

LESOTHO

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RICHARD ST. F. POST **Principal Officer** **Maseru (1966-1968)**

Richard St. F. Post was born in Washington in 1929. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1951 and his master's from George Washington University in 1969. His career includes positions in Ethiopia, Hong

Kong, Somalia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola, Portugal, Ottawa, and Karachi. Mr. Post was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 1990.

Q: *You were there in Swaziland in 1964-66 and in Lesotho in 1966-68.*

POST: Lesotho is a country inhabited by Basutos, one of whom is a Mosuto, and all of whom speak Sesotho.

Q: *Oh boy, oh boy!*

POST: Unfortunately, the French missionaries got in there first with orthography and they decided that the "utu" sound was best rendered by "otho". That's why so many people call it Lesotho.

Q: *What was our policy?*

POST: That was basically it. I think we were anxious to have in those countries, certainly after they became independent, we wanted to have people in charge who were clearly independent of South African control. Now that certainly happened in Botswana. Seretse Khama was virtually unopposed in becoming the head of that government. I must say it was a wrenching decision for me, as independence in those two countries approached because I could have had my choice, either to go to Lesotho or Botswana. I opted for Lesotho, because the domestic politics promised to be much more exciting. Indeed they were too exciting. But it was wrenching because I had such a great relationship with Seretse Khama and his wife Ruth, who, of course is white. That was a source of great anguish to the Afrikaners that they were going to have on their borders, a country ruled not only by a black but who was married to a white.

Anyhow I had really good relations with them. They were really very delightful people. I would drive vast distances across South Africa to go and visit them every now and then, to check up on what was going on. In those days Gaborone, which is now the capital, was being built. They hadn't completed it. It was just a railroad siding. They did have a few houses up, including a house for the Prime Minister. The nearest hotel was in Lobatsi, which is near the South African border. Well, the last couple of times that I went there, I would drive over--it was the dustiest drive that you could imagine in your life--and get to the hotel in Lobatsi, to be told that my reservation had been canceled. "What?" "You are expected to stay with the Prime Minister." So I would go to Gaborone and stay with the Prime Minister. He would give a party, a cocktail party, a dinner party, whatever. And I would be there after the guests had left to hear Seretse and Ruth tear apart the minister of agriculture and that sort of thing. Fascinating insights. As I said, I gave that up for the likelihood of a more active political scene in Lesotho.

Q: *Were there any issues that came between the United States and those countries, for example, the UN votes?*

POST: After independence, they were represented in the UN so we would have to go in with the usual laundry list of issues and how the United States was going to vote and give them a copy, so that we would hope that we would vote the same way. Then that led to an interesting exchange

between me and the man who was the principal fellow in the Lesotho foreign ministry, in charge of UN affairs and many other things as well.

I forget what the issue was. It was some issue on which we were going to vote one way and we wanted them to vote that way. It was clear that South Africa was going to vote a different way. He said that, "I agree with you, I agree with you, your logic and all the rest. It is a little difficult for us to vote against South Africa, particularly if they know it in advance. Because then they can come and lean on our Prime Minister, who was Chief Jonathan at the time, who was alleged to have received a certain amount of support from the South African government to get his election through. Anyhow he said, "How can I instruct our representative in New York, without the South Africans knowing about it? We don't have any codes or anything like that." I was aware of the fact that there is a significant literature in Sesotho language. Outside Ethiopia, there may be more native literature published in Sesotho than in any other language in Africa. Any African language.

Q: So you were saying that there was considerable literature in Sesotho.

POST: The point was that I had been, at that point it was a one-man post. I eventually got a secretary, making it a two-person post and eventually I got an assistant, so then it was a three-person post, but we were operating on one-time pads, where you would have these three-letter combinations. You had a text, which is the same as the text held at the other end of the line, and then you have 3 letter combinations that you feed into the code. Anyhow I suggested to him that he get a Sesotho book and keep a copy himself and give one to his ambassador in New York and then they could make up their own code by referring to a page in that book that was most unlikely to be in the possession of the South Africans. And they could make the combinations. Then they could instruct their men without the South Africans hearing about it.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Deputy Principal Officer
Maseru (1969-1971)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: So what happened?

