beautifully. Anything you wanted him to do he would do yesterday type thing and yet he had a life. He was not a nerdy type. He was just very capable. If it hadn't been for James, I don't think there was another officer at post who could have kept this program on track. He kept assuring me, no, I can do this. We can keep this program. I can comply with every requirement. I can supervise it adequately. I think throughout my whole tour I had to battle to keep that program. We did keep it, but it was so draining to have to fight with your own bureaucracy when you think that the ambassador's voice should mean something. But USAID had the money, and the USAID officer was the one who's got to sign off to get his bosses to sign off. Anyway, James Dudley, God bless him, he was wonderful because we never did get a resident AID person in, but we did manage to persuade the higher ups in AID that we were not being hoodwinked, that this was a valuable program and we would complete whatever reporting requirements they had.

James was also amazingly competent when it came to everything related to the International Monetary Fund effort, the restructuring the bridge loan. I would take him with me to meet with the Minister of Finance to discuss the developments on this program, how the thing is progressing with the IMF and we could find out what requirements the IMF was levying and James could handle the conversation well. He was the technician. He really was a very capable

young officer. I really hope his career has flowered. At any rate, again I encountered great resistance from AID to having the U.S. help with the bridge loan and the restructuring program because naturally we were one of the big voices behind getting the Guyanese to push into this program so the time came when it was time to put a little money where your mouth was to push the program forward. What a struggle. What an absolute struggle. I think I was able to get \$5 million, but considering it was the United States of America I think that's pretty petty. I think the British and Canadians came up with more.

At any rate the Guyanese did bite the bullet and go into this program and after a lot of battles we were able to get some funding, but it was not as much as I would have liked. AID would have liked to have given like nothing. We made a contribution.

Q: Did you have any contact with AID officials who came in above the rank of your nemesis in the bureau?

TULL: Yes, but it didn't seem to make any difference. Yes, and he would be in the meetings, you see, he would attend the meetings and I'd meet with say the equivalent of a deputy assistant secretary or something. They were kind of, I've never been to Guyana and he's the expert, type thing. We kept the PL-480 AID program, we got the economic restructuring program and it did make a difference for Guyana briefly.

One of the major problems we had was just keeping the embassy and our houses functioning. Guyana was in such drastic shape economically. They had no hard currency to import anything. If you needed a doorknob for a house we'd have to get it from Miami. It was pathetic. After this program got started, they did get their credit back and suddenly you saw there were a few things on the shelves in the stores. I mean you would go into a major, they had one major government department store and you'd see a few ratty looking Chinese tee shirts and a couple of handmade things from the Indians in the boondocks, but you would not see consumer goods to speak of. It was really pathetic. We imported our food. We had a small commissary, which we had the Canadians and British use, too to built up the volume, but we would get our food from Miami largely. After this program you started to see an improvement. Definitely there was an improvement in what was available for people to buy. It made a difference.

Q: Was there any concern about the workings of at that time it would be the Soviets and the Cubans?

TULL: Oh, on our part, yes. I had of course a CIA presence and they were looking into the activities of the Cubans, Russians and North Koreans because you didn't have many opportunities to see what they were up to. Yes, we saw a bit of what they were doing. As I say the Cubans were primarily in health care. The Russians were supporting Cheddi Jagan, but as I say he was a card carrier, there's no question about that. He would go off on his vacations to the Black Sea every year.

Q: Did you have any contact with Cheddi Jagan or his wife who was an American from Chicago?

TULL: Yes, oh definitely. He was the leader of the opposition and my attitude was he was a functioning politician. I paid a courtesy call on him when I arrived, flags flying on the car. I figured every move I made was going to be watched, so I would make it easy for the Guyanese. I would call on him and had some good talks. A charming man, very bright. He went to Howard University. He was a dentist and he still practiced as a dentist when I was there in Guyana. His wife as you say was from Chicago and she was a Jewish woman and a lot of people say she was the real communist in the marriage and that she had gotten him more interested in communism. She reportedly led him into the communist party and he was quite happy there. He was quite charming. If I had a major function I would invite him. I had the country's president and the prime minister and I had Cheddi and other people. That's the job of an ambassador. You don't cut out the opposition, so I saw him a reasonable amount of times.

Q: What about the Cuban representation, they were off limits for you weren't they?

TULL: Yes. Cubans and the North Koreans.

Q: Did that prove awkward at all?

TULL: Well, you know you go to diplomatic corps luncheons and they would be there and I would go, too. I just wouldn't sit next to them. I've got a tray here somewhere that was the standard farewell gift of the Diplomatic Corps to departing ambassadors. I think it has the North Korean and the Cuban ambassador's names engraved, together with those of all the ambassadors there when I served. But I had plenty on my plate without trying to duplicate what the CIA was doing.

Q: This was obviously a very critical time in Europe where the Berlin Wall was falling. Did that have any repercussions in your area?

TULL: No, I don't think so. The main difference it made related political liberalization. We were pushing for that, and I warned the State Department to now bear in mind that if there's truly a free election, Cheddi Jagan will win and you will have a communist in charge of the government, but the Soviet Union is weakening. They're not giving him the support they did. The Soviet Union is almost over, you know, so, but bear in mind that with a free election you're going to end up with a communist president in Guyana. When they did, when the Soviet Union did collapse and I think that pretty well ended any financial help that Jagan got from them.

Throughout my tour I encouraged the president, Desmond Hoyte, to think along political liberalization lines. I was there about three years and toward the end of my tour they were gearing up for an election and by this time I think I had irritated him enough with my occasional references to how good it would be to have a free election and that he might want to consider inviting international observers to witness the election. During my final courtesy call, my farewell call, I mentioned to him the possibility that the Carter Center could be approached to come down and observe the election which was going to be in maybe six months after I left and he said, "No, if there are going to be any international observers, I'll have them from CARICOM" (that's the Caribbean community of which Guyana was a member). "If we had anybody it would only be from CARICOM." I said, "Well, that would be fine. Of course the

United Nations sends observers.” “No, no it would just be CARICOM.” I said, “Okay, just keep in the back of your mind that President Carter’s Center does do elections. They’ve done it in many countries around the world and his center’s statement that it’s a good election certainly gives a lot of prestige to the country that conducted it.” He was not happy with this presentation, but at any rate, I did it anyway, it was my job. As I say he was a decent man and as it turned out when they did have the election maybe six months later, maybe even later, the Carter Center did go down. I think CARICOM as well, but he did admit the Carter Center and it was a free election without a lot of nastiness. Some little bit of I don’t want to say violence, that’s too strong, a little bit of rowdiness, maybe rough housing by some of the supporters of the black politicians. Cheddi Jagan won clearly, there’s no question about it, and he was not enthusiastic about all the economic reforms that had been introduced. We knew that would be the case, so he dragged his feet on it and it didn’t achieve everything that we would have liked. It was a little better in terms of goods coming in and anyway they got the president that they wanted and he served for a couple of terms and I believe I’ve lost touch, but I believe his wife succeeded him when he died. And President Hoyte accepted the election results and became the leader of the opposition.

Q: I’m not sure.

TULL: Yes, Janet Jagan, she was in the parliament and I believe she actually succeeded him. I believe to this day they still have an Indian as the president.

Guyana was fascinating. You should know a little bit about the history of the place. The British I believe got it from the Dutch in one of these wars and of course the British promptly imported blacks from Africa to grow sugar and things of that nature. Then the British freed the slaves in about 1831, well before we did and there was some thought that the blacks would then become paid laborers on these estates, but that wasn't what the British had in mind. They imported indentured servants, a type of mini-slave from India and also got people from Portugal, China to come over on seven-year contracts as indentured servants. The Indians came in the largest number. The Indians tended to stay on the sugar and later rice plantations. The Chinese and Portuguese went into business after they had finished their term and much of the business community was of Portuguese descent, Chinese descent and a few Indians who left the fields. But the blacks benefited from an excellent education system that the British put in so they got good educations and ended up going into government, police work, the professions, whereas the Indians in the early stages preferred to keep to their own culture and stay on the plantations. This accounts to a certain degree why when the country became independent you had this very articulate, capable black professional class who had participated in government, knew all about it and saw themselves as the natural leaders -- even though I believe by this time I think the Indian populations exceeded that of the black. But Cheddi Jagan was the exception -- a politically active professional type Indian. He organized the workers and I’m going to say it was the rice plantations, I don’t think it was sugar, it might have been sugar, but at any rate he was a union leader although he was a dentist, but that was his base, the agricultural worker. That was the background you had there. The Indians had not taken great advantage of the education system.

The Guyanese people were charming. They were so likable, so intelligent and I’m talking primarily I guess of the blacks who were the ones who were mostly in government, but I certainly met many articulate, charming Indians as well. One man whom I would have liked to

have seen be successful in politics organized, developed, and ran a rum distilling company. Just was a top-notch person. It was a very interesting mix of people there.

Q: Did you get out beyond Georgetown? I mean was there much out there to go to?

TULL: Yes. Getting out was very difficult. The British in their colonial period had focused on the coast and roads tended to go east west along the coast. There was even a railroad at one point that went east-west across the coast. I think it went into disuse under Burnham. But getting into the interior was very difficult. There are some beautiful rivers: the Essequibo River, the Demerara River were north-south flowing rivers and getting out from the coast was tricky. Yes, I did get out a few times, more than a few times, whenever I could. They had some fabulous trees, lumber and of course it would break your heart if it were done to excess because the Amazonian type forests are so beautiful, but they had certain types of wood, green heart and purple heart, very strong, durable wood. I got to know a businessman in the lumber business who was of Belgian descent. He and his family had been in the country for generations. He had a thriving lumber business along the Essequibo River, a beautiful arrangement there that he had built and developed through the years with his family and he took me down to his facility a couple of times on his private plane. This was the only way I could have gotten there so whether the Department would have approved or not, if you wanted to see what the lumbering industry is like, you accepted the offer. I went with him and spent a delightful weekend in his home with his wife right next to the river. It was just great. So, I did that a few times. A couple of times with the British high commissioner and his wife.

An Indian gentleman took me and a deputy assistant secretary who was visiting at the time to his rice plantation, again on his private plane. On a couple of occasions I got together with a couple of other ambassadors and we hired for pleasure an airplane to take us to Kaieteur Falls which are absolutely magnificent. They're higher than Niagara, not as wide, but high. Absolutely gorgeous. The only way to get there is to fly. Then on a couple of occasions I was able to get down to the Rupununi, again with the British high commissioner and the Canadian and his wife and my sister who was visiting. We took a few days vacation and flew down to the Rupununi, which is the southern area adjacent to, it borders on Brazil and there was a ranch there that I had read about in a book years ago before I had gone to Guyana by Durrell, Gerald Durrell, he was an expert zoologist and biologist. He had written a book about going to this particular spot. I forget the name of it. We all had it in our heads okay we're going to go to this ranch. We had heard that the daughter of the man who had run it when Durrell had gone, had reactivated it and was very anxious to get some cash customers there. We went there, interesting, but what a disaster. She was not equipped to handle visitors, but it was an interesting experience to see what life was like in the boondocks.

On another occasion I was able to go out with a U.S. military group that was down in the Rupununi doing some work. That's another aspect of the activities that I should get into a little bit. I was anxious to strengthen ties between the U.S. and Guyana in whatever way I could. Maintain the PL-480 program, get them in a structural adjustment program with some U.S. aid, encourage political liberalization, but also see if we could restart military to military ties, I had established good relations with their chairman of the joint chiefs and his deputy. I got in touch with SOUTHCOM who were then based in Panama. They were fishing around to see if there

were other areas where they could do some training activities. I arranged a visit by a three star general, General Woerner, head of SOUTHCOM. It was a big success. He came down and the Guyanese were thrilled to get this kind of high level attention. They wined and dined him and took him around and it was quite a success for a couple of days. While he was there we arranged for military missions to come down on training activities with the Guyanese military.

Q: We used a lot of National Guard engineer units and all to go down and do things in Latin America for one thing.

TULL: I'm not sure who these folks were. I think they were regular army. I think these people were regular army. There were two focuses principally that the Guyanese wanted and that our people were more than happy to deal with. One was well drilling. Certain villages needed wells and it was good training for our folks to come down and go to work in a relatively remote village and dig a well and leave water and good will behind them. Also, health missions. Medical as well as dental. For our folks the more remote they could get the better. This one trip I remember particularly it was down in the Rupununi area, not as far south as I had been with the ranch that had turned into such a fiasco, but it was pretty significantly down there and our folks, our military was delighted because they got to bring helicopters and to fly their people in and set up in the boondocks, you know, get all the training that they could get. From the standpoint of the Guyanese it was good because our military set up a medical clinic, dental clinic. I enjoyed so much dealing with our military. They were so professional and so enthusiastic. They were so delighted to be in Guyana, isn't this great, you know, a change for them and good training experience and afterwards I was fascinated. They told me that in the Rupununi many of their clients, their patients were ethnic Indians from the various groups that had been there forever and ever like the Caribs and the Wai Wai. The Indians would walk for hours to get to the clinic and they said what struck them was the fact that these people who were maybe just in their early '40s from what they could determine, one of their principal problems was arthritis and probably because of walking up and down these hills and mountains all the time. The patients were thrilled to get anything and our people were glad to get the experience. That really made some good contacts.

Q: Were there any, did Guyana have any border problems?

TULL: Oh, yes. Venezuela still claims about a third of Guyana. If you go to Venezuela and look at a map which I did before I went to Guyana, I remember being in a Venezuelan government office on a tour I took before going down and they had the map and it shows I think it shows Venezuela being all the way over to the Essequibo River which of course is not the case. I believe that the final border was fixed by Teddy Roosevelt, although Venezuela still resists it.

Q: We almost went to war with Great Britain. It was a very nasty thing. I think this was the, was it the?

TULL: We did an arbitration in the early 20th Century.

Q: Yes, but the British and the Americans got into this. I guess this was the Roosevelt proviso or something like that. I got a question on my written exam. This was back when I took the three and a half-day Foreign Service exam.

TULL: Oh my gosh.

Q: I didn't know what the hell they were talking about, but I had to write on something. It was Venezuela, the crisis. I think it was called the Roosevelt proviso, anyway we invoked the Monroe Doctrine and the British said don't do it. Anyway.

TULL: I'm surprised because the border dispute was resolved I believe by Teddy Roosevelt. I don't think he was president at the time. It's rolling around in the back of my brain that he resolved it. I don't know why the British would have opposed it because it gave Guyana a good chunk of what Venezuela thought was theirs.

Q: I'm not sure they proposed, but they were, something was going on there.

TULL: Butt out or stay out, whatever. Oh, no Venezuela would like a nice chunk of Guyana, but the relations were good when I was there. I don't know what its like now with Chavez.

Q: How about Brazil?

TULL: I wasn't aware of any real problems, border problems there.

Q: Did you ever get up to Jonestown or was this the place everybody didn't even want to talk about it?

TULL: No. We knew where it was, but there was nothing there. They didn't turn it into any kind of a memorial or anything. I wouldn't have touched it with a 10-foot pole, no way. It wouldn't appeal. From everything I gathered, there was nothing there. There was nothing there to see. I got out a fair amount. I did establish good ties with some government ministers and some private business people, things of that nature and got around a fair amount, but I was very pleased with the way we were able to resume military ties.

Q: Did you get any high level visits at all?

TULL: No. The highest level was this three star SOUTHCOM commander. I had a deputy assistant secretary I think that was it. I don't think anybody higher than that came that I remember. One little aside that I found was interesting; a very powerful figure in Guyana at that time was the head of their national police who was also the head of their secret police, sort of the CIA equivalent. He was the principal contact of my station chief. He happened to be very good friends with the general who was in charge of the armed forces, the equivalent of the Joint Chiefs of Staff commander. Well, I had only met the police fellow once or twice, he had quite a reputation. I did know the general pretty well. At a reception I was at the general said to me, "Ambassador, I hear that you play bridge." I said, "Yes, I enjoy bridge." (That's another thing I did. I'd play bridge and you play with average people, business people, you wouldn't just be

locked in with a narrow crowd. You'd learn a lot about what was going on in the countries over a bridge table.) I love bridge. I said, "Yes, I play, I'm not that great, but I play." "I like to play" he says, "I like to play, but I'm not that good. Could you play sometime?" "Yes, I'd like to do that." He says, "Oh, good." He says, "So and so and I, he wants to play, too." It was the secret police fellow. I said, "Oh, that would be fine. Yes, well, where would you want to do it? I can get somebody else to make a fourth." He said, "I have the fourth. Mrs. So and So. She's my wife's friend. We've played a couple times. You've met her." I said, "Yes, I have." Anyway, we established that we'd get together at my home the following Wednesday night. Well, it was kind of cute because I got a call from my station chief saying, "I understand so and so is going to come and play bridge with you." I said, "Yes. Do you play bridge?" He says, "No." I said, "Oh, well, I'm looking forward to it. I'm playing with so and so." He says, "Yes, I know." I said, "Well, you're welcome to come over if you want. You can kibitz." "Oh, okay, maybe I would." We got together and he got absolutely bored to death. He could see that we were just sitting there playing bridge and anyway, so, "well if you don't mind I think I'll go. I promised my wife, blah, blah." So, he went off. We had such a good time with these games and I never asked a single question. We stayed completely on bridge. I thought here's an opportunity for the police chief to see me with my fangs removed. This is the nasty woman who is meeting with the opposition and Jesuit priests who are opposed to the government and we'll just see how it flows. We had a great time because these two men were so aggressive in their bridge. You know bridge; you can be aggressive if you've got the cards. They frequently didn't have the cards and they got were funny. They couldn't stand to have me and my partner take a bid on a few occasions. They would bid higher and I would say, "Double." Well, we set them. It was so funny to see their reaction. They would be so annoyed, but they'd laugh. I went out to this man's home a couple of times on a Sunday afternoon for bridge and I went to the general's house and it really helped establish a relationship. I did not use the occasion to say, are you going to crack down on the demonstrators, you know, nothing, this was social. I think it served me well, as well as being fun.

Q: You mentioned the Jesuit priests. Was the church a factor there?

TULL: There was a group of Jesuits who had been a real factor in the opposition to Forbes Burnham, opposing his brutality and lack of freedoms and absence of human rights. This one elderly Jesuit, I think he was British. They were known to be opponents in the sense that they were seeking human rights and free elections. In fact during the Forbes Burnham period, a priest who was a dead ringer for this priest literally became a "dead ringer". He was murdered on the streets of Georgetown about a block from the rectory where he was staying. He had come in from another country to visit and went out at night, not late, and he resembled this man. Thugs came and killed him. The Jesuits didn't have a lot of warm feelings towards the Guyanese government, but they were also a source of some information and I also felt that they could use a little protection in the sense of letting the government know that the American Embassy knew these people existed and valued their views. I met with them a couple of times and occasionally on a Sunday night I would go and play scrabble with them. With the official car, you know, the whole routine. I never did anything surreptitiously. I always let the government see what I was up to. The Jesuits were an opposition element in a subdued way. They were pretty bitter having had one of their people murdered.

Q: Were there student demonstrations or things of this nature going on?