CARNEY: I went to Lesotho.

Q: Did this come as a surprise?

CARNEY: Elaine Schunter was the personnel officer at the time in Saigon. Elaine and I got along pretty well, partly because she felt guilty that she had failed to file the first efficiency report, and delayed my movement from FSO-8 to 7 for six months. The time didn't concern me at all. The assignment to Maseru came in and she said she didn't know where it was. Well, neither did I. She said, "I think it's Africa, but I'll call you back." She called me back and said, "Oh, you don't want to go." They actually had the post report. She sent it over. To this day, I can remember how it starts: "Snakes are not a problem if common sense precautions are taken. The grass airport lands flights twice weekly from Johannesburg." The initial paragraph reads, "Lesotho is inhabited by the Basotho people, all of whom speak Sesotho. The king of the country is Moshoeshe." Every term had its phonetic pronunciation. It just goes on and on like that. It was my second assignment, so I decided, of course, I'd go.

Q: You were there from when to when?

CARNEY: About August of '69 to about July of '71.

Q: Had a significant other appeared at this point?

CARNEY: Not at this point.

Q: You'd better describe where Lesotho is and the circumstances of its development.

CARNEY: Lesotho was one of the three British High Commission Territories in southern Africa. It is the only one totally surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. It was founded on the run from Shaka Zulu's impis in the first third of the 19th century by Moshoeshe I, who took refuge on a hill that was very easy to fortify and defend against the weapons that the Zulu impis were using. They fought off the various Zulus, then fought off the Boer moving out of the Cape in the trek of the 1830s. But through astute statesmanship and advice from a set of Protestant missionaries who had arrived in the 1830s as well, the Basotho managed to get themselves inserted as a "flea in Queen Victoria's blanket" and became a protectorate of the British in the 1860s or '70s. It maintained that status until it looked as if the British were going to merge the High Commission Territories with South Africa in the period after WW I. But the ascension of Jan Smuts and the United Party in South Africa and, while not apartheid, a growing effort to limit the freedoms of blacks in southern Africa, caused the British to delay. Then with the 1949 electoral victory of the Nationalist Party as the Afrikaners had out bred the English speakers, the continuation of those three High Commission Territories was guaranteed. The Brits just simply were not going to turn them over to apartheid South Africa. In the mid-'60s, they regained their actual independence, which they all three hold to this day.

U.S. Policy was to support the independence, and prove the viability of black run states in southern Africa. We wound up with, first, a rotating chargé d'affaires and then resident embassies headed by chargé d'affaires because Senator Fulbright didn't want us willy nilly to put full fledged embassies in all of black Africa, which was politically a mistake. That ultimately changed as the chargé were upgraded in the '70s to ambassadors.

Q: When you arrived on the grassy airport-

CARNEY: I didn't. I flew into the nearest large South African town, Bloemfontein, one of the three capitals of South Africa. The judiciary is headquartered in Bloemfontein. Bloemfontein exists on land stolen, by the British under Captain Warden's 1855 decision, from the Kingdom of Lesotho of the epoch. It's a 90-mile ride from Bloemfontein Airport to Maseru Bridge across the Caledon River. My predecessor met me with every sign of relief in his eyes, Peter Jones, son of Ambassador Jones. I think Peter himself got an embassy. I arrived in dusty Maseru to take up residence at the house we were renting for the junior officer, there only being 2 Foreign Service officers, a Secretary-Communicator, a USIA representative, a Peace Corps director, and a couple dozen volunteers.

Q: What was your impression when you saw this?

CARNEY: This was pretty close to the end of the earth but it looked interesting. It didn't take any time at all to realize that the people in Lesotho were very squared away, warm, welcoming, and solid.