TULL: No, not at all. Not at all. When I was there, I never heard of any thuggeries or murders perpetrated by the Hoyte regime, if it was taking place I was unaware of it and I did have pretty wide-ranging contacts. The biggest problem, the worst part of all, was the economic disaster. Guyana was regarded as having some of the finest bauxite in the world and they had gold, but the big crops were rice and sugar. The sugar was highly prized in England, but at any rate the biggest thing was bauxite. At the time of nationalization, the Burnham government did a few smart things. They entered into an agreement to repay the companies that they were expropriating and they maintained a payment schedule. One of the companies was Reynolds of the U.S. and I believe Alcan a Canadian group. But with the best intent in the world, you know, this group of unqualified government officials were incapable of maintaining the bauxite mines and therefore, hard currency became extremely scarce. The electricity grid went down. Terrible. They didn't have enough money to import enough oil to keep the generators going. It was terrible. It was just an awful situation. You would go with massive power outages a day two and a half days at a time. Of course it would shut down the mine, too. If they were trying to keep the mine open they'd shut down the grid elsewhere and get the power going into the mines. It was just so unnecessary and so sad. While I was there Reynolds came down and one of their executives, a very nice man, came down to see if there were opportunities for more investment with the Guyanese and he did generate some. There was also a company that came in to try to do something about the power situation. It was terrible. Eventually the embassy was able to get generators for every house. That meant of course buying gasoline, diesel I guess to run the generators. It meant noise. It meant the neighbors weren't happy because they didn't have generators and oh, gosh, it was just an awful situation to deal with. It was such a shame.

On one occasion, I think I was on leave in the States so I missed the worst of it, but they had a massive shutdown for two or three days and if you don't have power, you don't have water coming into the pipes. You can't flush toilets, or any of that. The water situation had gotten so bad, now here my general friend did a smart move. He sent army tanker trucks filled with water into the neighborhoods in Guyana and let people bring their buckets and fill up from the army tankers to try to keep the peace. They were on the brink of riots and it was over water and power, principally water. On this occasion the Department very smartly because I hadn't been there for the worst of it, and they said if I asked for it they would authorize an additional R&R for my staff which I did ask for and it was granted so they were able to get out again. It was a hard post. A hard post. It was hard enough for me, but I had the enthusiasm of my job to get me through. It was hard for me, but if you were a regular staffer and particularly if you had little kids it was awful. Really difficult. It's the worst living situation I've ever had.

DENNIS HAYS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Georgetown (1988-1992)

Ambassador Hays was born into a US Navy family and was raised in the United States and abroad. He was educated at the University of Florida and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1975, he spent the major portion of his

career dealing with Latin American, particularly Mexican and Cuban, Affairs. He also served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Burundi, and from 1997 to 2000 as U.S. Ambassador to Surinam. Ambassador Hays was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2001.

Q: I actually heard the group play in his house here in Arlington. He was in charge of the Senior Seminar at that time. In 1988 where did you go?

HAYS: From there I got a call. I wanted to stay overseas for another tour and I was interested in being a DCM or better yet, chargé, someplace. I think I made my third attempt at Antigua which was still a post, a chargé level mission. My old friend Gene Scassa was back in ARA (American Republic Affairs). One day he called and said, "Hey, I've got just the job for you, you'll love it" which was Georgetown as DCM. I found out later that there had been a couple of people lined up for that, and they had all bailed out. I was an 03 when I moved into the DCM job in Burundi which was a 02 slot and I was an 02 at that point and this was an 01 slot. So it was a nice stretch assignment and I did it. I went off to Georgetown.

Q: Guyana in those days was tough. It was about ten years after Jonestown.

HAYS: This was about the only reason that most people would recognize the name. When I got there, there was almost no electricity in the capital. Literally, you'd go days without electricity, and at that point we really didn't have generators in individual houses. It was raining all the time, the humidity was 110%, everything had fungus on it, the phones didn't work, the mail didn't arrive. The embassy was a 120 year old wooden structure that creaked and groaned, and the guys from FBO (Foreign Buildings Operation) Fire said, "Seven minutes from the first match to the last ash." That would be the total time. You couldn't get much food in the markets. It was tough. I remember getting there and moving into the bare house, what became the DCM residence, and the first night was sort of fun because we had candles and my kids were pretty young then and I read stories to them by candlelight. It was sort of fun; the second night less fun, and the third night no fun at all. It was difficult. It was a morale factor, obviously. We had a pretty big mission there, because there was a large consular section. Some of the first tour officers would come into this wretched, dilapidated building and spend hours upon hours every day having people beseech them for non-immigrant visas.

Q: Other than survival and daily coping with these conditions, what sort of role did the embassy have in Guyana? You mentioned there was a large influx from Guyana into United States.

HAYS: A lot of outflow is what there was from Guyana. Canada was still the favorite point of destination because there had been a pattern there earlier for the Guyanese. They called it the eleventh province (ten in Guyana and the eleventh of Canada). The twelfth would have been the United States. But increasingly it was shifting primarily to New York although the upper class Guyanese tended to go to South Florida, to Miami and that area. So that was a big part of what we did, the consular stuff. When I was getting my briefings, Guyana was perceived to be in a transition. Guyana, of course, is one of these anomalies of colonialism where the two major population groups are Afro-Guyanese of African descent and Indo-Guyanese of subcontinent descent, and the two political parties split roughly along those racial lines.

There had been Cheddi Jagan, a name from years before who was a communist. That's what he was, and his wife who was an American citizen or born an American was also a communist, in fact, more of a communist than he was. The Indian population was slightly bigger than the African population. Cheddi and his party were convinced that they were robbed, and they may well have been, in '64 when the British who were unhappy – and we were unhappy – with his direction set up another election, and it worked out that the opposition party came in led by Forbes Burnham. There was a third party actually which was the party of everybody else, primarily Portuguese who had come up via Brazil and also Chinese and the business community. So they were kind of the third group, but at that particular point they identified with the Afro party.

Burnham went from horseback riding with LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson) at the ranch to becoming a traditional strongman, one-party, flirting with Castro and other anti-democratic types and then holding a series of rigged elections to make sure that he stayed in power. A couple years before I got there Burnham, who would be president today if he'd had anything to say about it, went in for relatively minor surgery on his throat. Castro had sent his very best doctor to do this operation, and the operation was a success. Unfortunately, Burnham died in the recovery room from a heart attack. And among other things, they got the Cuban doctor out of the country before they announced this. They were afraid people would think he had assassinated him, and they might go after him. They weren't sure that was going to happen.

Burnham, like a lot of these guys, rotated his number two. He'd let somebody be number two for a while until they actually started having their own power base, and then he would move them out. So the guy who was number two at this particular moment was a man named Desmond Hoyte. There were very low expectations in the international community for him. He was seen as Burnham light. He wasn't going to really do much, just hold on to the power or be pushed aside by one of the other strongmen in the party. I have a pretty clear memory of doing my briefings around town here, and at that point, and there was some acceptance that maybe he would do something in the economic area because he had wanted some economic reforms, but low expectations that he would do anything in the political area. In fact, Hoyte did a lot in his time starting with the economic then also leading to political reforms. This, in turn, led to elections, free and fair elections, which eventually he lost, and he stepped aside. Subsequent to that, people said he's not playing as helpful a political opposition role as he might. But my experience is with him up to that point.

The country had invited in the Carter Center for the election process, and there was a lot of concern because of prior electoral fraud. People can be very creative when it comes to electoral fraud, and there was zero trust between the two sides. There had been violence in the past, certainly around elections, but also ethnic cleansing in the sense of driving people out. You would have an Afro village and an Indo village and people would overlap. Someone would say no, you, whichever side it is, need to get out of here and move, and there were campaigns of rape and beatings and things to enforce this over the years. So there was lots of hostility built into the system on top of mistrust.

What it came down to was the voters' lists and IDs. Both sides were convinced the other side was going to pad the vote in their stronghold areas. And so they had to come up with a system of identity cards that would be foolproof or close to it, and a system for voting so people could only vote once and you couldn't bring in ringers or what have you. That took a real long time. Carter came down a couple of times. I have great respect for his negotiating skills, because I sat there in the room and watched him. Hoyte, to give him credit, realized that the country needed to get out from under this cloud. The only way that was going to happen was to have an election that would be accepted by us and the Brits and the international community by extension. So when it came down to the hard questions he went ahead and did them much to the distress of the hard wing of his party who said, "Hey it's worked for 25 years, why are we changing it now? Why are we arguing with success?" So again I don't think he gets enough credit. Buyoya, for his many faults, took the country through an election, he lost and he stepped aside. What more do you want from somebody under these circumstances?

Q: What year was this election?

HAYS: The process started in 1990, and then it picked up in 1991. They were scheduled for the fall of 1991, and then they were postponed again and again and again. I left in June 1992. They finally took place in October of 1992.

Q: So the first couple of years you were there Desmond Hoyte was in charge and not yet facing the elections but allowed the country to come to that point. Why don't you say a few words about what he did on the economic side that seemed to work?

HAYS: Burnham had picked and chosen from various statist models; there wasn't any real pattern except that he wanted to make sure that he had control or a piece of everything that happened. So the cabinet was emasculated. They would have their little fiefdom but only with him watching over them to the extent that no one was getting more than he thought they should get along the way. There were disincentives; there was a presumption that any foreign investment was rapacious capitalism at its worst and to be avoided. Who needed them? We have a lush nation, we can grow everything we want, we've made it for 500 years without eating apples so why do we need these apples when we have grapefruit and tangelos and everything else? And so it was sort of that North Korean system of self-sufficiency. So Hoyte started breaking that down by streamlining the process, by traveling to the States and elsewhere to say come take a look.

Bauxite, of course, is one of the big industries. There was an interest in oil at this time in Guyana . It was right next door to Venezuela, and so there must be oil someplace. And the import sector had also been very restricted. There was a whole list of items that could not be imported. They were not considered necessary for a struggling socialist nation to have. So he started crossing things off. Not all at once, because I think that would've been more than the system could have taken, but little by little every six months or so there would be a revised list would come out with fewer things that were banned. More consumer goods started showing up. There was interest from the fast food industry; KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) was sniffing around at this point. They're always the first guys in.

The press had suffered considerably under Burnham. In fact, the only quasi-opposition was the Catholic newspaper which was a once a week if they were lucky, sometimes once a month, four-page tabloid. They would mostly hand them out in churches. When Hoyte came in there was a guy named David de Caires who was of Portuguese descent, a businessman, and he went to Hoyte and said, "In your speech you said you did not believe in restrictions on the press. Do you mean that?" And he said, yes, and de Caires said, OK, I'm going to start the press. It wasn't that easy. In fact, what David did is he would do the editorial and stuff and send it out to Trinidad where they would print it, and they would then fly it into the country once every other week at first and then once a week. In the initial going, there are always people who don't get the word and he had shipments that were seized, shipments that got lost, all kinds of things. He persevered, although there were harassment issues and problems. By the time I arrived it was up to twice a week, and by the time I left they were at four times a week and shortly thereafter I think they went to daily.

Q: Still printing in Trinidad?

HAYS: About a year after I got there they set up production facilities in Guyana. So they did print it. (Starbuck News was David's paper.) The Chronicle, the government newspaper, was nothing but a propaganda sheet at this point because it was still controlled by the ideologues in the party and so there wasn't much hope for that one.

Q: Did Hoyte, again on the economic side, manage to get the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank?

HAYS: They came through. They had conditionality on everything, and he met most of it, not all of it. There was a lot of back and forth and negotiating. The country would get some money, but not all. Again, not everything worked well. There was an American group, Batavia, who were interested in doing something with the electrical system. Again I mentioned at the beginning this sort of problems. I took a tour of the main electrical plant one time, and there was a bank of control panels there and I looked at it and all the indicators are at zero. And I say, how does this work? And he goes, "Walk around the back of that." So I walked around to the back, and the wires that were coming out of the control panel were all cut.

Q: Venezuela was next door and Surinam was on the other side, and I guess Brazil is the third neighbor. Why don't you talk a little bit about that relationship with the neighbors, in particular the question of oil in the economic context?

HAYS: If you look at the map of Venezuela, they always have the zone of reclamation which is about 2/3 of Guyana going all the way over to the Essequibo River. There was a treaty in 1899 between the Venezuelans and the British on that point, but the Venezuelans never accepted that arrangement so they still consider Guyana all the way to the Essequibo to be their territory. If you look on the other side with the Surinamese, there is what's called the New River Triangle. The way the border was set between the two countries was that one of the early explorers basically said the right branch of the river here seems to be the bigger one so the border goes this way. In fact, he was wrong; the other branch was the major branch of the river, and so you have a triangle of land which has been in dispute and actually fought over a long time. So if you took

what Surinam claims and what Venezuela claims you're left with about 30% of the land mass. The other thing that's happening, of course, is that while the Brazilians recognize there's no dispute over where the border is, they don't necessarily see it as anything other than just another river which you can cross and go over. So there's a fairly massive migration that's occurring from the northern part of Brazil up into Guyana. It's sort of thing that Brazil stops where the Brazilians stop.

Q: That's part of the Amazon River development, I suppose?

HAYS: Yes. It's a very serious problem for all these small countries along there because in 30 or 40 years if current trends continue the bottom half or 2/3 of the country is going to basically be Brazil. It'll be Portuguese speaking people who believe they are Brazilians rather than having any loyalty to say to Guyana or Surinam or French Guyana.

One of the sociological issues is that there's no manifest destiny in the Guyanese or the Surinamese either, for that matter, in the sense of if they think they need to go make a life for themselves, they want to go to New York or want to go to Holland or to go wherever. They do not want to go into the interior and homestead, or set up a business or go into logging. This is seen as something you do and then you come back to the cities. The population of Guyana was 800 or 900,000, but they were losing 1% per year net through emigration. If that were turned around and these people were going south, you would have a much more bustling economy and economic development.

Q: Let's review what constituted the U.S. mission in Georgetown in 1992. Who was the ambassador? There were a lot of junior officers; were they all doing consular work?

HAYS: I seem to have a knack for picking posts that were identified as the worst in the Foreign Service in terms of living conditions and overall ambiance. Georgetown fit into that pattern. The embassy was housed in a 100 year old plus house that was very creaky. That's what we dealt with. At one point the ambassador's secretary happened to look up at the suspended ceiling which seemed to be bulging and figured there was some water damage. GSO (General Services Office) came up and found that the floor above her was bulging. The Agency had a five-drawer safe that was literally coming through the floor and would have not only crushed her but would have taken her straight down to the ground floor had it happened. Anyway, the embassy was actually pretty good sized; we had a very large consular section. Guyana is a visa mill – both immigrant and non-immigrant visas – and it occupies a lot of people's time. Also when I got there, there was a USIS (United States Information Service) program, and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) had a few things going on. There was the usual gamut of embassy-type functions. We had an RSO, we had a building program because the new office building was under way at that point. It was a major effort and was one of the first of a series of post-Beirut embassies that were built up to the international world-wide standards which for Guyana was quite an effort.

Q: That's particularly on the security side in terms of set back and so on?

HAYS: That's correct. Remember Georgetown is built on mud flats, and so when you build a building out of that amount of concrete and rebar, the first thing you have to worry about is that it will just sink into the mud and disappear. So we ended up with 90 foot steel pilings that were driven. The first year was just putting all of that down to get into the hard clay. Interestingly, the Soviets were building an embassy about a mile and a half up the coast from us, and they used wooden poles of about 60 feet. The problem was that the hard clay started about 70 to 90 feet, and so effectively what they did was to have pilings attached to nothing and they did nothing for them. As soon as they moved into their building, it started cracking and splitting. So I do have to admit, for the money, we had a pretty solid building.

Q: I just read an article recently in the Foreign Service Journal by the wife of the current ambassador there, and she said that she liked to walk along the waterfront. If it wasn't for the sea wall, the sea would be well into the city of Georgetown.

HAYS: It is actually below high tide. The city was laid out by the Dutch – at various times the Dutch and British swapped – and they had a gravity-feed system where the water would drain out of the city at low tide and you would have a sea wall with a system of sluice gates that would prevent the water from coming in during high tide. Unfortunately, shortly after independence the government decided that they could use mechanical means to pump the water, electrical power, and so they didn't need the gravity feed. They stopped cleaning all the system of canals, and so then naturally, when the electricity stopped and they had no gravity feed system, the city started flooding regularly two or three feet deep, knee deep to hip deep, at high tide.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about U.S. interests in Guyana at that time? Were there many American firms? You mentioned bauxite. Oil? The Venezuelan fields are nearby. How about American tourism?

HAYS: Practically no tourism. With some of these countries you really had to work to get there. There was a recent article in the Washington Post about two Guyanese sisters who have started up an airline now to New York. They have a charter flight that goes back and forth. In my day, the national airline, Guyana Airways, had one old 707. In fact, it was the last 707 in the world in commercial service. You'd get on, and it would sort of rattle and you'd see bolts coming out of the ceiling. It was an experience any time you got on it.

Q: Did it fly to New York?

HAYS: It flew to New York. New York was the spot. That's where the Guyanese migration pattern shifted to. Toronto was a big area also. But New York is the hugely desired entry point into the United States for the Guyanese. Bauxite was a major product. There had been bad blood and ill will between the American companies and the Guyanese government over the years and if they had not actually nationalized, they had pushed out the door various companies. By the time I got there some of the companies were thinking about coming back. Reynolds, in particular, I remember was interested in getting back into a mine it had run in years past, but it was difficult to deal with the government because it was hard to get decisions made at any level. Oil, everyone who is an expert in oil says you have to have oil since you are next to Venezuela. They kept looking but had trouble finding it. There were American companies looking for oil that identified,

through some process, this spot in the middle of the Amazon way down in the south part of the country that turned out not to be economically viable. To do the test wells, it was impossible to get to the site from Guyana and so what they did was to go over to Venezuela. Then they drove along a road that would get you down to Brazil and there was another road that would kind of bring you across. Then they had to reinforce a bridge and clear a road up through the jungle. So it was quite an effort. Ultimately, it did not pan out that it would be economically feasible to continue.

The Guyanese believe, as sort of a part of the built in paranoia they had, that everybody wants a big chunk of their country, the Venezuelans claimed about 60% of their country; Surinam claims about 10% of the country. So they're always aware that their neighbors' maps include the vast bulk of their land. This plays out in interesting ways; one of the reasons that Jonestown was located where it was is because Forbes Burnham, the then leader, thought it would be a good idea to have a thousand Americans on the border with Venezuela so that in case of attack the United States would be pulled into the discussion or the fight. That's one of the reasons why it's located there.

Q: Jonestown happened ten years or so before you were there. Were there any residual effects?

HAYS: Not much. My first year there we came up on the tenth anniversary which we thought would be a bigger thing than it was in terms of the international press. NBC sent a team over but they didn't do a lot. Only one Guyanese died in the Jonestown itself although some died later. The last victim if you will was the Guyanese ambassador to the United States who in a murder-suicide died four or five months afterwards. One of the things Jones had done – if you remember his pattern, he started out very popular and then the dark side would come forward and he would have to move. So he went from a small town in Indiana to Indianapolis to San Francisco to Oakland to Guyana, and he was negotiating with the Soviets about moving to the Crimea. He felt he was still a little too close to the CIA and the FBI, the people who were going to get him. So this paranoia kept everybody away. He had a system whereby he was exempt from customs and immigration inspection. He could bring ships up and unload them. He could do whatever he wanted to. One of the ways he kept control was that he had two demographic routes; the bulk of his followers tended to the older pension age African-Americans and then he had a younger people, the enforcer group of men and, of course, a younger group of women who he would attach to targets in the Guyanese government or elsewhere. In the United States he had the same pattern, and he would exercise control over those people through the women. And that was the case with the ambassador, to whom one of the women who had been attached and who was involved in the murder-suicide.

Q: Did that happen in Guyana or Washington?

HAYS: In Washington, DC. The Venezuelans would alternately rattle the cage and make soothing noises. One of the theories at the time was that Guyana was just going to depopulate itself because there were so many people leaving the country. I think there was a net minus 1% despite a high fertility rate because people were leaving mostly for the States and Canada but also for England or Australia or the Caribbean or wherever. The Guyanese in years past had had a very good education system, and in fact, if you go through the Caribbean, through the islands,

and you look at who is president of the insurance company or the auditor general, or the head of the medical school, chances were pretty good that they would be Guyanese or of Guyanese origin.

Q: Or trained in Guyana?

HAYS: Mostly Guyanese who would then go out and find opportunities elsewhere. So the Venezuelan strategy was, I think, to prevent anything from increasing the hold the Guyanese had on their territory so they would object to any kind of massive development or investment in the area. A few rice farmers, some eco-tourism, fine, but if someone discovered oil in that area, the feeling was that the Venezuelans would object and perhaps more.

Q: During the period you were there they had full diplomatic relations with Venezuela?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: But that was really the concern more on the Venezuelan side than the Guyanese who presumably felt that they were on the lower end and had this large, monstrous neighbor?

HAYS: They had a large army which was much better equipped. The chief of staff of the Guyanese army had a big map on his wall of the Venezuelan map that had the zone of reclamation on it. He kept that to remind him what his job was, to see that that didn't happen. I talked with him about this, and the strategy was simply to be able to hold on long enough until the OAS or the UN or somebody could step in to sort it out for them, but not to relinquish control. They would keep people in the area. They would have no effectively fighting capacity, but nevertheless their presence would keep the claim alive.

Q: Did we have a military assistance training program of any kind?

HAYS: A small one. There were a few small programs. SOUTHCOM had a fairly regular series of visits. In those days the head of the army General McLean, who had been the police commander and very close to Burnham and then shifted over to the army, was generally considered pro-American. He certainly was pro-capitalist and maybe some of it was not in so reputable a form on occasion, as rumor had it. The army was primarily of African origin and Guyana was split into Indian, actually Bombay Indian origin and African origin. The smaller populations of Portuguese descent from Brazil, the Amer-Indians, of course, the Chinese population and a few Europeans and others sort of thrown in. The two major groups fought, and in comparison to say Surinam where you had even more of a mix of ethnic groups, it was pretty much winner-take-all in Guyana. It was zero sum, it was perceived as zero sum; you were either with the DPP (the Indian party) or the PNC (the black party) and you either won or you lost. If you lost, you were out and you shouldn't expect any kindness or anything. There was a little bit of crossover; there were some blacks in the Indian party and a few Indians in the black party, but as a rule they were looked at if not as traitors at least as opportunists who couldn't be trusted in polite society.

Q: Which party controlled the government while you were there?

HAYS: The PNC, which was the Afro Guyanese party, had control which they had had since '64 when allegedly we and the British and others cooked the books to keep Cheddi Jagan, who was a communist after all, out of power. Then Forbes Burnham picking up a lesson from his new friends – at that point he was friends with LBJ, he used to go to the ranch and ride around and then he figured out he had more in common with our friend Fidel and learned how to hold fraudulent elections including one just a year before I got there.

Q: Did Guyana at that time because of the strong position of those of African descent have particular relations or involvement with Africa?

HAYS: No, not really. Forbes Burnham had tried. He had gone through West Africa and did some work. There was some attempt to identify where Guyanese had originated. But they quickly discovered there wasn't much to be gained from that other than sort of solidarity with the Group of 77 in which they were fairly active. And I think again because of their educational system they were pretty good at placing people in these international organizations. Sonny Ramphal, for instance, at this point was head of the Commonwealth. I saw Sonny two weeks ago at a conference and he hadn't changed at all.

Q: He was Secretary-General of the Commonwealth for many years. How about with India or the subcontinent?

HAYS: There was a debate over whether they should have ambassadors. They wanted to have an ambassador to Ghana and an ambassador to New Delhi. They ended up, at least in my time, of having it but not appointing anybody so they finessed the problem. There was a feeling you couldn't have one without the other, and they really couldn't afford either considering the costs. There wasn't a lot to be gained from it. In Guyana there was also the issue that when the Indians were brought to Guyana it was in theory a temporary step, they were indentured servants, and the expectation was that they would perform their period of service and then go back to India. And in fact, about a third of those brought to Guyana did in fact return to India. There was a fund that a worker contributed to over a hundred years that was to help facilitate the return and give people a stake to go back to India. One of the things that Forbes Burnham did that generated no goodwill was that he looked at this money and at this point almost nobody was going back. They had in the thirties but no one was returning in the sixties. He said, "Well, this money is sort of sitting there and there's no point in just letting it do that, let's build a large performing arts center." I think it was tied in to a large conference or something they were hosting. So they used up all this money for that, and of course, this was without the Indian population's say, and so there was a lot of ill will over stuff like that that happened fairly often.

Q: You mentioned the Guyanese had positions in international organizations, partly because of their language aptitude, I suppose, and their education. Did the Guyanese army involve itself in peace-keeping, UN (United Nations) or other activities?

HAYS: They were interested in it. I think in my time at one point they sent some people which we paid for to help with some Haiti-related item. I remember that a group did go off; not a large group, a squad, maybe 15 men. But they were thrilled. They got new uniforms, new boots, they

got to hang out with other soldiers, and so it was a tremendous experience and very useful because we were able to use that as an incentive with the army. I might mention that the army had been down-sized quite a bit during this time period. They just flat out couldn't afford it anymore, and there was also the national service – several steps beyond what our president is talking about now – it was almost mandatory service and based on the communist model. If you weren't in the army, you had to go out and teach or grow chickens or do something for a year or two. The guy who was head of that was the best soldier in the country, Brigadier Joseph Singh who eventually became the chief of staff. The military at that point had pigeonholed him in this other job, although he was by far the preferred interlocutor for our people. He was a solid guy, very squared away professionally.

Q: I was in Ghana from 1989 to 1992, more or less the same period. I am quite sure there was no Guyana high commissioner, ambassador, nor do I remember, quite frankly anything about Guyana except that occasionally we would get our mail that would be sent to Georgetown and probably vice versa. There was general confusion about the difference between Ghana and Guyana. With regard to Surinam, I do remember a few things that happened in those days because Jerry Rawlings had a relationship with them. How about Surinam? Were they concerned about that relationship?

HAYS: Yes, but less so. It was one of those things you hear one side and then you hear the other. From the Guyanese side, the story was, "We kicked their butts and ran them out of the disputed area and they wouldn't dare come back." Years later hearing the Surinamese side it was, hey, they tricked us and sucker-punched us, and because we're the more mature and steady state we didn't have to go back and teach them a lesson. So you take your pick which it is. Nevertheless, in these days Surinam held a much higher standard of living. The Dutch presence is, and continues to be, much stronger in Surinam than the British presence in Guyana. Surinam had electricity, Surinam had running water and Surinam had a fairly efficient food distribution net from farm to market to the consumer. There was actually immigration of 30 or 40,000 Guyanese who would migrate, often illegally, into western Surinam to work in day labor menial type positions. There was that kind of relationship. In general, the New River Triangle that's in dispute, unlike the Essequibo which is 2/3 of the country and hard to miss, is unpopulated and of no economic interest to anybody at this point. If they find gold or something that will change, but at the moment you can't get there, nobody lives there, it's not something that people are going to get excited about.

Q: You just mentioned the somewhat lesser role that Great Britain has in Guyana compared with the Dutch residual interest in Surinam. Do you want to talk anymore about the role of the British High Commission in Georgetown or that of any other Commonwealth countries? It was pretty small I suppose?

HAYS: Yes. The Brits' license plates were again dip one and they got that pride of place. They had a considerably smaller mission than we did. They had the high commissioner, the deputy, one political junior officer, maybe two or three consuls and kind of a commonwealth cooperative and that was about it. Nevertheless, as the mother country they played a disproportionate role and the Guyanese worried about them. It was a love-hate kind of thing. Every Guyanese conversation would start out with how badly the British had ignored them, they hadn't put the

money in, they hadn't built the bridges, they hadn't done this, they hadn't done that. But at the same time there was a residual pride in the empire and the queen and these sorts of things. Again, they were primus inter pares but not particularly more than that.

Q: Canada?

HAYS: Canada could have played a bigger role than it did. There were a lot of Guyanese in Canada. Toronto has a huge Guyanese population. The Canadians were in the middle of a downsizing, however, and they downsized the embassy literally to the high commissioner and his secretary, and that was in it. When I got there they probably had five or six officers, and they were literally down to the high commissioner who would rattle around in a very attractive old colonial style embassy. The Canadians had a few programs. They focused on such things as runways; they built runways all over the Caribbean and ports and things. They were obviously helpful, and I think that because they were not Britain they had a chance to kind of play a role. They weren't the United States and they weren't Britain. They had some influence but only to a point.

Q: Was a drug, anti-narcotics effort begun? Was that a problem?

HAYS: There was transshipment through Guyana; not a whole lot, because it's hard to get to Guyana. Even for drug smugglers it's hard to get to Guyana. I think the pattern picked up more, again jumping forward, for Surinam because the ships went to Amsterdam and there was regular shipping whereas with Guyana most of the ships would be just a milk run around the Caribbean and occasionally to New York. It wasn't the kind of hub of transportation that drug smugglers tend to like. There was domestic marijuana production. The army chief of staff had a farm outside the country, and he used to joke about showing his cattle and his oranges, his pineapples, and then he would talk about the cash crop that's on the other side of the hill there. We had it better in the embassy because DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) came in with one of their spotter planes to do their aerial surveillance. This property was close to the airport, and so there were a lot of people in the embassy who said he would never sign off on it. The first field they would take off over would be his, but in fact, he did and they didn't find anything. He was clever enough to plow it under before signing the paper or whatever; they didn't find it. Nor did they find a whole lot else; they did find a few patches, but it was more for domestic consumption.

Q: Before we leave Georgetown, why don't you talk a little bit more about your role? Were you chargé a lot, were you DCM, and if so, were you mainly a manager?

HAYS: Let me vent a little bit on USIA as an agency. When I got there they had a PAO (Public Affairs Officer) and a pretty good sized local staff. In fact, they had a PAO and the trainee slot. They also had by far the best library in the country. There was a Carnegie library, one of many that Carnegie had founded. That was sort of the national library, but it had gone into hibernation twenty years before and the books were just rotting or beginning to rot from the temperature. The USIS Library was where every high school and college student would come to do research and they had a pretty good program of periodicals that were relatively up to date and they really filled a need. When the word came down that we're shutting the whole program, and I was chargé at this point. I couldn't believe it; this is the best thing that this country has got going in

this area and we're just going to shut it down and give the books to the national library where they will sit in piles and rot over the next decade until they're totally unusable? This was the plan. So we went back and forth and they said well we have to cut back, we have budget problems. My point and my concern in this was I understand budget problems, but you don't need nine guys in Bonn to tell America's story. There are ways that Germans or Swedes or Mexicans or Canadians, for God's sake, can learn about America's story other than the U.S. government libraries. Whereas these small isolated countries – which granted their needs are a helluva lot more important than Guyana but nevertheless, when you look at what actually can be accomplished, I would say it comes pretty close to evening out. We can't shut down a program like that.

I then discover that executive authority. The one that says an ambassador has the right to say whether people are coming into the mission or not. It works the other way too in that they can't take people away from the chief of mission without the chief of mission's authority. I just refused; I said, no this is stupid, we can't do this, and so that engendered a flurry of telegrams back and forth and various phone calls from my hierarchy and I said this is nuts. Reprogram some programs in Mexico City. We can't let this go. And it went back and forth and back and forth. At the end of the day I got the phone call with my boss saying, OK, you made your point but give up. I wasn't quite ready to do that, and so in talking finally to someone in USIS I felt was fairly reasonable, we cut a deal which was that the American position would be reprogrammed away, but the library and the library staff who had been employees of the U.S. Government for eighteen or twenty years would remain which I thought was OK. I would like to have kept the American, but I thought keeping the library was my goal and I accomplished that. Unfortunately, six months after I departed post they shut the library down. They did exactly what I feared, dumped the books over to Carnegie library where, I'm sure, to this day they are sitting on a shelf in the back someplace of no use to anybody.

Q: What was the arrangement you worked out? Would you or another American officer have the nominal responsibility?

HAYS: Yes. I designated one of the junior economic officers as the acting PAO which worked out very well and while I was there it was somebody who was good at it and liked it. It did a number of very good things. He was effectively 50% PAO, 50% economic officer which was about right for Surinam because you probably didn't need a fulltime economic officer.

Q: And possibly not a fulltime PAO?

HAYS: Yes, exactly. There was enough work to have a fulltime PAO, but you can scale it back. But again to me it was the library that was important and we saved it for awhile but again as I left, it went away.

Q: You said that you got the word at some point from your boss that you should concede and give up and you worked out something with USIA. I'm curious, who was your boss? It's always an issue when you're chief of mission.

HAYS: It might have been Donna Hrinak, who was the DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) for the Caribbean. It might have been Sally Cowal.

Q: Having been a chief of mission, I know you don't necessarily have one boss; you have multiple bosses.

HAYS: To give my experience. When I got to Guyana I had been DCM in Burundi and I wanted to be DCM again or chargé someplace. And my old friend Gene Scassa called me up and said I've got this great deal for you. Of course, later I find out that there had been a candidate who broke his assignment and several others who had turned it down. So maybe it wasn't that bouquet of roses that I thought it was going to be, but nevertheless, I liked it. It was a bigger embassy than Burundi, more Americans, more FSNs, more of the whole bit. It was in the Caribbean although at that point, I didn't realize that you could be in the Caribbean and not have beaches. And so I signed up. I got there and I think we've talked before about some of the particular hardships of the post, but I liked the work and I what liked Guyanese people who were fun to work with.

But at that point, we went through one of these cycles where all the DCM-ships were three years. Either in Paris or Guyana, it didn't matter, you were there three years. I was ready to go at the end of two or I knew I would be. So I went back to Gene and said, "Look, what can we do here? He said, now's not the time, the ambassador is leaving, and this, that and the other, and so I said, "OK, I'll stick around." The ambassador was Ambassador Terry Tull up to that point. She left in the summer of 1990, and so I became chargé and I loved being chargé; it was great, you figure you're in charge, you get to do things, you get extra money, they pay you for it. So, all that is to the good. The construction of the new embassy was coming along. We had elections coming up so there were things both professionally and lifestyle things that were interesting. Then the ambassadorial candidate, George Jones, said, "Well, I think I'm going to take some course that's offered by the War College and if I do that, I probably won't get to post until the last week of August of 1990."

As you may know, poor George got caught up in this discussion with Helms on the release of documents from his days in Chile. He couldn't get a hearing. At first it was held up a few weeks and then it was a few months and it got to be more and more. Meanwhile, my third year was coming to an end. This was 1991. The elections started to loom up on the horizon. Carter was beginning to come down and things were happening.

I, meanwhile, had been assigned to the War College which I was excited about because it was something I wanted to do. About April, Donna called me and said, "Look, George isn't going anywhere soon. With the elections and everything we would like you to stay until either George or someone else can get down there." So I thought about that a little bit. Again, I liked being chargé, I was making good money and I wanted to be there for the election and I wanted to be there for the new embassy to open. So I gave my list of non-negotiable demands, all of which were, of course, totally ignored before I said yes. Staffing and the library was a live issue at this point. I said, "Why don't you assign a new DCM here, and I'll stay as chargé. Then when George comes, I'll leave and there will be somebody to provide continuity, rather than me leaving because I didn't particularly want to go back, and I knew enough and had talked to

enough people who had been a long-term chargé to know that going back to DCM can be sometimes a difficult transition.

Q: It's also difficult for the new ambassador.

HAYS: It's also difficult for the new ambassador. Particularly, in a small community there are only so many people to know and at that point, I would have been there three and a half years. They said, yes, yes, yes. Of course, it never happened. Anyway, so I stayed. We opened the new embassy which was a great event. It really it is a spectacular building. There's no particular reason for it to be in Georgetown, but it is a spectacular building. The elections were coming along with various delays. To show you how the State Department intelligence system works, around the first or second of December, I got a call from John Clark who was the Executive Director for ARA, and he said, "Dennis, George isn't going to make it. We're going to have to nominate somebody new. Plan on being there and coming out next summer. We're going to take care of you." So that was December first or second. December third I got a call from George who said, "Great news, I'm approved." I said, OK, great. George was a wonderful guy, and I was happy for him, but I began to wonder what I was going to do. So he ended up coming in January of 1992. He was super, a great guy to work with, and he was very conscious of that relationship. I knew enough to get out of town, and so I went after three weeks of opening cocktail parties on three weeks' vacation, came back and sort of phased out. I left in early June. I have great memories of George and the post. It was a good tour despite the fact, when you tell people you spent four years in Guyana you get the raised eyebrows and the "What the hell did you do?"

Q: Not only are there no beaches, but probably the cruise ships don't even come there?

HAYS: There are no cruise ships, no.

Q: Do you want to talk a bit more about President Carter and the Carter Center? I didn't realize you were chargé at the time.

HAYS: I think I'd talked earlier about when I went down there Desmond Hoyte was the new president on the death of Forbes Burnham. There were very, very low expectations for him. There was some willingness to say maybe he'll do some economic reforms. And, in fact, he did do a number of economic reforms that sort of helped. It didn't solve all the country's problems, but it moved them away from the self-destructive course that they had been on. On the political side, no one expected anything. To his credit I think he wanted Guyana to rejoin the community of nations. They were under pressure from the Commonwealth, from us, from the Europeans, and they had been treated like this for over the years. He also thought because of his economic reforms and just from being in power that he could win, particularly if the candidate against him was Cheddi Jagan. Cheddi's fault was that he was a Marxist without a sharp edge. If he had been a Castro, a Rawlings or any of these guys he never would have lost power in the first place. He had it, but he let it go. So he was still out there. A quick story on Cheddi which is indicative of how things worked. He used to go to these communist party gatherings that they would have, and he would sit kind of in the back because he wasn't a head of state at this point (in 1968.) He was eight or nine rows back in the audience. This was the time of the Czechoslovakian invasion. Apparently, a couple of speakers had gotten up from the communist party from Australia and

they had criticized the Soviet Union for its actions. So when Cheddi gets up and launches into this attack on them that how dare they question the judgment, the commitment, the dedication of our fraternal brothers in the Soviet Union who protect us? He went on and on and on. So he gave this little speech and they broke for lunch and when they came back he was sitting next to Brezhnev. From that point on he was always a front row guy for the next twenty years. He moved up. He also got a Dacha on the Black Sea. Anyway, Hoyte wanted to have the election, but he wanted to win it obviously. The trick was to get him to actually have free and fair elections, and then accept the results.

Q: How did the Carter Center become engaged?

HAYS: At the request of the Guyanese government. They were looking for somebody to authenticate their efforts or lend legitimacy to them perhaps. They didn't want the Commonwealth at that point even though they were obviously a member of the Commonwealth, because the Commonwealth had been beating up on them regularly and had taken a side that they were wrong and bad and at fault. The Carter Center, to the best of anyone's memory, had never commented on Guyana one way or the other and so they came in with a clean slate. Pastor was still at the Carter Center in those days and was the action guy for this. They sent down a number of people including Amy Beale, the young woman who was killed in East Africa some years later. Carter made it clear that he would not put his credibility on the line unless they actually did move to free and fair elections. The big issue was voter identification cards and how you determine that the people who vote, only vote once. The election was postponed several times, and Carter came several times to break through the log jam and keep the process moving. There were a couple of occasions where I thought from sitting in on the meetings that that's it, there's a rupture here, and the Guyanese aren't going to come back from this one, but they did, they kept coming back. Hoyte, in particular, felt that to win a disputed election would send the country spiraling further down. They weren't going to get international resources, they weren't going to get investment and so they had to do something. They had to satisfy Carter. I was quite impressed. He insisted on concrete results and not the sort of thing that you release a statement and get on the plane and fly away and then they give you another statement.

Q: You went to his meetings and worked closely with him, or did he want to keep you and the embassy of arms length at some times?

HAYS: There were occasions when he would go one-on-one with Hoyte or he would do a small group by himself, but he was pretty good about including us in the next circle out from there.