Q: What was the government like?

CARNEY: It was an elected government under Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan. A year after independence, there had been parliamentary elections which the Basotholand National Party, the BNP, had won, and Leabua Jonathan of a chiefly family had become prime minister. Their opposition was the Basotholand Congress Party, which was very leftist for the time under Ntsu Mokhele. There were elections scheduled for January of 1970 as well, so we were approaching an electoral period when I got there in August.

Q: Was there a king?

CARNEY: The king was the great grandson of Moshoeshe, Moshoeshe II.

Q: What was his role?

CARNEY: He was a constitutional monarch at that point.

Q: Was he a tribal chief as well?

CARNEY: He was. There was a political party, the Marematlou Freedom Party, that supported enhanced powers for the king, but they were very much of a minority.

Q: Who was the chargé?

CARNEY: Initially and for a temporary period it was Edward A. Dow, Jr. He was there with his wife, Virginia. He was an old India hand and Indonesia hand, but he had come from somewhere in North Africa to do this just before he retired. He was old Foreign Service, a good man. He was replaced by Stephen Gurney Gebelt, who had at one point been chargé in Salisbury before he

became chargé in Maseru, and had had any number of other posts.

Q: Had you had any briefing as far as Africa goes?

CARNEY: I vaguely remember being so urgently needed that no time was available even for the Area Studies course at FSI. If I left Saigon in June and got to Maseru in August and I had home leave I didn't really have time for much. I remember Oliver Crosby was the director of AF/S. I had some conversations there in Washington, but nothing else sticks in my memory.

Q: As you arrived there, had you picked up just by reading or being a student, did you have any feeling about what was happening in South Africa?

CARNEY: No, but that was clearly what I ultimately wound up doing: South Africa watching. Lesotho, you can pretty much grasp in three months. I had enough contacts that I knew what was going on especially after the coup in January of 1970.

Q: How did the coup come about?

CARNEY: The prime minister aborted the elections in mid-count and took over because his party had lost.

Q: Did this make any difference from our point of view or was this just watching a group of people who had their own way of doing things?

CARNEY: It made a difference because it affected the Peace Corps mission. We drew it down dramatically. It certainly affected the view of Lesotho as a democracy. But it didn't ultimately keep us from putting in an ambassador and then installing a resident AID mission. AID had previously been effected by the Office of Southern African Regional Affairs. The relationship just ticked along.

Q: Let's talk about working within Lesotho. How did you find dealing with the government?

CARNEY: The relationship with the government... We were very interested in community development and development in Lesotho in general. It's a rocky country with much of the best land having been acquired by the notorious Captain Warden 100 years previously. As a result, the ambassador's self-help fund, all \$10,000 munificent dollars of it, was under my control. The chargé rarely wanted to go out to an opening or anything, so I was all over the country at the opening of a village water system or a dam or a schoolhouse that we had built or that we had helped to fund the materials for or to build. Up until the coup of January 1970, relationships were very straightforward with the usual demarches for support on UN-related matters at General Assembly time. Entertainment of government officials and the whole panoply of people active in Lesotho, including the small number of embassies proceeded in traditional foreign service style. The Brits had an active high commission. Taiwan had their ambassador there in those days.

Q: Were the South Africans calling the shots?

CARNEY: Not at all. The South Africans were in an interesting position. They were willing to second civil servants to Lesotho. The chief justice of Lesotho, Geldenhuys, was a South African, and a number of officials from the South African government were seconded. There wasn't an embassy and relationships were conducted on sort of an ad hoc basis. We had had a visit of the notorious minister for Bantu affairs, Piet Koornhof. One of my earliest recollections of South Africa watching from Lesotho was when he returned to be interpolated or maybe just to answer questions in parliament. Asked if he had not sat down and dined with Kaffirs. He said he had indeed but he had done it for his country, not because he enjoyed it. This was likely in February or March of 1970 as parliament sits in South Africa, or did, in January, during the summer in the Cape.