Q: He would debrief you on his private meetings?

HAYS: Yes, so I became a big fan of Carter at that point based on how he handled this. We'll see what he does with Castro. That's coming up. He's been invited to go to Havana.

Q: You were there when the elections actually did take place?

HAYS: Actually not. They postponed them beyond that. I kind of regretted that. I left in June 1992. The elections had been scheduled; the last one I thought I would make was in April 1992 but they were postponed too.

Q: Why were they postponed?

HAYS: Continuing problems over voter identification and registration. They were postponed until July and then they were postponed until late October when they finally did take place. Hoyte lost, and Cheddi won and they had a change of power. Whether Cheddi was the best thing for the country was another story, but they did have an election and a good result.

Q: What sort of relationship did you have with Cheddi Jagan?

HAYS: Reasonably good. When I first got there, he was referred to as a “spent force”, as one of the British politicians referred to him. There was a sense that he would never come back. In fact, the best thing he could do would be to step aside and let a younger, weaker, more charismatic leader come forward. Nevertheless, he held on and his party, the PPP which was very much his creation so the inner circle were all people who had been with him forever and stayed loyal. So he was there. There was criticism occasionally based on “hold your own”, in other words a racial appeal when he would go off into the rice country where it was basically 100% Indian population. But he was willing to talk to us. I didn’t see him all that often because there wasn’t really any need to for most of the time I was there. His wife, who was American by birth, was also an interesting character, sort of your urban grandmother. A nice little old lady, but she was by far the tougher of the two, both in terms of ideology and also in terms of ruthlessness in exercising political power. And she ended up being Prime Minister when he died.

Q: At the time you were there would she have given up her American citizenship?

HAYS: Long before, yes.

Q: Georgetown is on the coast. To what extent did you or others in the embassy go upcountry or down-country, whatever it is called? Were the Peace Corps volunteers in the country at that time?

HAYS: We were negotiating to have Peace Corps and by the end of my time we had a Peace Corps presence. They tended to be along the coast area, they tended not to be up country. This was very different from Surinam where they were deliberately sent upcountry. Yes, I tried to get up fairly often, but there wasn’t much structure to do that. You could go to Kaieteur which is a spectacular waterfall with a 740’ vertical drop with a whole river that goes over the cliff. That’s the “one must see” tourist spot in the country, and we would often go down to the Brazilian border to another series of step falls there that was quite nice. The Rupununi area which is the whole southern part of Guyana was a high savannah. In fact, the world’s largest cattle ranch is up there, something like 1.2 million acre cattle farm, bigger than the King Ranch. It was interesting also because at the time of independence there was a brief movement in Rupununi, the Americans who were there who had done cattle drives during World War II up to Georgetown and then off to Europe, thought about going over to Venezuela. They were actually in negotiations with the Venezuelans for this. There was only one airfield in this entire area, and it

had been blocked with 50-gallon drums. The Guyanese eventually parachuted in some guys to clear the air field to bring in an airplane and one guy got killed, a local. But then they reestablished control of the area. But it was a huge open area.

And an issue for all these countries is the Brazilian influx. The fact, that this river is Brazil on one side and Guyana on the other has little impact on the immigration flow. You had thousands and thousands of Brazilians – in Surinam they tend to be gold miners, in Guyana they are homesteaders – which creates problems like people getting killed on the road because the Brazilians drive on the right and the Guyanese drive on the left. Several people died in head on crashes in Guyana because the other guy is on the wrong side of the road. But my fear given that there was no frontier, go West young man, go South young man mentality among the Guyanese – they all work to get out of the country to Europe or America – that within two or three generations all of these areas starting in Venezuela and working across Guyana and Surinam and French Guyana will be Portuguese speaking and effectively be Brazil.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: All right, today is the 23rd of October, 2003. Sally, Guyana.

COWAL: Well, it's not a terribly important country to U.S. policy in any meaningful sense. I think the United States had a not very positive intervention in the political process in Guyana in the early '60s, as part of its general anti-Communism around the world. This succeeded in having a person of East Indian origin, Cheddi Jagan, essentially eliminated from consideration. We decided that Cheddi Jagan was not a true nationalist leader, but was in fact a Communist leader. And his wife was an American, Janet Jagan, who was from Chicago and had been a dentist, I think, in Chicago, from the part of American Jewish intellectual tradition that certainly in the years of the Depression had been very sympathetic with the left, and even perhaps with parts of the Communist left.

I would say a lot of that is pre-Roosevelt. I think most of the people who were able to get onboard with the New Deal saw it as really being a new deal, and eliminating some of the rampant capitalism which had led to the stock market crash and the Depression and so on. But at

any rate, be that as it may, the United States had decided that Cheddi Jagan could not be allowed to be the leader of Guyana. So we had given, I think, pretty unconditional backing to the other political party. As in Trinidad and other countries in the region, there are two major ethnic groups: the Afro-Caribbeans and the East Indian Caribbeans. The political parties essentially represent those ethnic groups. So, in turning our back on Jagan, we also turned in favor of the Afro-Caribbean party, the PNP, which led to Forbes Burnham being elected as prime minister and remaining in power for many years. I think, essentially, all of the excesses of a one-party rule in this very small, former-British colony played themselves out, with a considerable degree of corruption. All of this on a minor scale, because there's not a whole lot in Guyana other than bauxite that anybody really wants to have, or any basis for a real economy. But it is strategically perched there on the shoulder of the continent, above Brazil and next to Suriname, another problem country.

It had gone on for some time. During my time as deputy assistant secretary, we began to achieve a more balanced look at Guyana, in part because our views on who was a nationalist and who was a Communist began to change. The PNP had simply been there for so many years and it was obvious that they were stealing elections and bankrupting the country of whatever little it had. The jobs were for the boys, and the boys were party members. During my time we took a more balanced look at Guyana. And through the efforts of non-governmental organizations, like the Carter Center, preventing the ballot boxes from being whisked away with no supervision, there was finally an election in which Jagan came to power.

I never followed it very closely before that period and I never followed it very closely after that period, and we're now in my current work at PSI (Population Services International). I'm getting involved again in Guyana because it's one of the places in the Caribbean that has a pretty alarming HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection rate, and pretty dismal statistics on poverty and so on. But it has, at least, become a better democracy, more open, with competing parties. Since the '89, '91 time period, there have been three or four elections, and the leadership, the prime ministership, has gone back and forth from one party to the other. That's happened without the kind of ethnic and political violence which had always been feared would happen if finally the Indians got in power. I think that, in that sense, I feel fairly satisfied about that little role that we played there.

Q: Well, did you run into the problem within our own bureaucracy of the true believers? For years, we've been hearing about Jagan.

COWAL: Right.

Q: I pay scant attention to Latin American politics, but, boy, his name came up and his wife's name came up all the time. So I would have thought entrenched in our bureaucracy would be people who had been fighting this battle.

COWAL: Yes, I think that was probably true. Maybe it was more of an accomplishment than I thought at the time to simply say, "Let's give up on that. Let's look at reality today and not get ourselves caught in this time warp." I must say, Jagan gave me personal credit for it more than I probably deserved, years afterwards, when I was ambassador in Trinidad and there would be

some regional meetings, and he had been elected prime minister after I was already in Trinidad. But those elections came about, and his party got the votes and he was chosen prime minister, and from whatever podium he was at, he would say, “Oh, I see Ambassador Cowal is in the audience, and she’s responsible for the fact that I got elected, because the United States stopped being in opposition.”

I don’t know that he was ever received at the White House. He had been received by Kennedy, and then immediately that was sort of reversed. I don’t know whether Cheddi, who is now dead, ever got another meeting at the White House. He did come to Washington and was received by the secretary of state and by appropriate American officials and was accorded the honors of a legitimately elected head of government, which he was. I suppose this is much more true of places like Cuba, but Guyana also has a vigorous expat community living in the United States, particularly in and around New York, and another one in Canada. And like many people from the English-speaking Caribbean who emigrate to Canada or Britain or the United States, I think because their educational systems at home are pretty good, they arrive here as reasonably skilled people, as quite skilled individuals, who on top of it are very articulate in the English language. Therefore, I think, compared to immigrants coming from Nicaragua or El Salvador, or places where the educational system is not as good, and of course the native language is not English, they are able to mobilize themselves politically as expat groups quite effectively.

I think that’s more true in Canada, which of course they’re a bigger part of the population, it being a smaller population. But there are several Guyanese and Trinidadian and Jamaican Canadian members of parliament, for instance, who are elected by those constituencies, and who therefore have a real influence on Canadian national life. That’s less true of our national political scene, but it is true that in places like New York, they have some tremendous influence. I remember, for instance, one instance in which Desmond Hoyte was still prime minister, who was one of these reforming leaders, actually. Although he was a product of the Forbes Burnham system, it was Hoyte who, like Gorbachev or somebody, like Salinas, for that matter, and this is partly good pressure from the United States, “I guess we just can’t go on in the same way we’ve gone on before, stealing elections time after time. The world: read the United States, is demanding more of us in terms of openness and so on.

I think Desmond Hoyte was the one who opened the door, which allowed Jagan to walk through it. So there was an occasion in New York, and actually it’s the only time I’d ever been to the top of the World Trade Center, the late, lamented World Trade Center. The Guyanese community had – Hoyte must have been in New York for a UN General Assembly or something, so they had organized a dinner for Hoyte to come and speak to the Guyanese community in New York. It took place at Windows on the World, or one of the private dining rooms up there on the top floor of the World Trade Center, and I was invited to attend as the State Department representative, and I decided that indeed I should do that. We obviously had an embassy in Guyana, and despite the fact that we were critical of their lack of political openness, we were supportive of the fact that he seemed to be a reformer, and so I decided that I would attend the dinner.

I attended the dinner and arrived at the plaza of the World Trade Center to find at least 100 protesters, all with signs, who were protesting my attendance at the dinner, and they were Jagan proponents. Because by my attending the dinner, they saw this as the United States giving its

support to the continuation in power of the PNP, which they regarded as a corrupt leadership. These are the things which never make national attention, but count within these little immigrant groups. I think that's something that probably all American representatives in Latin America are more conscious of. Maybe now with some of the big Asian immigration on the west coast and other places, that's equally true, but certainly, many of these countries – the Jamaicans, the Trinidadians, the Guyanese, some of the Latin Americans – have their strong nationalistic groups in the United States, and they care about U.S. policy, which most people don't, to those places.

Anyway, I'm pretty proud of how Guyana came out, despite the fact that it remains a terribly poor country. I have not followed it closely enough to know what economic opportunities they should have been exploiting that they haven't been exploiting. I expect to make a trip there early in the new year, when we will launch a new condom brand in Guyana. I told our representative in Guyana that I'd be happy to go and launch their new condom brand, but that the last time I visited Guyana, it was to open a new U.S. embassy in Georgetown, so I wasn't sure they were quite equivalent.

Q: I have to ask. What's different about a new condom brand?

COWAL: Well, what we do is sort of socially market products. First of all, we try to make condoms more widely available, and more easily accessible, particularly to the people who most need them, which are often young people, who obviously have higher sex drives than most of us. Yet, in many countries around the world, and it's also a way true in the United States, you'll go into a CVS drugstore and the condoms are under glass. So you have to ask for a condom, and a 16-year-old or an 18-year-old, and particularly if he's not at the CVS drugstore on M Street, but in the corner pharmacy in Georgetown, Guyana, where his mother also shops, he may be unwilling to ask the pharmacist for this condom.

So we put a product on the market, which we advertise widely, we make it attractive to young people, and then we try to also have it in places where young people go and where they can buy these things. It's a matter of marketing. Why does Coca-Cola launch a new brand? It's probably the same condom in a new wrapper, which you could have bought yesterday, but it's a jazzy wrapper.

GEORGE F. JONES
Ambassador
Guyana (1992-1995)

George F. Jones was born in Texas in 1935. He graduated from Wabash College in 1955 and received a Master's Degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Stanford University. His postings abroad have included Quito, Accra, Caracas, Vienna, Guatemala City, San Jose and Santiago, with an ambassadorship to Guyana. Mr. Jones was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You must have been the most thoroughly briefed Ambassador Designate that one can think of to a major country like Guyana.

JONES: Well I had to go through all of my briefing in 1990. There was this damned pre-clearance thing. It seemed likely that it was going to go through that year so obviously I had to be prepared, touch all the bases, go around to all the various agencies of the government and find the private companies that had interests in Guyana and so forth. In August of 1990 the Department asked of I would go to the Capstone course at the National War College for about six weeks. It is designed for military officers who are being promoted to general and admiral ranks. They have one place for a foreign service officer who is being promoted to Ambassador in the course. During the course we went to Ottawa and visited the Canadian Government, so I used that visit to consult with the Latin American division of the Canadian Foreign Ministry. All these meetings I had gone through introducing myself as the Ambassador Designate to Guyana. I didn't get there until a year and a half later. My embarrassment was acute; I think there was some embarrassment to the United States. I was sworn in in December of 1991, and I arrived in Guyana on January 18, 1992.

Q: You were there from when to when?

JONES: From January 1992 until August 1995.

Q: At that time, what were American interests in Guyana and what was the situation in Guyana?

JONES: There were some interesting parallels to Chile. Major differences of course, Chile was a much larger country. Certainly relations with Chile under Pinochet loomed much larger in the State Department's eyes than Guyana. But Guyana also had had a long period without a free election. At the time the British were thinking about giving it independence, in the early '60's, the two major political leaders were Cheddi Jagan, a Guyanese of Indian descent who had studied at Howard University and then taken a dental degree from Northwestern University, and Forbes Burnham, a Guyanese of African descent who was a lawyer. While in Chicago, Jagan had met an American, Janet Rosenberg, and married her. Janet, if she wasn't a card-carrying Communist, was the next thing to it and certainly converted Cheddi to Communism. Cheddi returned to Guyana with Janet, went into politics, and won all the elections that were held under the British colonial administration except for the very last one. The British who were initially very reluctant to turn an independent Guyana over to him were clearly coming around to the view that there was no alternative. No matter how many elections they held, he kept winning them. But then Cheddi paid a visit to Washington in '61, I guess, met with Kennedy at the White House, and gave a famous speech at the National Press Club. Kennedy of course was very concerned not to have another Fidel Castro in Latin America, not to have a second Cuba. Although Cheddi said lots of things about wanting good relations with the United States, he didn't give quite the right answers. He wouldn't forthrightly deny that he was a Communist or assure us that he wouldn't have anything to do with the Communists. So the Kennedy administration decided that it should pressure the British to prevent him from coming to power. The Foreign Relations volume with all the documents on this is supposed to be coming out within the next few months. Their publication has been approved.

The methodology that was eventually arrived at was to change the Constitution to provide for proportional representation instead of first-past-the-post elections. So an election was held on that basis in 1964. There were three forces in Parliament, none of which had a majority: Burnham and Jagan and a smaller conservative pro-business party led by an important businessman. He had the same view as the United States, that at all costs, Jagan must be prevented from coming to power. So he threw his support to Forbes Burnham. Burnham was named prime minister and the British granted independence to Guyana. A number of other things were done as well to help insure Burnham's election. But ironically, after a number of years of getting along well with the United States and Britain, Burnham began turning increasingly toward the Communist Bloc and toward dictatorship and state socialism internally. Something over 80% of the economy was controlled by the government at the time of Burnham's death. My own view is that Jagan could not have possibly been as bad a leader for Guyana as Burnham turned out to be. A spectacular illustration of the risks we run when we try to choose who is best for another country. The uncertainties of that calculus are such that time after time we have been burned, and we were certainly burned in Guyana. We pulled out the Peace Corps, closed down our AID mission. Relations were absolutely at the zero point. Gerald Thomas, Reagan's first Ambassador to Guyana, a political appointee, met with Burnham only once his entire time there, relations were so bad. Burnham died on the operating table under Cuban doctors in 1985 in what was supposed to be a routine operation. They sent his body off to Moscow to be preserved the way Lenin's body was. It was supposed to be viewable in a tomb like Lenin's. Somehow it didn't quite work. The Mausoleum is there but it had to be closed, not for open viewing. Burnham was succeeded by a man named Desmond Hoyte, who was his prime minister. Burnham in the meantime had converted himself from Prime Minister to President, and Hoyte was his Prime Minister and became President on Burnham's death and was confirmed as President in an election held in December of 1985. All of the elections that were held after 1964 were highly suspect. They were not free and fair by any standard. So Hoyte's term of office was supposedly up in 1990, just as I was getting ready to come to Guyana. Hoyte looked at the situation Guyana was in and concluded that the only hope for the country was a 180 degree turn. Up to that point, he had been a faithful follower of Burnham's and still talks about him with great affection and nostalgia and so on, but he reversed his policies totally. He began to let foreign investment in. He sold the telephone company to American investors. He cleared up Guyana's arrears to the international lending agencies. He began to give indications that he wanted the 1990 elections to be regarded as free and fair. He told the State Department, I sat in on some of these meetings as Ambassador Designate, that he planned to invite the Commonwealth to send observers to the election. Well, the Commonwealth had observers at previous elections, and they hadn't filed a very credible report, the obvious supposition being that they didn't like having to criticize another Commonwealth member. So the State Department said that's fine but we think you also ought to invite the Carter Center. A bit to everyone's surprise, an invitation was extended to President Carter. Carter went down there in September of 1990 and did the kind of negotiation that only Carter can get away with. He only spent 24 hours in Guyana, but he had done his homework beforehand, and he knew what had to be changed to prevent the election from being stolen once again. It was absolutely clear that whatever Hoyte's intentions were, and there was some doubt about that, it was clear that there were members of his party who had been in power for 26 years and had no intention of giving it up easily. So Carter, just before the end of his visit, and just before a scheduled press conference, told Hoyte that unless Hoyte agreed to do the following things, he was going to announce at the press conference that he was not going to be

able to accept the invitation to observe the elections because he couldn't have anything to do with elections that were questionable. So he had Hoyte over a large barrel, and Hoyte agreed to everything that Carter asked. My own view is that Hoyte knew that from the moment he invited Carter, Hoyte was no fool, he didn't know everything he was going to have to concede, but he knew there was a damn good risk that he was going to lose the election, and that he was putting his Presidency on the line by inviting Carter. I think he did it with his eyes open. He did it because he could see no choice for Guyana. So Carter agreed to observe the elections. The various changes that were agreed to began to be implemented, but in best Guyanese fashion with stops and starts and twists and turns. So the elections did not in fact take place in 1990. They still had not taken place when I got there in January of 1992. Hoyte's term just got extended. They wound up being held on October 5, 1992. Which to my private amusement was exactly four years to the day after the plebiscite in Chile in which Pinochet had been defeated. The delays were caused by trying to get a clean voters list and all of the hassles related to that. But we finally got a list that was reasonably accurate. The chairman of the elections commission was changed and an honest man was put in charge of it. The counting of votes had in the past been done according to the British system, at a central counting places. They don't count votes at the place of poll. Carter got Hoyte to agree to count at the place of poll because the big mechanism of fraud had been between the polling place and the counting place, boxes had mysteriously disappeared, and been replaced by others. So my first nine months in Guyana were spent preparing for the elections.

Q: When you arrived there I assume there was no great difficulty seeing Hoyte and all that.

JONES: There was certainly no difficulty in presenting credentials. The Guyanese were very nice about that. I think I arrived on Saturday, the Foreign Minister received me on Monday, and I presented credentials on Tuesday. When I thanked the Foreign Minister for that very speedy action he smiled and said, "Well we thought you had waited long enough."

Q: They understood what the situation was. The American political overtone.

JONES: Yes. Certainly the Foreign Minister, Cedric Grant, did. He was in fact simultaneously Ambassador to the United States. In fact I first called on him in Washington in his role as Ambassador. Hoyte had asked him to come back to Guyana. He didn't actually have the title of Foreign Minister because he couldn't be that and Ambassador simultaneously, and he didn't want to give up his Ambassadorship, so they called him special advisor to the President on foreign affairs. He was functioning as Foreign Minister. But it was not terribly easy to see Hoyte or to deal with Hoyte. Hoyte was a very private person to begin with. He had a major tragedy in his personal life. His two daughters were killed in an automobile accident. He was not an easy person to get close to and was very much, both while in the job and out of it, conscious of being President. He wanted all the formalities paid to that status. That is practically the only Guyanese I can say that about. The Guyanese are a very delightful people, very hospitable, and care very little about protocol.

Jagan received me very warmly. The whole story of Cheddi Jagan is a fascinating one. He bore no resentment toward the United States for having prevented him from becoming Prime Minister. Maybe he did at one time but by the time I got there he certainly bore none. He was an

avid listener to the Voice of America. He was always writing in to the VOA commenting on their programs or asking them for more information on something that he had heard on one of their broadcasts. He had heard an interview I had given to VOA after being confirmed. He liked that interview and that got me off to a good start. I asked him the question Senator Dodd had asked me. He replied that he was a Marxist-Leninist, and that he wasn't going to apologize for it.

Q: You are talking about '92 when Marxism and Leninism was really falling apart in the Motherland and elsewhere.

JONES: That was the one and only time I ever talked to him about it. I didn't think it was very productive to rehash the past in terms of accomplishing my mission. But other people, journalists and historians, were always asking him about it. He didn't like to talk about it particularly. He was annoyed that it was brought up with such frequency. But when compelled to talk about it, he would say Communism had never really been properly tried. The Soviet Union had messed it up. Stalin had gotten off on the wrong course so that if you could have true socialism, that would work a lot better than what had been tried in the Soviet Union. But, he would add, this is all irrelevant because this is not the issue of the moment. Guyana certainly needed foreign investment, and he wanted the best possible relations with the United States and with foreign investors. He never apologized; he never retracted anything. In fact I don't think that in his mind he ever changed his views, but he adapted to circumstances. He was enough of a politician to be a pragmatist. He saw clearly that there was no further assistance coming from the Soviet Union, that he had to work with the West. He also saw that the West, not the East, had helped him at long last get back into power. It was the West that was guaranteeing a free election; it was not anybody from Eastern Europe. I think he was really very grateful. He awarded a decoration to Jimmy Carter after he got to be President. He was very grateful for the assistance that the United States in particular had rendered.

Q: What was the evaluation at that time of his wife? I remember hearing over the years that she was more red hot red than anybody else and still maintained her American citizenship. I was just wondering what was the feeling at the time you were there?

JONES: Well, both Cheddi and Janet I found charming. I always wondered if I would have found them less charming earlier in their careers when they were both fire brands and when they were not so disposed to be accommodating and neither felt the same gratitude toward the United States nor the same dependency on the United States. But they are certainly very nice people. They are grandparents. Their daughter became a Canadian citizen; their son became a US citizen. Their son was a dentist in New York for about 12 years, came back to Guyana after strong arm-twisting by his parents after his father became President, moved his dental practice to Georgetown. He complained constantly about having to put up with this third world country. He didn't use those words but that was the gist. How he missed the United States and how the United States was the greatest country in the world. I mean the ironies are just profound. Janet had in fact been deprived of her citizenship twice. Once for voting in a foreign election, got it restored, and then taken away again when she was elected to the Guyana legislature, and swore allegiance to Guyana. When Clinton invited Jagan and four other Caribbean leaders to have lunch at the White House in August of '93, his advisor for Latin America, Richard Feinberg, called me and asked me to look into the status of her citizenship and if she still wasn't a citizen, what could we

do about restoring it. So I did that and was told that in the light of all the court decisions in the intervening years, she had never voluntarily given it up and therefore it was hers for the asking and she could have it back. I went to see her and laid all this out. She was very nice about it and must have been secretly amused. The American Ambassador coming to see her and offering her her citizenship back. She said she would have to talk to the family, and of course it was difficult now that her husband was President. She never got back to me on it, never took any further steps, so I just kind of let it lie.

I heard the same thing, that she was the more forceful and committed of the two. I think certainly she must have had the intellectual convictions of Communism. Cheddi was not an intellectual. He was a political leader, a politician. There must have been a time of conversion, but once he was converted I don't think he was as solidly embedded in theoretical marriage to Communist ideas as she was. I don't know whether she would have been as pragmatic as he was. I mean if she had been the Guyanese President, would she have bent as easily with the prevailing winds, I just don't know. There was no visible evidence that she opposed his revisionist policies, his pragmatic course of action.

Q: This period leading up to the election, nine months or so, I imagine there was some attention. It obviously wasn't on the front burner but there was some attention. What was your role? What were you doing?

JONES: We were monitoring the process and reporting on it, trying to do everything that we could to ensure that it would be a free and fair election. I think that everyone who knew anything about Guyana thought that Jagan was the overwhelmingly likely winner for demographic reasons if for nothing else. The East Indian section of the population was the majority, somewhere between 50 and 55%. The African descent, 40-45%. The rest were mixed and assorted other ancestors. Everything indicated that the East Indians had a fanatical loyalty to Cheddi and always had. He won his first elective office in Guyana in 1947. By the time of the Bush and Clinton administrations, the shadow or the specter of a second Marxist leader in the hemisphere didn't worry anybody anymore. We no longer had a security concern that Soviet bases would come to be based in Guyana. That was not going to happen in the world of 1990-92. What we wanted to do is keep this process building of converting every country in the Americas to a democracy, for a variety of reasons including the reason that this would isolate Cuba and identify it as the odd man out in the Americas, which it is today. During this first period in Guyana, that was my overwhelming interest. There were little obstacles on the road, but on the whole, all the preparations went well. For the elections in October, a huge number of foreign observers came down. The Carter Center brought 66 observers for the election; the Commonwealth had another 20 or 30 I think, and then there were various other smaller groups that showed up.

We also had the Deputy Assistant Secretary who was responsible for the Caribbean, Donna Hrinak. On election day she and I visited a polling place, and things were going smoothly; voting was taking place in an orderly fashion. Everything seemed to be going just fine. I was giving a lunch in her honor. Our guests had arrived and we had sat down to lunch. Then the phone rang. There were a couple of Americans who were working at the elections commission. In order to get a clean voters list and an efficient voters list that was computerized, foreign technicians had to be brought in. Actually the UN provided the computer programmers to put the voters list into

the computers and set up the computers for receiving the results of the election as well. The senior person was an American named John Gargett. Gargett called me and told me the elections commission was under attack. There was a large crowd outside and they were stoning the building. He was very concerned; they had a couple of policemen there and that was it. They were unarmed, as Guyanese policemen, like the British, normally were. John was very fearful that at any moment the crowd was going to storm the building, run right up the stairs to the computer center and wreck the equipment and threaten the lives of all the foreign programmers including his own. He asked for help. I went to Donna and told her, sorry, I need to get down to the election commissions building. She said I'll go with you, so we piled into the car and headed off to the commission and found conditions exactly as described. There was indeed a sizable crowd outside the door in a very bad mood, as I found out by trying to talk to some of them. In this three story building every pane of glass in it had been shattered. So we worked our way through the crowd and into the building and found the chairman of the commission holding a press conference with mostly foreign press on the ground floor of the building. Gargett and the other technicians were also down there. The press conference broke up, and Gargett and the others said, "get us out of here. This is totally unsafe." Donna and I led the way out of the building, and just as we came out, the mob began to throw stones again. Some of the glass cut me on the hand and scalp, but we made it out of the building and back to the cars. One of the Commonwealth observers was there, a remarkable lady from New Zealand named Dame Anne Hercus. She said why don't we go see the police commissioner. Some of the cars took the technicians off to the hotel. There was no major problem anywhere except right there in front of the elections building. Dame Anne and Donna and I went off to see the police commissioner, and after some delay got in to see him. He was talking on about four phones at once; there was further delay until he could give us any attention, and in effect made no promises. He said he thought the building had adequate police protection as it was. He did in fact send a few additional policemen to the building. And the technicians, at our urging, went back to the building. Things quieted down. One of the things that happened, the chairman of the elections commission made the very... the complaint of the crowd was that they had not been able to vote. Well, as I had determined by talking to the people, the problem was that they thought all they needed in order to vote was their national identity card. I don't doubt that in past elections that was all they needed. But in 1992 they were supposed to have registered to vote and to be on the voters list. They had not found their names on the list and they were very upset. So the chairman of the elections commission decided to set up a special ballot box and let all these people vote. An absolutely brilliant idea. Their votes were not counted so it was sort of a smoke and mirrors thing, but it got them calmed down and gave them the feeling of satisfaction. So the atmosphere had calmed down and the technicians had gone back to the building.

But around nightfall I got a call from them again saying there were still just a handful of policemen in front of the center. They could see there was looting going on and people running up and down the street, there were still a considerable number of people outside the building, and they were still very concerned about their safety. Carter had been out of town during the day. He had flown off to the interior to watch the voting, but by this point he was back in town and we briefed him on what had transpired. He went to the elections commissions building, and then picked up the phone and called Hoyte and said, "I'm a former president of the United States and I'm here in this building. I'm not concerned about myself because I have the Secret Service here with me, but I think that if any kind of mob got into this building it would cause very unfortunate

press for Guyana." So Hoyte at that point gave the order and suddenly miraculously, lots of policemen appeared and some army armored personnel carriers were quietly moved into place a few blocks away.

Q: the mob that was outside there were they distinguished as being black as opposed to being Indian or...

JONES: Yes. Of course the population of the city was overwhelmingly black. The East Indian population was overwhelmingly rural. If you had a crowd in Georgetown, the odds are that it would be black. The looting that was going on was looting of Indian stores with Indian names. There is a real racial factor in Guyana. As soon as I heard that Carter had gone to the Commission, I joined him. Later in the evening the British and Canadian High Commissioners came as well. We stayed there for several hours just to give the technicians some moral support and make sure that nothing further went wrong. In fact nobody ever did enter the building. Who knows why they didn't. I mean they could have easily done so and destroyed everything in the building during almost any point in the day but they didn't. We came within a hair of losing the election, that is, of not having had one. If they would have destroyed the computers it would have been very difficult to have continued with the election. It certainly would have given a perfect excuse to those who didn't want to continue with the election. But the votes were counted. The Carter people did a quick count, a selection of precincts that were representative of the entire vote. Carter went to see Hoyte and Jagan the next morning and told them the results of his quick count showed Jagan ahead by 14 points. The actual vote was 11 points, but Carter said their margin of error was three points, so it was within the margin. So the results were announced; Jagan had won.

There is a park in Georgetown which has an oval path through it which is fine for jogging or walking. I used to go there and walk every afternoon that I could. I was walking around the path one afternoon a few days later and an Indian lady walked past me in the opposite direction. She went past and just looked at me and said, "Thank you." A lady that I had never met before and as far as I know never met again. That meant a lot.

Q: From our perspective were there any important changes when Jagan came in? We're talking about really the late '92 up through '95 period. Did things change particularly?

JONES: Well, yes. In several contradictory ways. On the one hand, I found access to the President much easier. I found the relationship with the President much easier. I had no trouble getting in to see him and it was always a very relaxed and friendly situation when I did see him. His cabinet was a funny mixture of some very competent people and some much less competent people. There were clearly great debates within the government on just how far to go with this private enterprise nonsense. The election was the high point of my tenure. A very emotional moment, a very satisfying moment to have seen another country through to democracy. There is no question Jagan is going to run an honest election the next time they come up, next year, October of '97. Hoyte had done a lot but he hadn't done everything. The atmosphere in the media was still very controlled when I first arrived. Jagan opened up the media. There was no longer any sense of intimidation or pressure. He gave no indication of having any problem with, well that's a little too strong. There was one occasion when not he himself but his party issued an

angry statement about one of the independent newspapers. But on the whole, the whole atmosphere of the country changed to a genuinely free one following the election. So that was very satisfactory. But from that point on the main issue I was concerned with, the main thing the US government wanted me to do during the remainder of my time there, was to try to persuade them to privatize, to get rid of these highly unprofitable government enterprises that were causing their budget deficits, and open the door for foreign investment, in particular American private investment. We were able to restart the AID program. We were able to bring back the Peace Corps. Of course our AID program was tied to compliance with the IMF. The IMF and the IDB and the major Western powers were all trying to get them to privatize. Success in this area was virtually zero. Those remaining two and a half years were on the whole quite frustrating. I had the sense of having a lot of chips that we had won by astutely and honorably playing in the poker game and yet never succeeding in cashing any of them in.

Q: I would have thought that with an Indian population, along with the Chinese and others, these are entrepreneurs from their fingertips. I would have thought that no matter what the proclivities of Jagan and his immediate entourage, he would be dealing with a bunch of small shopkeepers.

JONES: And some of them not so small. There were some very substantial, not substantial in US terms, although there was one family in particular that was substantial even by US standards. The Indians dominated the business community. The blacks were the civil service, the army, the police. The middle class Indians dominated the business community and they had financed Jagan's campaign, plus the communities overseas. One of the remarkable features of Guyanese election campaigns is that both Hoyte and Jagan went off to the US to hold campaign rallies and collect money from Guyanese living in the US and Canada. But in spite of that, the Indian businessmen expressed time and again their frustration at not being able to get through to Jagan. He had all kinds of concerns. He was genuinely worried about the poor. Jagan was somebody, it's hard to say this about a politician, in whom there was hardly a devious bone in his body. What you saw, what you heard from Jagan was it! He was very sincere, I mean the reason he had become a Communist was that he became convinced that was the way to help people, the poor, to raise up the masses. For example, one of the worst run of the government enterprises was the electric company. He was very concerned that if he privatized the electric company, what would happen to the electric rates, people would have to pay more. I and dozens of other people said to him, "Okay, you can skew the rates. You can make the rates high on your Indian businessmen friends and low on the average consumer." He shot back immediately, ah but the businessmen would simply pass it along and raise their prices in order to make up for their increased electricity costs.

The second factor was nostalgia and unwillingness to admit error. He had been the one who had nationalized the electric company in the 1950's when he was premier of the colonial government. He just couldn't bring himself to undo that. He is certainly a nationalist if nothing else. That was one issue where he had a lot of black support as well. The idea of foreigners controlling the electric company just stuck in their craw. There were all sorts of schemes for part ownership by local businessmen and part ownership by foreign investors and the state would keep a minority ownership. These ideas were all discussed endlessly and none of them got anywhere. The same thing with the state airline. He would always listen, and his ministers would always listen. They were always extremely polite. I began to be very negative with American businessmen and they

would think that I was trying to keep them out of doing business with Guyana, but all I was trying to do was warn them. They would come away glowing from their first meetings. They seemed so interested. They wanted investment. They told us how much they wanted American investment in here and how much that would help the country. Then I would watch it as the weeks went on. Then they would come and see me and say you know you were right. These guys don't really want foreign investment in here.

Q: During this period you were there, did the Cubans play any particular role?

JONES: No. The Cubans still had an embassy there. The Russians, the North Koreans, the Chinese, that was the remnant that was left; I'm told that at one time the place was just inundated with East Germans, Bulgarians, they were all there. The Cuban Ambassador who was there for most of the time I was there was a very friendly sort. The American School even talked us into doing a debate once. Well sort of. It was on separate nights. I thought it wise not to appear on the same platform with a government we didn't recognize so I spoke one night and he spoke the following night. The Cubans had on the whole a very low profile. They did have a group of about 40 doctors there to assist the public health system and some of them would periodically defect. But that was the only aid program they had left. They did very little. Oh, every time something major would happen in US-Cuban relations, he would hold a press conference and condemn us but otherwise played no role. The North Koreans even less. Very little was even seen of the North Koreans even at diplomatic functions. They never did anything publicly. The Russian was a very nice guy, Mikhail Sobolev. We became good friends. Of course by the time I was there they were flying the red white and blue flag, put up on December 31, 1991. He had nothing to play a role with. The Russians and ourselves had built new embassies at the same time. They built a massive structure, a full city block including apartments. And to our great envy a swimming pool and tennis courts. After the change there was no staff to put into this nor any interest in Moscow in having it. They decided not to sell it but instead to lease it to a hotel. A fence was built through the middle of the compound. The swimming pool, tennis courts, and apartments were converted into a hotel.

Q: Did the tragedy in Jonestown, you know we are talking 20 years ago, were there any reverberations from that?

JONES: Not really. The Guyanese, as some of the Latin countries do as well, stole their TV off the satellites. They just downloaded the signal. So we enjoyed a limited amount of American television. Every time that motion picture was shown about Jim Jones, "The Guyana Tragedy," that got great viewership in Georgetown, the only movie that ever featured Guyana. But it was not something they liked to talk about. Obviously they were mortified that the only thing that most Americans knew about Guyana was "Oh, wasn't that where that crazy guy made everybody drink Kool Aid?"

Q: What about outside of Georgetown, getting around in Guyana out in the bush or whatever you call it. And also relations with Brazil and Venezuela?

JONES: Getting around the country was easier than I had expected. There is quite a good paved road that runs from Georgetown, which in the middle of the Atlantic coast, all the way to the

eastern border with Suriname. The same road makes a 90 degree turn and goes south from Georgetown about 30 miles to a bauxite mining town called Linden. (Linden Forbes Burnham named it after himself.) The American and Canadian bauxite companies were another thing that were nationalized, by Burnham in that case. Those were essentially the only paved roads in the country, that one road with its 90 degree turn. So you could travel quite easily along to coast and to Linden by car. Beyond that you really had to have a four wheel drive vehicle and you could drive over unpaved roads for further distances. There were many rivers, and you could go up them by boat, or you could fly. As in many of the Latin countries, there are small landing strips all over the place and lots of small private planes around. Not at all difficult to get yourself a ride into the interior. Anywhere there was any significant economic activity, there were people flying in in small planes, because that was the only time-effective way to get in. The interior is quite beautiful. The interior is a subsection of the Amazon rain forest and as the Amazon rain forest is burnt off and chopped down, the Guyana portion of it is one of the last unspoiled virgin rain forests in the world. Another thing I tried to do and kept being frustrated about was to get some kind of interest shown by the US Government and non-governmental organizations in the Guyanese rain forest. Again highly frustrating and no real success. The World Wildlife Fund was very interested at the time I was first going down to Guyana, but their condition of cooperation with Guyana, was for Guyana's one national park to be expanded substantially, increased about ten times in size in order to provide some legal basis for protection. They told the Guyanese that if they would take that step, the World Wildlife Fund would go out and raise funds for Guyana worldwide, and give it a lot of publicity as a country courageously protecting its environment. But the Guyanese would never take that step. Neither the Hoyte nor the Jagan administrations were willing to, basically because they weren't willing to close the door permanently to development of that large an area. In any developing country the dilemma is a severe one. They want to protect the environment, but they also want development. The United States and other industrialized countries didn't protect the environment when they were developing, why should they? As they saw it, they were now being asked to do the things we were unwilling to do when we were going through the developmental phase.

Q: George, maybe we are coming to the end here. Things can be added on. I take it you got your election and everything was fine and then you began tilting at these windmills.