Q: What was the Peace Corps doing and how effective were they?

CARNEY: I didn't know how effective they were. I didn't have any clue whether or if they were effective. I knew that they were all out, for the most part, in villages, many engaged in teaching. This was before the Peace Corps became so active in hands-on development projects.

I built a volleyball court in my backyard with the assistance of Peace Corps volunteers who liberated some cement and poles to put the net up. Every Saturday and Sunday afternoon, the Peace Corps came over for volleyball. Whoever was in Maseru was welcome to come. I had taken up with a British girl at that time, so there was more of a social aspect to some aspects of life than professional.

Q: How did you find the embassy? How was it run?

CARNEY: There were only three Americans in the embassy itself: the chargé d'affaires, myself (I was also consul), and a secretary who was also a communicator. One of the things I had done in Washington was to acquire backup communication training on the HW28, a glorified telex. We had a receptionist who was very capable and a driver. I think there was a handyman and a driver as well. We were in an office building until we negotiated with the landlord of a number of our properties to build a chancery. We got the land allocated by the chief of Maseru itself and used a lease purchase agreement to acquire the building that is to this day the U.S. chancery in Maseru, Lesotho. We moved in there in late 1970. Assistant Secretary David Newsom came down as part of an Africa trip to dedicate the building. It was right next door to the house that was rented for me. The house next to me was the PAO. The one next to that was the secretary-communicator. So, we had sort of an American row on the main drag coming from the border point up into downtown Maseru.

Q: How did you find the place run?

CARNEY: The chargé d'affaires was very much old school. He basically let things run by indirection rather than active leadership. One of his predecessors had actually taken the job too seriously and had the secretary taking work home at night. That man and I subsequently had a conversation about 15 years later. We ran into each other in the cafeteria. In Maseru we had overlapped for a week. I had come from Saigon and almost laughed out loud at him when he asked if I had done something within an hour of his having asked me to do it. He had so clearly

lost his sense of perspective and proportion. He seemed to recall that event. He said, "As I look back on Lesotho, I went over the top." That's not a direct quote, but sort of an implicit apology is how I took it and I think is how he meant it. I said, "Well, you should have seen what came after you." One of his predecessors wound up being relieved.

Q: What happened with his successor?

CARNEY: That man basically was sent to Lesotho, kind of put out to pasture, because he had had problems with alcohol before. But the prime minister's coup, as he aborted the 1970 elections, caused a series of problems of violence in the country, and included the arrest of members of the opposition party, and some deaths. The extra stress ensured that he could not keep his drinking under control. He would have occasional episodes and these episodes unfortunately were at parties when he would, out of nowhere, seize on something another guest might say, and most intemperately verbally attack them. After a number of these, he wound up doing the same at the chancery with me. I just left the office, went back to my residence, at which the secretary-communicator shortly appeared, also shaken. We had a drink together, wondered what to do. I had pretty much decided what I was going to do when the chargé arrived. He apologized for whatever he *might* have done, which is the usual non-apology, and argued that if we were going to make any report, we should hold off because he was a sick man, not likely to last much longer. He left and I immediately called the administrative officer in Pretoria who had regional responsibility for the posts and followed with a letter. We got an inspector in three weeks who ultimately recommended that the man be relieved, but it took another 4 or 5 months.

Q: That's always the problem. This put a burden on you as a junior officer.

CARNEY: Fortunately, I had the Saigon tour. It was an enormous gyroscope. I suppose it built a reputation for me as able to handle a range of conflicts.

Q: Speaking of conflicts, with the coup business, were we getting any signs of interest from Washington about it?