JONES: The windmills of privatization. The one political issue that came up after the election, they had another election incidentally, municipal elections in '94, which ran very smoothly with much less furor and tension. In the political area the only other issue that required major attention was getting Guyanese support for our objectives in Haiti. Which was originally trying to get them to take Haitian refugees. A lot of major efforts were made. I made efforts with Jagan, leaned on him harder than on any other issue the whole time I knew him. I got what I told the Department was as close as Jagan ever came to saying no. What he said was "the boys in the party are not enthusiastic about this." I told the Department, you should read that as this is not going to happen. Then he went off to a conference in Barbados, and the Department sent its top Haitian people down to this conference at least in part to work on Jagan. Bill Grey, the President's special advisor on Haiti, Jim Dobbins and various people, I'm told met with him for five hours. An extraordinary example of Jagan's patience and good will that he devoted that much time to a group of people that he knew he was going to say no to in the end anyway. They got nowhere with him. They got a yes from Suriname and in fact we moved in military engineers

and built a big camp in Suriname. Then just as we got it built the need for housing refugees disappeared because we made the decision that we were going to go in to Haiti.

So then instructions came out for the new pitch. The new pitch was that we wanted Caribbean participation in the multinational force. The Guyanese had been very nervous, an Indian government was nervous about taking black refugees, but they were quite prepared to participate in a UN force in Haiti, but then we made it clear that what we were asking them to do was to participate in a US-led force which was going to be the precursor to the UN force. Because the reality was the UN would not come in until someone else had made things safer. That gave them considerable pause, and again I had to work very hard on Jagan and the Foreign Minister. It was a close thing. I think Guyana was the last of the Caribbean countries to come aboard, but they did finally agree to participate. At any one time they had about 50 Guyanese in Haiti. All things considered, given their history of total non-cooperation with the US in foreign policy matters, it was a big step forward in US-Guyanese relations, and I was proud of my part in it.

MOSINA H. JORDAN
Program Officer, USAID
Guyana (1995)

Ambassador Mosina Jordan was born in Brooklyn, New York. She earned a BA from New York University, attended Howard University Law School, UCLA Law School and received a JD from American University. She was a career member of the Senior Foreign Service and served as ambassador to the Central African Republic. She also served at USAID as counselor. Ambassador Jordan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.

Q: OK, well let's talk about the program in Guyana. I mean what was the situation? What was the government and what was going on there in '95?

JORDAN: Guyana is located on the coast of South America, with Surinam to the east, Brazil to the south and southwest and Venezuela to the west and the Atlantic Ocean to the north. Although Guyana is part of the Anglophone Caribbean, it's one of the few countries that's part of South America. The official language is English, although the majority of the population speaks Guyanese Creole. Guyana has a population of approximately 765,000 people, 51% Indo-Guyanese, 42% Afro-Guyanese, 4% Amerindians and the remainder, Europeans, Chinese and Portuguese. Guyana was originally colonized by the Netherlands, and later, it became a British colony.

The 20th century saw a rise in consciousness among the country's ethnic groups and a struggle for political power between the disenfranchised, non-white class and the old plantocracy. The British responded to demands for reforms by establishing suffrage in 1950 and allowing the formation of political parties. Rival parties emerged based along ethnic lines, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Cheddi Jagan, a Marxist Indo-Guyanese, and the People's National Congress (PNC) led by Linden Forbes Burnham, a leftist Afro-Guyanese. Burnham was

the first prime minister at independence in 1966, winning a contentious election in December 1964. I read that Cheddi Jagan, the prime minister at the time had to be forcibly removed from office, because he wouldn't accept the election results. Burnham's two decades of authoritarian rule, firmly established control over Guyana's political and economic life. Intimidation and threats accompanied fraudulent elections. As opposition to the government increased, the government responded with retaliation and violence. Nationalized industries and financial institutions led to decline in productivity and economic stagnation and decline. Quality of life deteriorated - there were frequent blackouts, shortages in rice and sugar, basic staples and unprecedented emigration of skilled professionals. Three factors that kept the economic decline from becoming a disaster was the flourishing illegal economy, remittances that Guyanese citizens received from relatives abroad and Guyana's near self sufficiency in food production. In 1981, USAID under the Reagan Administration terminated its development assistance program in Guyana.

Burnham died in 1985 and Desmond Hoyte, vice president became the new executive president. In 1980, a new constitution shifted power from the prime minister to the executive president. In the 1985 elections, Hoyte won by 79% of the vote. Hoyte developed an economic recovery plan, negotiated with the IMF and World Bank new loans in exchange for free-market reforms and reversed Burnham's nationalization policies. Hoyte expecting to win the 1992 elections based on the improving economy and free market reforms, lost to Cheddi Jagan who after 40 years renounced his past Marxist policies and embraced elements of the free-market economy.

A new Guyana program was developed to support Guyana's free-market reforms. We started initially in Barbados looking at ways to re-engage in Guyana by exploring improvements in the justice system, in the management of their trade and export program, and in constructing a new drainage system in a section of Georgetown, and in constructing a new power supply grid. In January 1995, I relocated to Guyana, selected an office building, staffed the office, bought and installed equipment and furniture, and implemented the program. Three months after my arrival, I became very ill. The doctors at the Guyana Hospital misdiagnosed my medical problem and after a month of tests and re-tests, my condition became severe, and I was medevaced to a hospital in Miami with pneumonia. I remained in Miami for three weeks and returned to Guyana to pack out and depart for Washington, DC.

DAVID L. HOBBS
Ambassador
Guyana (1995-1996)

David L. Hobbs was born in Iowa in 1940. After serving in the US Army from 1960-1963 he received his bachelor's degree from University of California at Berkeley. His career included positions in Germany, Brazil, England, Japan, Colombia, and an ambassadorship to Guyana. Ambassador Hobbs was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1997.

Q: Well, David, let's talk about going to Guyana as ambassador. You were there from when to when?

HOBBS: Just about a year, 1995-96.

Q: How did that come about?

HOBBS: I had been in the job of principal DAS for a couple of years and had been going to a lot of meetings in the management family, Dick Moose, the director general, diplomatic security and foreign buildings, etc. They got to know me. Near Christmas I got a call from the director general's office asking if I would be willing to have myself put forward as ambassador to Guyana. I thought about it a day or two and then agreed. The nominations began to move forward very slowly. I got a call that I was one of the hostages, as they were calling them around the building. Senator Helms [Republican, North Carolina] wanted to see the reorganization of the foreign affairs agencies, Arms Control, AID and State all rolled into one and didn't feel his idea had been given sufficient consideration and therefore thought he would get the attention of the foreign policy community by not approving anymore appointments. So we waited around for a while. In the end there was some kind of compromise worked out and the appointments began moving through. I got out the end of October, 1995. It took from December, 1994 until October, 1995 for the process to be completed.

Q: In getting ready for the assignment, what were American interests you were told in Guyana?

HOBBS: A couple of interests. One was the continuation on the road to democracy. Guyana had not had a free election for about 25 years or so. Then they had a free election in 1992 and it was coming time for another election. The feeling was that Guyana should do it again, 1997. So, there was some concern that we keep an eye on that and coach them along and make sure the process works smoothly.

The president then had been out of power for over a quarter of a century because in 1966 he had lost the office of prime minister, because of some changes in electoral rules which the American and the British worked out as a way of getting him out of power.

Q: This was Jagan.

HOBBS: Cheddi Jagan, who was a well-known Marxist and quite a rabble rouser at an early time in his life. Jagan was manipulated out of power and then the person who got in power, Forbes Burnham, did not have real elections for all these years. So, when there was a free election, after we convinced Burnham's successor, Desmond Hoyte, who took over after Burnham died, he ought to have one, Cheddi Jagan won. So, he was back in power. We were hopeful that he would not try to do what his predecessor had done, which was once you are in power don't have any more elections. So, we had to make sure there was a clear understanding that this is what we expected.

It turned out to be no problem. Jagan, of course, is from the Indian Guyanese community, which is the majority in the country. Forbes Burnham, who took power in 1966 was Afro-Guyanese,

which has a minority of the population. So, Jagan, being a member of the majority group, and since they vote very much along racial lines in Guyana, could be quite sure it was safe to have an election and win. So, there was no real problem with having an election later in 1995.

The other issue was American investment opportunities. There were a number of American investment disputes, a number of American companies were expropriated during the Burnham years. Reynolds Aluminum was one example. These companies were anxious to get back what they were due. A new company had come in. An American telephone company had bought the telephone company of Guyana. There was great need for a new electric company and some American companies were interested in making that investment. It is a small country, about 700,000 people so they can't buy very much or produce very much, but what is there we would like to have Americans get a crack at, especially since Guyana gets a tremendous assistance from the IDB, International Development Bank, which is funded to a large extent by business in the United States. So, we put a little pressure there to make sure we had some consideration and our people had a chance.

Other than those two, there were not many issues.

Q: Was there any aftermath to the Jonestown business of 1976?

HOBBS: No, it is long forgotten. The jungle has taken it all over again. There is nothing left, you can't get there without going up a river and tramping through the jungle. The Guyanese would like to forget about it completely. No Guyanese ever mentions it. Americans almost always mention it. As I was reading-in to go there I looked for any articles on Guyana in the newspapers that I might have missed and saw all kinds of references to Guyana. I said, "Oh, my god, this is interesting." I found out they were articles about the Branch Davidian...

Everybody on all sides of the political spectrum would agree that Jagan was clean. He lived a very modest life. There were always allegations about corruption of people who were in government, but it never touched him. I believe that is true. When I presented my credentials we had a chat afterwards. He told me I might be able to have 15 or 20 minutes, and he kept me for an hour and 20 minutes talking about a lot of things. He talked about the year when he lost the office of prime minister. He knew what the American role was in that and was not at all bitter about it. He said he understood that he talked too much and that got him into trouble.

He never felt himself to be a Castro, and I don't think he is. I think he is a much kinder and more gentle person. He is married to a woman who was born here in Chicago, but who is no longer an American citizen. I judged him as being to the end of his life a true believer in Marxism as the best way to manage an economy. Had he been able to he would have loved to have done that when he got his chance to be head of the country again, but Marxism was gone most everywhere. Cuba was there, but Cuba was no longer able to help him.

Q: Was there any Cuban influence?

HOBBS: Well, there is a Cuban embassy there and they were fond of the Cubans. But, the Cubans weren't helping them any, so I had much better access. The British, Canadians and

Americans were the ones who mattered there. We had access and could get lots of attention. We were providing a lot of assistance. The Cubans couldn't provide anything basically. The Cuban ambassador was a personable fellow and I also greeted him, although I never talked to him very much.

The North Koreans and Chinese were there, too. But, nobody could help him. His only help was coming from the West—the Americans, British and Canadians and the European Union. So, he had to maintain his relations with us and he was very friendly. It was an odd situation because many of the entrepreneurs are Indian in the country and yet he is never very comfortable with entrepreneurship, he is more comfortable with a planned economy. The entrepreneurs would criticize Jagan's economic policy but they weren't inclined to vote in anyone else because they didn't want to be under an African as president. It was Jagan's turn and he was entitled to the office as long as he was there. Nobody had any inkling that he wouldn't be there for a long time, everybody thought his health was very good and that he might run even again.

The country is not making as much progress as it might if it were more open to business and allow foreign investment in with less hassle. It is going to be very interesting to see what happens now because the former president, who took over when Forbes Burnham died, is running again from the African party. There is a Muslim Indian who came back to be finance minister in the early years of Cheddi Jagan, but had been away from the country so long he really didn't have his connections while he was finance minister and didn't stay too long. Now he is back running for president. You have a number of people within Jagan's party who are all trying to get themselves as presidential candidates for the PPP. Some of them are very much to the left, very Marxist and dogmatic and true believers, and some are more pragmatic. It will be interesting to see how it works out.

Q: Were there any problems that would concern you about border disputes?

HOBBS: Yes, those were the old long standing disputes, but they did not heat up. Venezuela has claims to about two-thirds of Guyana. Surinam has claims to about a fifth of Guyana. And Brazil not only is pushing a claim for some territory of Guyana, but there is no presence of the Guyanese on the border with Brazil, so the Brazilians are moving in so that that part of the country is gaining more and more Portuguese speakers. In another generation or two they could find a good chunk of that southern part could be pretty well populated with Brazilians. For a long, long time they have been trying to build a road from Georgetown to the Brazilian border. Some people are opposed to that because they think it will make it easy for the Brazilians to come on into Georgetown. They don't see that it also would make it easier for Georgetown people to get into the rest of their country.

The business community of Guyana has been very isolated. It is very protective and some of their biggest exports, sugar and rice, bring very favorable prices on the European market and they really don't have to compete as much as they would if they didn't have that. So, their production costs are high and when those favorable prices go away they are going to have a hard time producing sugar and rice at the prices they will have to sell them at. There is a gold mine there. There is not enough electricity which is inhibiting economic growth. They recognize that but haven't been able to find a solution.

There are lots and lots of allegations of corruption during the previous administration and in this administration. There is a lot of suspicion between one group and another. It is a country which hasn't been able to figure out how the different races deal with one another. I don't see a solution anytime soon.

Q: Do we have much AID or Peace Corps there?

HOBBS: Well, the Peace Corps went back there for the first time in 25 years as I was arriving. They left during the Forbes Burnham years because he was an avowed Marxist, and not friendly. We decided we just wouldn't have a Peace Corps. Now with this new administration, they came back. It was a small group. Originally there were about 24 but the number dwindled down to about 14 because a lot left early. It was a pretty challenging place to live, especially the way the Peace Corps goes about it. They try to live pretty much the way the people live. A new group came in, but it was a smaller group than anticipated. They may be approaching 30 now, but that is a small group.

The AID program has been decreased substantially. Just as I was arriving there they were hoping just the year before to go up to about a \$10 million program. By the time I got there it dropped to about a \$4 million and was heading towards \$2 million. With that much money you can't have much of an impact.

The person who runs that program is doing a great job and is very innovative and gets a lot of mileage out of a small program using the money as much as possible to leverage other AID projects in other countries and other organizations. I think we were able to get a little more impact than we might otherwise get.

USIS was closed down. It was basically State Department and a small, small AID mission which may not be there much longer, and a small Peace Corps. That was about it.

JAMES F. MACK
Ambassador
Guyana (1997-2000)

Mr. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin American where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy March 20th, 2004.

Q: This is a good place to stop! And we will pick this up in 1997 and where did you go?

MACK: I went to Guyana as Ambassador

Q: Okay we will pick it up then. Today is 20th of February 2006. Jim, you are off to Guyana, 1997?

MACK: That is correct.

Q: How did that appointment come about?

MACK: Well, that was the year in which President Clinton had named a fairly high number of political appointees to fill ambassadorial openings in Latin America. If I remember correctly, there were only two or three posts filled by career people. Georgetown, Guyana was one of them and I was lucky enough to get an appointment..

Q: Well you served in Guyana from '97 to when?

MACK: To 2000.

Q: What was the situation in Guyana as you got ready to go there?

MACK: Well an election was coming up and the situation was getting fairly tense, with racial overtones. Janet Jagan was the presidential candidate of the ruling People's Progressive Party, or PPC, which was Marxist Leninist, and Desmond Hoyte was the candidate of the opposition party, the People's National Congress known as the PNC, which had largely shed its Marxist ideology and had evolved into a more moderate party.

Since most people know much about Guyana, let me give you a bit of background. Guyana achieved independence in 1966. About 10 years prior to that, the main pro-independence party, which was a Marxist party, had largely split in two along racial lines between the two largest Guyanese ethnic groups. The group headed by Forbes Burnham, a British educated barrister was predominantly Afro-Guyanese. The other group, headed by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, a US trained dentist, was predominantly Indo-Guyanese, that is to say comprised of descendants of indentured servants who had been brought to Guyana from the Indian subcontinent in the mid-1800s replace the African slaves on the plantations after slavery was abolished in the British empire.

Q: Jagan's wife was American.

MACK: His wife, Janet Rosenberg Jagan, was born an American in the mid-west, I think in Chicago, and had met him when he was studying dentistry at Northwestern University just north of the city. In any event, Cheddi had largely built the independence struggle in Guyana. A peaceful struggle I might note. It was basically based on his support from labor unions, especially the sugar cane workers, most of whom were Indo-Guyanese. In fact Jagan's father was a foreman on a sugar plantation and Jagan was raised on one. But the problem for the British, who wanted to extricate itself from Guyana, was that Jagan was an avowed Marxist-Leninist. At the time of independence, the British and Americans were very concerned that Guyana would be the first country, at least in the British Empire, to achieve independence under a Marxist Government. So they changed the electoral system to require that the party or coalition of parties

winning the presidency be backed by an absolute majority of the seats in the parliament. The idea was that the parties representing the non-Indo-Guyanese groups, who together formed a slight majority of the population, would join together to defeat Jagan. Even though the two main parties were Marxist, Jagan at the time was considered more extreme, and therefore the greater evil.

The electoral change produced the intended result, at least in the beginning. Forbes Burnham and his largely Afro-Guyanese party called the Peoples National Congress or PNC forged an alliance with a party with strong support from Guyana's Portuguese, Chinese and Amerindian population, plus some non-Marxist Indo-Guyanese businessmen. As a consequence it was Burnham, not Jagan, who won the election and therefore it was Burnham, not Jagan, who became independent Guyana's post colonial leader. However, in the end things did not work out as the British had hoped. Burnham himself proceeded to move farther to the left and ended up nationalizing something like 85 percent of the economy - the bauxite mines, the sugar industry, the rice industry. Even relatively small businesses were nationalized. Of Guyana's large enterprises only the Coca-Coca franchise escaped nationalization. Burnham's actions destroyed the economy and impoverished the country, spurring massive migration abroad of Guyana's population -- to the US, Canada, the UK, the Caribbean, Venezuela -- to the point where today at least as many Guyanese and their descendants live outside of Guyana as inside. Despite a relatively high birth rate, the country's population has not significantly changed in 40 years. This is almost unheard of in a third world country and gives an idea of how bad the situation there became.

In any event, Burnham was reelected several times, almost certainly the result of fraud. Early on in his reign, he basically told the other ethnic groups that had supported his election in 1966 that he didn't need them any more, didn't want them in Guyana, and that if they were unhappy they should leave the country. Most of the Chinese and Portuguese Guyanese did just that, largely to Canada. Finally in the mid 80s, I think around 1985, Burnham, a heavy smoker, and sick with lung cancer, died on an operating table. His attending surgeon was Cuban. At that point, the Soviet Union, his main benefactor, was not doing very well either so Guyana too was at a dead end.

His successor Desmond Hoyte also was a British trained barrister and had been in Burnham's cabinet for years. Given the ethnic composition of the country, Hoyte's subsequent electoral victory in 1985 also almost certainly came about as a result of fraud, but he turned out to be much more moderate and proceeded to start to open up the economy.

When the Soviet Union finally collapsed, the world changed radically for Guyana. After a couple of failed attempts, Jimmy Carter convinced Desmond Holt to allow an internationally supervised election when he ran for reelection in 1990 or '91. Cheddi Jagan ran again and this time he won. His election was basically due to demographics. The Indo-Guyanese population remained greater than the Afro-Guyanese population. And people tend to vote along racial lines. In fact, the editor of the country's largest newspaper once described elections in Guyana as "a racial census" So Cheddi, a declared Marxist-Leninist, a faithful friend of the former Soviet Union, who for 30 years vacationed on the Black Sea a guest of the Soviet state, finally became President.

But he was elected *after* the fall of the Soviet Union, and was simply unable to do a lot of things that he otherwise might have wanted to do. Also, Burnham had already tried those things they had failed utterly. They bankrupted the country and reduced it from the ranks of a middle income nation at the time of independence to a country only a notch above Haiti in terms of their per capita income. As a consequence, Jagan did not attempt to reverse Hoyte's economic openings, but did little to deepen them either.

Four years into his presidency, Jagan suffered a heart attack. Unlike his predecessor, he was offered US medical treatment by the US Government a gesture which he and Janet Jagan appreciated. In fact, the US Air Force flew him to Walter Reed medical center for treatment, giving him the royal, or I should say presidential treatment. No Cuban doctors for him. Unfortunately, he succumbed a few weeks later to another massive heart attack, without finishing his term. The ruling party named an Afro-Guyanese member of a small coalition partner of Jagan's party to finish it out. When Jagan's party could not agree on a successor, it turned to Jagan's widow Janet Rosenberg Jagan as the party's presidential candidate in 1997. Desmond Hoyte was her opponent, just as he had been her husband's opponent in 1991.

Janet Jagan was a well known figure in Guyana, a major political power in her own right, one of the principal founders of the ruling party, and for years the real organizational force in the PPC party. There were some interesting comparisons to a prominent US power couple in the US at that time and now. Janet also was demonized by Hoyte and his party. Hoyte's campaign was very strident with racial overtones. When Janet Jagan was declared the winner, which was inevitable given the racial makeup of Guyana, things got out of hand.

Q: This was when?

MACK: This was December of 1997. At that point, the Afro-Guyanese population was largely urbanized or lived near the capital, and formed the absolute majority in the capital of Georgetown. When Janet was elected, Hoyte repeatedly claimed massive fraud. It did not matter that OAS and other outside observers did not detect any significant fraud. Afro-Guyanese anger boiled over into rioting and arson. They just could not accept that the PPC had won reelection. Cheddi they had some affection for, but not Janet.

I won't say was situation was totally out of control but it was very, very serious leading CARICOM, the economic association of the English speaking countries in the Caribbean, to intervene and broker discussions between the two parties which led to an uneasy truce that allowed Janet Jagan to take office. Things had been so bad that Janet was hastily sworn in at the presidential residence. And I do not believe Hoyte or his party attended the opening ceremony at of the newly elected National Congress. Things were that tense. By the way the Canadian ambassador, the British high commissioner and I worked with a highly respected, and politically independent Afro-Guyanese figure behind the scenes with CARICOM to urge Hoyte to accept the election results and tell his followers to cease their violence.

However, even after the deal, tensions remained high, with the danger of things getting out of hand at any moment. After about a year of this, President Janet Jagan decided to step down on the grounds that she had some heart condition. She was well into her 70s at that point, but always

struck me as healthy and vigorous. By the way, I found her very approachable and plain speaking with a typical mid-western manner, even though she always retained her communist beliefs.

In any event, she decided, ostensibly for health reasons, to step down. I think the real reason was the constant tension with the opposition with the Afro-Guyanese Party., constantly. She knew she was a red flag to the opposition. In fact, every little issue tended to blow-up into some sort of strife. Labor strife or strife from the street. And so, she decided to step down. In her place the People's Progressive Party Central Committee named Bharrat Jagdeo to finish her term. Jagdeo was a very bright Soviet trained economist of Indo-Guyanese origin. I think he was in his mid or late 30s at the time. He had received his Master's Degree in Economics from Patricio Lumumba University in Moscow along about the time that the Soviet Union was collapsing. Jagdeo was from a small village up the coast from the capital. Years before, the Jagans had identified him as a young man with great leadership promise and had overseen his education and development. The Jagans brought along other young people in party in the same way, like Jagdeo, and eventually sent them off to the Soviet Union for an education. My guess is that they were grooming Jagdeo for the presidency after Cheddi Jagan had hopefully finished two terms so in a sense his assumption of power was premature but inevitable.

When Jagdeo returned to Guyana after his Soviet education, he was given a senior position in the Ministry of Finance and eventually becoming the Minister. I met with him in that capacity and later as president. I found him much less ideological than Janet Jagan. Must have been something about the water in Moscow since he was there when the Soviet Union collapsed.

I think the party's choice in naming him to finish Janet's term was excellent. I found him pragmatic person, and very, very approachable. When he was president, I was able to get right to the point with him, walk through all the issues and reach conclusions. That was his style. By the way, when Janet Jagan was president, she was always available to see me, unlike the Foreign Minister, Clement Rohee, a party loyalist, who avoided me for months at a time even when I issues important to both our countries to discuss. My guess is that he was under the thrall of regime on a bid island off the coast of Florida. A couple of times I went to President Jagan directly to complain about the Foreign Minister and got what I thought was a very fair hearing.

In any event, that was the situation I walked into. A country that had suffered grievously, through because of Marxist economic policies over the preceding thirty years, a country that had fallen from the ranks of a promising mid-level developing country to one that was just about at the bottom of the scale for the Western Hemisphere next to Haiti. A country that had been hemorrhaging its people, including the best and brightest for over a generation!

Q: Where were the Guyanese people going?

MACK: They were mainly going to New York and Toronto. But a lot of educated Guyanese were going to the English speaking Caribbean countries, most of which were substantially better off economically. Many Caribbean Island States needed skilled people - doctors, nurses, school teaches judges etc. Even Botswana was recruiting Guyanese teachers and nurses . Botswana was short on qualified English-speaking teachers and had the money to pay. So they sought them in a much poorer country. The impact of these losses on Guyana, year after year was very high. Even

with several years of growth in the late 80s after Hoyte become president and, Guyana was still losing its best and brightest all over the world. Needless to say, when I got to Georgetown, the lines outside the Embassy consular section were pretty long. One of the first things I did was to set up an appointment system for non-immigrant visa interviews, which ended the problem of lines.

But it was pretty disconcerting when I first arrived, to see lines of people sweltering in the sun and dripping in sweat waiting to get an interview on the chance that they might be allowed to enter the United States on a tourist visa so they could overstay remain in the United States illegally.

But that was the situation in Guyana. We were trying to encourage the private sector. We had training programs to help to private sector organizations develop some economical analysis capability so they could make constructive sound economic policies proposals to the government.

One of the consequences of Guyana's massive out migration was that they had bled so much of its human talent that the government found it very difficult to staff itself adequately. There were simply not enough skilled people around in the country to do all the things that needed to be done. There was a very small, very thin veneer of extraordinarily, able well educated people. But many of them were over 50 years old at that point. They had been educated under the British system, and for one reason or another they had stayed in Guyana and actually succeeded despite the economic situation. Others had gone to work for international organizations; some became international consultants; some where in the private sector, so there was a small group of really stimulating people. Many became wonderful friends. Others would come back to Guyana to visit family -- like university professors in the United States, judges in Antigua or the Bahamas or teachers and etc. Others would be working for the UN. The number still living in Guyana was very small. So it made it very difficult for a private company or the government to move ahead.

Q: Did you get any feel in talking to your predecessors who had been there that these socialist or Marxists governments were essentially driving people away. It seemed to be a deliberate policy. Did they understand what they were doing?

MACK: I think Forbes Burnham knew exactly what he was doing back in the late 60s and 70s. I think he felt he could consolidate and maintain power by driving away those people. His successor and fellow PNC party member Desmond Hoyte tried to move the government back to the center. Hoyte had reprivatized a couple of significant businesses and was trying to attract foreign enterprise to come back to Guyana. And he had some success, but when the country started to grow again, it was from a very low base. And while Cheddi Jagan did not welcome these policy changes, which occurred before he took office, he did not really attempt to reverse them. On the other hand, he did not have much of a choice because at that point, he had nobody else to turn to. No socialist country was around to bail him out. Remember Forbes Burnham had received significant assistance from the Soviets and from Cuba during a number of years. But those sources had dried up. So Guyana had nowhere else to go.

Q: Well did you ever talk a heart to hard conversation with Cheddi or Janet Jagan to say look what has happen to you?

MACK: Cheddi Jagan had died 6 months before I arrived. And I never had an ideological conversation with Janet Jagan. We are talking about a fully formed person her mid-70s who had worked on behalf of her Marxist beliefs her entire adult life. I just don't think that kind of conversation would have been productive. My guess is that she would have blamed Guyana's problem on the excesses and corruption of the Burnham government, not on any basic flaws in Marxist thought. I did make a number of speeches on the importance of free enterprise, foreign and domestic private investment, open markets, and less restrictive regulatory regimes to Guyana's economic development, but my focus was on the business community.

I do remember once that I had an informal conversation with one of the top leaders of Jagan's PPC party right after the Fifteenth Party Congress. I had run into him at a cocktail party. The newspapers had reported his speech stating the ruling party's "unswerving commitment to Marxist Leninist principles." We had always been friendly so I went up to him and in the course of our conversation, referred to his remarks, and said bluntly "you don't really still believe that stuff do you." His response was in a serious but friendly tone. "Oh! Absolutely I believe it" he said. We are committed to this. Basically, our time will come." I was a bit surprised, but he was being very serious, not hostile at all but serious. That was world view of those of his generation in the party leadership. These folks were in their fifties or up at that time.

The party did all the things you would expect of a Marxist party. May-Day was a big deal. The party leadership would establish slogans for each May-Day celebration. And the faithful would chant them like "Forward ever, Backward never". They would sing the "Internationale" But they were always very friendly toward me. Nobody was hostile to me. There was no tension. One of Jagan's key deputies, a 1970s Howard University trained medical doctor with whom I had a very good relationship, would always address me, have jokingly as "comrade ambassador". With the exception of the Foreign Minister, I had access to anyone I wanted in the government. They were perfectly willing to see me. They invited me to everything. And the U.S. had significant assistance programs there and of course an active Peace Corps program.

Q: We are talking about a time when the Soviet Union ceased to be the Soviet Union, I think by '92. And reverberations all over Eastern Europe. The whole system, essentially Marxist Leninist just died on the American and European campuses, I think.

MACK: Well I don't think the average Indo-Guyanese guy in Guyana who voted loyally for the PPC cared about Marxism at all. But the party leadership did. The old line people. Especially those over 50 and were raised in this dogma. And remember they worked harder than anyone else in the party. They were moving all around the country all the time tending to their grass-root party organizations. They were constantly organizing and fertilizing the faith of the Party cadre. This was a party organized like the communist party. It was a communist party! But it was operating when communism's time had clearly passed.

Q: You mentioned the Foreign Minister several times in not the most friendly terms. Who was he?

MACK: His name was Clement Rohee. He had been Foreign Minister for quite a while when I arrived. He always seemed to have plenty of time to sign trade and cultural agreements with Cuba, but did not have much time for the Ambassador of the United States which was providing fifteen million dollars a year in assistance. Remember this was a country with 800,000 people. We had also a large Peace Corp contingent. And of course the US was the largest market for Guyana's exports. In our meetings he was civil, but he would put me off for 6 weeks at a time before he would agree to see me. It was very, very frustrating. On two occasions I actually wrote letters to the President Jagan essentially saying look, I have some serious business to conduct with your government and I can't seem to get any time with the Foreign Minister. She immediately called me in and we talked.

Q: At that point what were the American interests?

MACK: They were not huge. There were a number of American businesses there. Gold mining companies, although the largest was Canadian, a US owned bauxite mining operation, fish processing companies, a large box company. The tropical timber industry was large but not in American hands. We were concerned about the high level of illegal immigration to the US from and through Guyana. Drug trafficking was an issue. Tough we never had a permanent DEA Agent we did have a multiple ton cocaine bust of a ship passing through Georgetown. And we were concerned with Guyana simply because it was a very poor in the Western Hemisphere that we wanted to see develop. But I cannot say that United States had absolutely critical foreign policy interests either because Guyana's geographic or proximity issue or because they produced a strategic mineral unavailable elsewhere. That would be a vast overstatement.

Q: Now at one point way back we were concerned about Guyana was part of a n expanding crescent in Caribbean that include Cuba and Granada..

MACK: Actually there is some truth to that. During the "Cold War" Guyana was quite an interesting place. The Soviets had a huge Embassy, the Chinese had a large presence as well as Yugoslavs and the Romanians. Even by the time I got there the North Koreans still maintained an Embassy, the Chinese were building a brand new embassy, and, of course, the Cubans were there, in fairly large numbers -- medical people and sports trainers. As you know Cuba was renting out their medical people and athletic coaches all over Latin America and the Caribbean.

There is an interesting story I would like to tell you. The Soviet Embassy, I guess in the mid-80s, was built on a choice piece of land on the coast donated by the government. U.S. had wanted to build a new embassy as well but did not want to accept the property where the government wanted to put us because it had been confiscated from its owners by the Burnham government without compensation. Therefore, we decided to build our modern bomb proof on the same plot of land on which the Ambassador's old wooden residence had been located, but with an exemption from the new State Department setback standards since there was simply not enough room. .

The Soviets Embassy was a large compound that contained not only the chancery, but also, in the typical soviet manner, the apartments and recreation facilities for the twenty five or so Soviet

families. By the time I arrived the Soviet Union no longer existed and the Soviet Embassy was now the Russian Embassy. However, Russia at that point had fallen on very hard economic times and could not keep the entire compound going.

To compensate they built a lousy chain link fence right down the middle of the compound and turned the apartments into a hotel and athletic facilities – pool, tennis court, weight room into a private club open to all who wanted to pay the monthly fee the “Ambassador” club. They also rented out their recreation hall, which was converted into a night club, called “Night Flight”. Since there were few sports facilities around, I joined the “Ambassador Club” for a time.

I should note that the Russian Ambassador was very friendly as was the Chinese Ambassador. There were only 12 ambassadors in Guyana. Of course I was restricted on my contacts with the Cuban ambassador, but I remember there were only 12 foreign embassies in Guyana. It was a small place, and the Cuban was the Dean of the diplomatic corps based on his length of service in Georgetown. And also since I was one of the few Spanish speakers around, I got invited to social events for the Spanish speaking community at which the Cuban ambassador was almost always present. When I was with the Cuban in such situations, we spoke mostly of baseball and he told dirty jokes. In fact, there was a custom that each month one of the 12 foreign Ambassadors would host a lunch for the other 11 ambassadors. And in that situation I had to invite the Cuban as the Dean of the diplomatic corps. I was unable to communicate at all with the North Korean since he spoke no language I knew, and certainly not English. At that time, the 3-4 North Korean diplomats in Georgetown survived by selling contraband, liquor, you name it, they had brought in under their diplomatic privileges. I communicated with the Russian, Venezuelan, Colombian, and Cuban ambassadors in Spanish. None of them spoke decent English.

Q: Did Guyana have any border problems at the time?

MACK: Guyana had a long standing border problem with Venezuela. Actually was more than a border problem, an *existential* problem since Venezuela claimed at least two thirds of Guyana’s national territory. The problem dated back to the nineteenth century when Guyana was a still British colony. The dispute had been settled by international arbitration in the early 1900s, which, while Guyana was still British Guyana, largely in Guyana’s favor. A prominent American whose name I cannot recall was one of the arbiters. Venezuela accepted the ruling for forty, fifty or sixty years. However, I think in the early 1960s, one of the assistants of the arbitration panel now on his death bed alleged that arbitration decision had been cooked. The Venezuelan Government immediately seized on this alleged confession to declare the arbitration decision null and void and reinstated its claim.

I personally think that British historical British claim is probably correct given that the Dutch and then the British had established plantations along the coast of the disputed area over 300 years before Guyana’s independence. But while I was in Guyana, the Chavez government did not push the issue.

Q: Was there any residue of Jonestown?

MACK: No! There was no residue of Jonestown, site of the mass suicide of over 800 American followers of the California sect led by the Rev. Jim Jones. By the way, I visited the place 20 year

after the end and found virtually nothing. You would not know that almost a 1000 people lived there. The jungle had reclaimed it., except for couple of rusty old tractors and other farm implements. By the way Jonestown is located in an extremely isolated area in Western Guyana not far from Venezuela. No roads link the area to the outside world. Everything had to move by air or boat . It was very inaccessible. That is why Rev Jones was able to do get away with the things he did in Jonestown away from the scrutiny of the world. Unless you were invited at the time, you could have not gotten into the settlement even if you were physically able to get to the front gate which itself would have been difficult.

Q: What was the Peace Corps doing?

MACK: Oh! The Peace Corps was very active. They were working in health, they taught school, they worked in community development. Having been a former Peace Corps volunteer myself, I was very close to the director and the volunteers. I visited the volunteers frequently. However, Guyana was a challenging place for volunteers because of threats to their personal security. Shortly before I had arrived there had been a spate of assaults on volunteers including rapes to the point that the Peace Corps came close to leaving the country. The attacks were criminal in nature, not politically motivated. There was a high level of violent crime in Guyana in general. Most volunteers physically stood out and were seen as easy targets by the criminal element. In the end the Peace Corps decided to stay but did remove the volunteers from urban areas. They had originally thought the volunteers would be safe there since they had placed them with families thinking that their living with local families would give them protection. That turned out not be the case given the high level of criminality in the community.

Security in the rural areas turned out to be much better. However, even there life was not easy for volunteers. The climate is very hot and humid. Even though trade winds blow through the Guyana coast, for those without electricity life was hard.

Q: What was USAID doing?

MACK: AID was helping to strengthen private sector organizations. They worked in health and they financed the reconstruction of sea walls or dikes. Remember much of Guyana's coast is three or four feet below sea level at high tide. First the Dutch and then the British built sea walls all along the coast for 150 miles to reclaim tidal swamps for agriculture. Sea walls need to be maintained. And they were not well maintained under the Burnham government after independence. A lot of sections had crumbled and collapsed. A lot of rock had be brought in from the interior to rebuild the walls. By the way there is no surface rock on the coast. It is all mud. Rock had be brought from inland. It was quite expensive.

We did some training of judges and prosecutors and helped them rewrite some legal codes and things like that.

Q: Did you find as Ambassador that the State Department had no particular interest in Guyana?

MACK: Yes. Interest was very, very limited. We were way off Washington's radar scope.

Q: At one time it was pretty high up on the scope. This was when the Cubans were active and all. We all knew the name of Cheddi and Janet Jagan..

MACK: That is correct. That was during the cold war.

Q: Did we have any bilateral interest at all?

MACK: Nothing huge. Nothing to compare with Venezuela or Mexico.

Q: You left there in 2000?

MACK: I did.

Q: And then what?

MACK: Before we go there, I should tell you about one scandal that hit us in Guyana. While I was there an untenured Junior Officer named Tom Carroll arrived at post as a rotational office. He had come from the US Interest Section in Taiwan. What I did not know, since the Department did not tell me, was that Carroll had left Taiwan early under a cloud. And he went to work first in the consulate session as our one non immigrant Visa Officer. Remember, we were a very small post. Sometime after his arrival, I would imagine three to six months after his arrival, he fell in with a crowd of visa fixers. And he went into business with them. And over a period of about a year, he sold about a thousand visas, for I would say between five or ten thousand dollars a piece. It turned out that he had made arrangements to be paid at home by the fixer.

Carroll arrived I think in 1998 I believe and was assigned to the Consulate Session as the Visa Officer working with non-immigrants. His *refusal* rate was, in fact, twice as high as his predecessor. And he created an image of somebody who was very committed to his job and who took his responsibility of adjudicating non-immigrant visa applicants very seriously. By the way, among the first time applicants, our refusal rate was historically about 90%. Even counting all applicants our refusal rate normally was about seventy percent, to give you an idea. I will not talk about his supervisor, the head of the consular section, but obviously Carroll was not well supervised. Overtime, unbeknownst to me and unbeknownst to his supervisor, Carroll began to sell visas in cahoots with a known Guyanese visa fixer. He covered his tracks well since his refusal rate remained well above that of his predecessor.

About a year before I left, and about ten months after Carroll arrived, I began to get reports from various sources alleging he was selling visas. By the way these such allegations are constant at high refusal posts.

Q: Oh Yes! I was a consular all of my career, but you have to take such allegations seriously.

MACK: You have to take them seriously. When I first heard about his alleged involvement, I was somewhat skeptical I have to confess because Carroll had been very, very assiduous in tracking down visa scams and that sort of thing, particularly involving Chinese migrants. He spoke fluent Mandarin by the way. The Chinese came through Hong Kong, some of them with

visas they had purchased from the Surinamese Embassy in Beijing. They transited the Netherlands where the authorities simply let them continue on to Suriname. Eventually they made their way to Guyana by boat and on to Venezuela and up through the Caribbean to the US.