CARNEY: There was a successful effort to moderate the policies of the new coup government. Chief Jonathan publicly said to "Time Magazine" in an article on Africa's "durable popinjays," "I've made a coup and I'm proud of it." But the chargé, who could be most effective, would go over, and in the most dispassionate manner point out alternatives and suggest behaviors that would preserve Lesotho's international position. Many times, that advice was on how to deal, for example, with unhappiness over Peace Corps volunteers who were reflecting the opinions of the people of the areas they were resident in, as to the illegality of the regime. I think it kept Chief Jonathan's government from excesses to which it would have given itself. There was also a deputy prime minister who was torturing people in his residence in downtown Maseru, screams coming out and what have you, and this was a matter of some concern as well, even in pre-human rights Washington.

Q: What about before and after the coup? You mentioned making demarches on UN votes? I would think Lesotho would be one of those countries where we could for modest support, financial or what have you, be up for grabs? Or did it vote with the African Union?

CARNEY: I think Lesotho generally voted with the OAU, but not so outrageously. Lesotho, with Taiwan resident, wasn't voting for Red Chinese UN membership, for example. Because it had that vote at the UN and the cable was a circular, I just went in and did it.

Q: This is a good place to stop. The one thing we haven't covered in South Africa watching and reporting on.

Today is July 11, 2002. You were in Lesotho. We didn't cover relations with South Africa.

CARNEY: We didn't, but that's probably alright because we did no reporting on South Africa itself from Lesotho. There was a bit of coverage of relations between the Lesotho and the Boer but nothing of great significance. It was an odd period in Lesotho when many senior civil service positions, and indeed the Chief Justice himself, were not only South Africans, but an Afrikaner. The Chief Justice apparently had no trouble justifying the state of emergency that Chief Jonathan declared on January 23, 1970 when he aborted the elections in mid-count and threw the opposition leadership into jail.

Q: So the justice system was sort of rigged to keep the ruling group in power?

CARNEY: I don't think it was calculated in the rigging. It was generic to the structure of the appeals and the high court that you would have South African civil servants in that. The police, by contrast, did not have South Africans in it. The Lesotho Mounted Police – there was no army at the time – essentially was officered by the British, funded by their ODA. It included officers with experience in Aden, one of the men whom I knew. They were the officers for the Lesotho Mounted Police.

Q: Have we pretty well covered Lesotho?

CARNEY: Yes.

RICHARD J. DOLS
AF, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1972-1973)

Richard J. Dols was born in 1932 in Minnesota and educated at St. Thomas College and the University of Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961. His career included posts in Bordeaux, Toronto, Swaziland and Wellington. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: BLS being?

DOLS: Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. It was a major agreement and largely supplanted the need for a British post independence subsidy to the Swazi budget. So naturally I was reporting on it. I went to see the Attorney General who was a Brit with kind of South African ties. We talked quite a while and he did tell me quite a bit about the agreement. Then he indicated there was a secret protocol to it. About that stage he excused himself saying he had to do something somewhere else in the building. He left me sitting like this, and I am next to a desk right now, with the secret protocol lying right there. I sat there a few moments. Of course I wanted to know what was in the secret protocol, but I thought, "Hey, am I being set up?" Later on I had some other run ins where he was very distinctly hostile to us. It kind of reinforced my judgment not to even cast an eye at things. But I must say I was very tempted.

Q: So you were serving on the BLS Desk from 1972-73. Did you have any feelings about any changes after the Nixon Administration had come in? Was there less interest in the area?

DOLS: Toward my three countries things went the same. It was only after I took over the South African Desk that I realized there were other forces in the picture. As far as third world Africa there were no real changes. What I did mainly on the BLS Desk was to coordinate and push a lot of AID programs.

Q: What type of aid were we doing?

DOLS: All kinds really. We were still into some infrastructure, a lot of vocational training and that kind of thing. I got the AFL-CIO's African program involved in vocational training. Building a huge dam in Lesotho. We were still building big things like that. A road in Botswana which was a most interesting one.