In any event, an investigation into Carroll was launched first by our post security officer, later assisted by others sent from Washington. By September of 1999, a serious investigation was underway and it was pretty clear to me that Carroll had in fact sold visas. Only a few of us in the embassy that knew an investigation was under way. Keep in mind ours was a small embassy. The American staff of only fifteen, almost all of whom frequently socialized together, from the lowest to the highest ranking. I regularly played basketball with this Carroll. He and his wife were frequently at my house. It was that kind of post, like a family. Yet, at the same time I knew an investigation was going on. Of course, I couldn't let on even to my wife. To make a long story short Carroll was led to believe that another consular officer was willing to sell visas. Since Carroll wanted to keep his business going after he left post, he propositioned the other officer to go into business with him for part of the proceeds.

Keep in mind I knew all this was going on. You can imagine living like this at a small post. When Carroll was about to leave post for home leave and his next assignment, I threw a big farewell party for him. The short of it is that when Carroll returned to Chicago for home leave, he was arrested by federal agents. He was given an opportunity to cooperate with the prosecutors for a reduced sentence but despite the incontrovertible evidence against him, including tapes of his propositions to the other officer, he refused and was sentenced to twenty-one years in jail. Two of his Guyanese confederates were caught in the US and are serving time. I think this was the first successful prosecution of a US consular officer for visa fixing for many years. I think Carroll is getting out this year after serving six years. The FBI recovered over a million dollars in cash and gold bullion from several safe deposit boxes. My guess is that he has several million more stashed somewhere that was not recovered. Possibly in Taiwan since his wife was Taiwanese and I believe we have no extradition treaty in Taiwan.

Q: Well, what was his background?

MACK: He was an American from Chicago. At least one of his parents was Irish since it turned out he had an Irish passport as well as a diplomatic passport. By the way we don't have an extradition treaty with either Ireland or Taiwan so he was never granted bail. I have to admit I liked Carroll. While he did have a very short fuse, he was smart and energetic and would have made an excellent commercial officer if he could have controlled his temper. In the beginning it never occurred to me that he was selling visas. It was a tragic situation and absolutely devastated my American staff when I brought them in Sunday to announce his arrest. People were absolutely devastated. They could not believe it. These were people who had socialized with him, eaten lunch with him, worked on the visa line with him. They just couldn't believe it. They felt utterly, utterly betrayed. I stayed on an extra month in order just to see this thing through. To make sure he departed post as planned and after his arrest to help the staff heal because they were so devastated by this.

It was not only a said situation, it did not have to happen. If the US Foreign Service personnel system had been willing to tell me that this guy had a checkered past I would have looked at him

in a different way; but I presume they wanted to give him an opportunity to start with a clean slate to be able to get tenure. And the Foreign Service paid the price.

Q: Did you find out what his problem in Taiwan was?

MACK: I never was officially told. I think it may have been some sort of sexual harassment, problem possibly related to visas. I am not sure. But let me tell you another story about this guy that he himself had told me before I knew he was involved in selling visas. His first Foreign Service assignment had been to Beijing. As a junior rotational office there, he had spent some time working with the visa section chief, a former marine, who was later indicted for visa fraud – that means selling visas, but who beat the rap. Carroll actually told me this. It never occurred to me then that Carroll had learned from this officer and came to Georgetown with criminal intent.

Q: That very seldom ever happens.

MACK: I am not so sure. Apparently the Foreign Service has passed these people along quite a bit. Carroll is not the first Junior Officer or non-Junior officer I have served with who has been investigated for visa fraud. He is only the first one I have worked with who was convicted and served time. But I know for a fact that others with whom I have served were associated with visa fraud, and in one case proven to be involved in a visa selling scheme. That particular guy was not prosecuted and allowed to retire since the investigators could not prove he personally took any money. The Foreign Service has a problem here. After Carroll was arrested, I sent my A-100 classmate Mary Ryan, then serving Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of Consular Affairs a cable on this with some recommendations for changes in training at FSI. Once I returned from Georgetown, I personally told her then deputy, Maura Harty, of my concerns. Both are very capable officers, but did not feel I got a very sympathetic response. Both were very protective to their consular officers. So what can I say.

RONALD D. GODARD
Ambassador
Guyana (2000-2003)

Ambassador Ronal Godard was born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. He was educated at Odessa College and the University of Texas. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, he joined the State Department in 1967 and was posted to Panama, the first of his assignments in Central and South America. These include Costa Rica, Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina and Guyana, where he served as Ambassador from 2000 to 2003. His Washington assignments also concerned Latin American Affairs. During his career the Ambassador served with the Organization of American States, was diplomat in residence at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was Political Officer in Istanbul. Ambassador Godard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: You left there in 2000. What happened?

GODARD: I was nominated as ambassador to Guyana and served there for two and a half years.

Q: What was the situation in Guyana in 2000 when you got there?

GODARD: Guyana was just about to have an election. Elections within that country are unfortunately incredibly divisive. The election in 2001 was no exception. I got there at the end of the year, or at the beginning of 2001. The country is divided racially between Afro Guyanese and Indo Guyanese. Guyanese who were brought in from India as indentured servants originally and of course the afro-Guyanese were brought in as slaves. They all live right along the coast, 90% of the population is along the narrow band along the Atlantic coast of Guyana. And these political parties ferociously contest national elections. The numbers are such that if it's an honest election, inevitably the Indo Guyanese party is going to win because they constitute about 55, some would say 60%, of the population. Because the parties have managed to narrow down their appeal to just those racial groups. They don't have a broader electorate to appeal to, despite the best efforts of some politicians in the country to broaden their appeal. So these elections are always contested after the results are in, there are claims of fraud and there is always violence associated with it. When I got there I was trying to avoid repetition of the old pattern. I was working regularly with an international group – friends of Guyana who were investing in the election. Through AID we had put a lot of money into getting the computer systems, the electoral database up to date so they could use that for counting the votes and ensuring that the voter lists were honest. We also worked with the EU which had a program of assistance for the election.

Q: Was it the OSCE or...?

GODARD: The EU itself. They had a representative there with an aid mission, assistance mission. And we had also the UK, former colonial power, and the Canadians. Canadians always have an interest in the Caribbean, but particularly in Guyana because there are so many Guyanese-origin immigrants in Toronto in particular, all over Canada, but Toronto especially. So those were essentially the ones, but we also had PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) and other international organizations participating. We would meet on a weekly basis coordinating our activities and we worked with the electoral tribunal very closely. They had a very highly respected civil servant, he had been the commander of their armed forces. He was retired and had been brought back as head of the electoral tribunal. He was respected by both sides. So we had a good shot to having a peaceful and fair election. But, inevitably there were issues, and again there was no question about who won the election. The count was imperfect, but we had observers from the U.S. from the Carter Center, from the OAS. The EU had observers, the UK had observers. We had all kinds of observers. We all agreed who had won the election. Different reports were done on the electoral proceedings. The Carter Center came down, in fact President Carter. I met up with him again, had him over to the house again and all of us agreed who won the election. It was the Indo Guyanese party. And there was demonstration and rioting, burning of buildings by the Afro Guyanese, and that finally sort of dampened down. But during the whole time I was there, there was this aggravating political issue. There's a minority sector in their national assembly from the opposition. They would frequently walk out to try to discredit the legislative power doing stuff they have to do. What they were after I think was shared power, but what they really wanted was power. The problem is the Afro Guyanese party had been in

power for about 35 years previously to the first honest election held in 1992 I think. So anyway, politics dominated from the time I got there until the time I left. Another issue that took up a lot of my time there was working with the problem of HIV/AIDS. Guyana is second only to Haiti I think in the incidence, in the Caribbean, of HIV/AIDS.

Q: Where was that coming from, was that a reflection of Africa?

GODARD: No, there are different theories as to the origin of it. The Guyanese have been exporters of population for some years, especially since the end of the colonial period. Very educated people. So there's a lot of contact with particularly North America, but also the UK, people back and forth. Not like in the old days. They don't just close the door on the old country, they keep their ties. So there's a lot of travel back and forth. So there's that. And in the Caribbean in general I think HIV/AIDS is a problem. I think it more than likely came from North America, those contacts with North America. But it's because of the health conditions. The country is second, some people say Honduras is poorer, but probably second to Haiti in poverty. So the standard of living is pretty desperate, and disease is an issue. When we got there, there was a lot of denial in the society, in not wanting to come to terms with the issue. We had a very good program which I got involved with personally, and did a lot of personal diplomacy in working with speeches and doing walks with them and so forth. The AID coalition of about 10 NGOs, they were mostly young people's groups, and they were attacking the problem from different angles, but a lot of it was education in schools, that they were conducting. So that was a big issue.

It was also a country where crime, like in all the Caribbean, was becoming more serious and the police were a serious problem there. Their corruption. We pinged them repeatedly on torture by the police. Killing people rather than arresting them is what it amounts to. There were many instances where with proper police procedures you could have brought the guy to justice and they wind up instead opening fire and killing them. So there were those issues. We didn't work with the police in particular, but the UK did, and we supported them in their efforts. Our program was primarily with the army in the security field. We did the army and they did the police sort of thing. We split it up, and it worked fairly well as far as a mechanism for assistance, but we had a long way to go in strengthening the police organization. The army is in pretty good shape.

Q: Was there a concern about Cuban influence? One time there was.

GODARD: It's still there. The Cubans have a good-sized mission there, and they also have a number of scholarships that they offer to Guyanese students every year. They have there something in the neighborhood of 50 medical personnel, nurses, physicians and technical people. We don't offer to scholarships so I didn't have anything to contend with. The president increased by about 50% the number of scholarships available to Guyanese students in Cuba. On Cuban issues, we couldn't count on the Guyanese vote in international organizations; there was a problem there. But the Cuban threat of the past, using Guyana as perhaps a springboard for influence in other countries, that really wasn't an issue.

Q: What about the Venezuela border?

GODARD: Well Venezuela claims about three fifths of the border, three fifths of the territory of Guyana. And this goes back a long way. There was a war during the Cleveland administration which supposedly settled the border between Guyana and Venezuela. It has subsequently been repudiated by the Venezuelans, and they reiterated their claim to this other three fifths of Guyanese territory. It was always there, and the Guyanese were always looking over their border at Venezuela which is their big neighbor. Of course you've got Brazil toward the south, but no border disputes with them. They were particularly suspicious of this new government that had taken office in Venezuela not that long before I got there, Hugo Chavez's government. In rewriting the constitution, he reiterated that claim to Guyanese territory. But it was managed fairly well. I always thought it could be settled, but maybe not. All they can do is, it's a political, old, old issue for Venezuela. It would be very difficult for them internally to just settle it. But it factored in the development in Guyana, when there were rumblings about it, and maybe they weren't too serious. An article would appear in the press or something. It acted as a disincentive for investment in that particular part of Guyana, particularly with petroleum resources.

Q: How'd you find living there?

GODARD: It's a tough country. Of course, I as ambassador had a brand new residence that my predecessor had dedicated a good deal of his time and effort to getting built. It was a big spacious place. It wasn't quite finished when I arrived, but we moved in several weeks after our arrival. It was built by a local contractor to our specifications. We don't own the building, but it was built as an ambassador's residence. As I say, my predecessor worked on the plans, and so it had just the right kind of space for entertaining. It had good grounds for covering things like the fourth of July reception, and then opening it up for the fourth of July picnic whenever you have the American community which is quite large in Guyana. So it was ideal space wise. It also had a swimming pool so the community.. there weren't many recreational opportunities there, so we had a nice pool which everybody in the embassy community had access to, and it had tennis courts. We don't have any private clubs in Guyana, so they could have those sports facilities available. It was designed with central air conditioning which is not a thing you do in Guyana normally. Unfortunately they didn't insulate the pipes sufficiently so shortly after we moved in the ceiling started collapsing from the distillation on the pipes. And the plumbing in general was really a wreck. My wife nearly went out of her mind. Just before our first fourth of July reception, the evening before there were huge clumps of plaster all over the living room where we were supposed to be receiving the president and the foreign minister into the house, and everybody else, the politico-economic elite of the country. We got it all patched back together, but it was a real headache. At least the first year I was there it was a real problem. But comfortable. Having workmen around all the time, comfortable residence. A very nice embassy interestingly enough.

It had better hospital facilities. Even for tooth extraction. We'd take people out and send them up to the States. Malaria was a problem, Dengue Fever is something they also worried about. And just general infections from the water. You had to watch the water. It was a small town, easy to get around along that band of the coast. As I mentioned earlier, not many recreational possibilities, but one of the great recreational opportunities was if you took a little time and went into the interior of Guyana, you go into these pristine untouched rainforests that are just spectacular. It's not easy to do, but there's a number of resorts along some of the rivers. You can get to those by river. If you're going overland, there are no roads to speak of. There is one chancy

road in the rainy season. There was a lot of work to try to improve it while I was serving there. A road between the coast and Brazil. The idea being that there are markets that are in Brazil that are potentially very important for Guyana. And cities like Manaus which are now a million people offer quite a source of consumers if they had better transportation. But any rate, those natural beauties were something that you can't match in any other country. The Kaieteur Falls is just a spectacular place. It's in the state park there. My wife made several trips, she visited places where the wildlife is just unimaginable. Having giant river otters come right up into the house, that sort of thing. Giant anteaters, monkeys all over the place. Parrots and macaws. Just incredibly biodiverse system.

Q: I take it Jonestown was a distant, nasty memory?

GODARD: One of the first things I did when I got there as ambassador was visit the site, because I wanted to be able to tell people that I'd been there and seen what was there. It's an archaeological site. There's been no effort, nobody wants to remember Jonestown, so there's no memorial there, there's no effort at all to preserve the place. Immediately after everyone was killed, they committed suicide, whatever happened, the ones that survived also set fire to all the buildings, and then afterwards there were these rumors, stories, apocryphal tales, whatever about Jim Jones' treasure which was buried out there somewhere. All this money that's supposedly out there. So the area has been tremendously excavated. You cannot imagine. It's really rocky and rough. But it's all overgrown with jungle. I walked around just trying to figure out, where was the main house. I found sort of what must have been part of megaphone. I think Jim Jones had a sound system where he could speak to everyone in the community at the same time. I found part of what looked like a telegraph machine of some kind that had come apart. Then there was a lot of pieces of motors, heavy machinery, and things like that. If you pull the jungle back, clear the ground a little bit, you can find little articles like that, but nothing else.

Q: You didn't have people from San Francisco or something coming to memorialize?

GODARD: No, nothing like that. It's extraordinary how little, there are stories now about it, among the Guyanese, but when it was going on, when it was created out there, people didn't know it was there.

Q: I've interviewed guy who was a DCM there who was actually wounded. This was way out there.

GODARD: It's very near the Venezuelan border, and very isolated. We went in by plane this time, and we had a heck of a time finding somebody to guide us to where it was. There was one Amerindian woman that we finally found who remembered it as a child and she, after a couple of missteps, we went down the wrong road a couple times, we finally found it and walked around, saw the stuff that I was telling you about.

Q: You were there when the twin towers of New York were attacked, 9/11. Did that have any impact on you at all?

GODARD: Very definitely. Everybody. It was a horrifying event to have been back here in the States, but to be overseas where you feel like you're so vulnerable, and for the American citizens living there in particular, they really felt like orphans. That's when being an American really comes home to you, when the country is under attack like that, and you have no earthly idea what's next. So the American community itself felt just swept with this fear of what was going on. Guyana is a country with a Muslim minority, a large one, about 10% of the population. There are mosques all over the country. At least 12, some would say 15, 20%. So there were all kinds of rumors. The first thing I did was call them all together and this is where that big house came in very handy. Got everybody into it, the American community, a lot of missionaries and missionary families in particular. Gathered them there and commiserated with them and told them what I knew at least about the situation. We were pretty much, during those first days, leaving it pretty much to the missions to manage the situation because there was a heck of a lot of stuff up in Washington. We'd even evacuated the building at one point. So I did what I could to reassure the American citizens there, the American staff. There was a tremendous outpouring of sympathy from the Guyanese. It's interesting, Guyana I think I mentioned earlier has been the source of all kinds of out migration. One of the biggest concentrations of expat Guyanese is in New York, in Brooklyn and Queens. That community accounted, per capita basis, probably Guyana was the country that lost the most citizens, because there were about I think 16 Guyanese who were accounted for. It's a country of under a million people. So there was one man who came in very shortly after it happened and had lost his wife in the 9/11 events. President Jagdeo called me immediately upon hearing about it, offered me all kinds of support, condolences, increased security at the embassy. And then there began a bunch of commemorative, mourning events. There were Muslim groups who invited me to come and speak, or Hindu groups. The country is divided between Hindus, Muslims and Christians. About 50% Christian. But I did an ecumenical ceremony at the cathedral where we had all religions including the Bahais represented. I spoke to that gathering. Really very touching and very reassuring too. Shortly after the attack, leaders of the Muslim community came to me and assured me of their goodwill and sympathy, and condemnation of that kind of approach. So that was comforting too. So we went on from there. A year later, we had a commemorative ceremony at the embassy that the President himself came, and a good deal of his cabinet, members of the opposition. It was a very tough period, it was difficult working through it. After that, I spent a lot of time in outreach to the Muslim community, to make sure that we were in touch with each other, that I was explaining our policy in clear terms to them and developing my personal relationships with them.

Q: During this period, the second Bush administration's foreign policy was under a lot of criticism in the United States and certainly in Europe and all, about going unilaterally in various things including attacking Iraq. Did you find the criticism at all was reflected where you were, and did this make things difficult?

GODARD: Oh yeah, that was the big issue in the public domain down there. The press very much in line with the sort of thing you were hearing in Europe about unilateralism by the United States. The Guyanese were critical of our position on Iraq. There was an opportunity, however. The press was open to our getting our message across and that's when I started an awful lot of public diplomacy. Appearances on television. The UK ambassador there and I did a lot of joint appearances. Both the first ambassador I worked with and then his successor. There was a lot of

sentiment for the UK still, favorable sentiment in Guyana, but still a member of the commonwealth. So that was helpful. And my letters to the editor were being published. Especially on television we got an opportunity to get our case before the Guyanese. I did as I say appearances particularly on programs that were dedicated to Muslim audiences. I tried to, there are a number of those in Guyana. It gave us an opportunity to have our say, and in some cases debate what was going on.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

GODARD: On Guyana? Well, it was a difficult assignment. The one thing that happened at the end, I mentioned the crime. But it reached a particularly acute stage toward the end where there were kidnappings of people, and at one point there was a kidnapping of one of my personnel. The RSO was nabbed and was held for 12 hours I guess before he was finally released. Just a criminal gang. They've developed on the outskirts of Georgetown, the capital, a kind of refuge for a criminal group that was led by some gentlemen who had escaped from prison. They had nothing to lose, multiple crimes, murder in most cases. And they started kidnapping people for profit. This is something that had started in Trinidad and seems to have drifted over to Guyana. Things sort of happened in the Caribbean. Fortunately it turned out well and our RSO was released unharmed. But after that, because I couldn't be assured my people were safe, I had to bring up the pressure on the government to do something about this security issue because otherwise I would have to close the mission. That got their attention, and they finally did go in and wipe out these guys that were in this little village on the outskirts of town. For a while at least, it brought the crime problem down.

Q: How did your staff and family feel about this?

GODARD: Oh, well they were terrorized of course. Everybody was upset. That was another thing, just working with my staff through the issues. You can imagine the sense of insecurity that they have. Is my family safe here now? We were particularly under threat because the police were not doing their job. They reached that stage in deterioration of their capabilities, and these guys were just out of control. So what I did was keep the pressure on the government and eventually they did do what they had to do.

End of reader