The South Africans mightily objected to us building a road from Zambia to Botswana and down the east side of the Botswana border towards South Africa. They claimed it was going to be an avenue of terrorism. You have to know a little about the geography...There are four countries that meet at a point on the Zambezi on the south, Namibia on the west, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) on the east and Zambia on the north. As usual the colonial area maps were very poor and it was uncertain whether these four borders met at a quadri-point or whether there was a little gap of territory, water, in the middle of the Zambezi that connected directly Zambia and Botswana. That is where we wanted to build the bridge.

We didn't have a legal problem if we had a little gap, but if there was a quadri-point it would be impossible without putting it over a little bit of Rhodesia and a little bit of Namibian territory, which was old Southwest Africa in those days. So we went round and round and studied colonial era documents on it and did everything else to figure out what had happened. It is like old surveys, none of the documents matched.

Again we came to a common sense solution. Maybe we can't build a bridge, but nobody can object to our prescriptive right, that is the right of ancient usage, to operate a ferry across there. There had been a ferry going across there for 50 years between Zambia and Botswana. So we will build a road up to both sides and run a ferry. We took a few shots from South African and

Rhodesian territory and some other harassment, but the road was built and the ferry runs to this day. I didn't see hordes of terrorists marching along the road.

ROY T. HAVERKAMP
AF, Office of Southern African Affairs
Washington, DC (1975-1976)

Roy T. Haverkamp was born in 1924 in Missouri. He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and later earned degrees from Yale University and Cambridge University. Mr. Haverkamp joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Korea, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Guinea, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, and Grenada. He was interviewed on April 11, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well, then you went back to Washington where you served from 1975-78. Where were you serving?

HAVERKAMP: From 1975-76 I was the Director of the Office of Southern African Affairs, which included South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

Q: While you were there what was your impression of reports coming in from both the field, the CIA and maybe elsewhere on those areas of Africa that you were dealing with?

HAVERKAMP: I thought they were pretty good. One thing that a good intelligence agency can do is that they can give their government an objective understanding of problems that it has internally with its own people that it would never acknowledge publicly. Foreign intelligence agencies that are good can pick this up and so can embassies. On issues of Blacks and Whites in Southern Africa there were also ideological zealots in Washington who tried their best to obscure reality, but the reporting by intelligence agencies was realistic.

Q: I get somewhat the impression that as has happened you have always had this very strong right wing which is powerful in Congress and elsewhere, particularly in the Republican administration and sometimes will toss a whole area to let them have more say. This happened during the Eisenhower Administration with Asia. Asia was turned over, you might say, to the right wing so he could go ahead and do his thing in Europe. I don't know if this would be fair to say or not.

HAVERKAMP: I don't know. I never saw it in that context in Africa. Obviously, the right wing predominated policy wise, but the left wing prevailed. In Asia our security interests with Europe were much more closely linked, for example China and Russia.

Q: Perhaps not even consciously, but it seems that at least in part Africa was left off to one side, so that if someone took a strong interest, say in Congress, they weren't up against a hard policy.

HAVERKAMP: By relating what went on in Africa to what the Soviets, the Chinese communists and their acolytes were doing, these hard policies developed quickly, e.g. North Africa, Zaire, Angola and South Africa. Also there was a great deal of ignorance or lack of understanding particularly towards South Africa. Some liked the policy of apartheid, while others, they considered themselves "realists", were convinced that numbers did not matter. What counted was that the government had the only organized disciplined force and could not only maintain law and order, but also contain any Soviet supported insurgency.

JOHN H. KEAN
Regional Development Officer
Swaziland (1976-197?)

John H. Kean was born in Saskatchewan, Canada in 1921. He attended George Washington University, receiving an A.B. degree in 1943 and a M.A. degree in 1947. Mr. Kean worked in the Department of Commerce from 1943 to 1952, whence he joined the Foreign Service. Mr. Kean's overseas career included posts in Turkey, Egypt, Ghana, and Swaziland. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1994.

KEAN: To duty in Swaziland as Regional Development Officer for Southern Africa where I was responsible for our activities in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland in particular, and to some degree, in Zambia and Malawi. But those latter two were relatively limited activities.

Q: It must have been a complicated job working in three different countries?

KEAN: Yes, it involved keeping in touch with our own people in those countries and trying to be involved with the leading economic officials of those three countries, visiting them frequently enough to be in touch with current developments, not to lose a sense of being personally and directly involved.

Q: What was our policy at that time?

KEAN: Well, you will recall that this was shortly after the Soweto riots, and these three countries were frontline states in the confrontation with the Republic of South Africa (RSA) which played such a predominant role in the region. The RSA had economic, political and military power far outstripping any and all of the other countries in the region. South Africa was not only continuing to pursue the policy of apartheid and to intensify it in many respects but was taking measures to destabilize, undermine and disrupt the black-majority ruled countries in the region and to eliminate any power base that might develop in any of the nearby states. Its most destructive activities, of course, focused on Mozambique, Angola and its own colonial province of Namibia. South Africa was determined to try to prevent the emergence of strong independent governments that might threaten their interests. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland did not constitute a threat because they were small countries, but the RSA was certainly maneuvering at

all times to prevent those countries from pursuing the line of cooperation that they thought might be detrimental to South Africa's apartheid interests.

Q: Being a base for the ANC, among other things?

KEAN: Yes. The BLS countries were in some degree a base for anti-apartheid activities, but to a more limited degree than other front line countries. Their role was in large measure passive, serving in some significant degree as safe havens for refugees from the RSA, especially in the months immediately after the 1976 Soweto riots. Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania were the more important base countries for political and offensive military activities against South Africa. There were occasional violent actions in Southeastern Swaziland allegedly carried out by RSA forces against supposedly anti-apartheid bases in that area which lies closest to the Republic and to Mozambique. There were no ANC political leaders based in the BLS countries as was the case in Zambia. There were occasional police and/or military raids into Lesotho where RSA forces pursued ANC "terrorists" who had allegedly taken refuge in that country. In the case of Botswana, the Government was at once firm in its determination to preserve its own independent position but realistic in avoiding making bombastic threats. It also turned to South Africa as a source of supply whenever there was no realistic alternative. In contrast, Prime Minister Jonathan of Lesotho sometimes made wildly extravagant threats against South Africa without the slightest capacity to carry them out.

Maintenance of the independence of the BLS countries was a primary purpose of our Government, and in the wake of the events at Soweto in June of 1976, it became quite critical to strengthen those countries. So during the period that I was in Swaziland, there was a very rapid buildup of USAID resources going into those countries and hence, we were moving very rapidly to find new ways to support those governments. We sought to address problems that they were facing, to undergird their own efforts to find means to be more economically independent which was in fact the means of helping them to be more politically independent and more nearly self-supporting. That was a very difficult objective to achieve because from virtually every point of view they were at a disadvantage. Their economic power, their infrastructure situation, the regional transportation linkages, the relative negotiating position that they had in dealing in financial and economic matters, vis-a-vis the Republic, made them underdogs. They differed from one to another, but they were all basically in the same boat. So it was a very interesting time to be there. It was a challenging thing to undertake to work in that environment where we were communicating constantly among the representatives of USAID in each of the countries and working with the Embassies in each of the three countries.

There was a single Ambassador resident in Botswana who, like me and others in the USAID Mission, traveled constantly among the three countries. That in turn had its complications in terms of trying to be in communication with him and at the same time being in communication with the Deputy Chief of Mission who was in effect the Charge in each of the countries where the Ambassador was not resident. The Ambassador residing in Botswana was especially interested in that country where he had his base but was I think extremely conscious of the fact that all three of the countries were dealing with the same basic issue and his role was to try to find means to maintain the territorial integrity and political independence of the countries and he regarded the USAID resources as a significant part of doing that.

Q: What scale of program?

KEAN: We moved up from a level of seven and a half million dollars for the three countries at the time I arrived to ten times that figure in the final period when I was there, seventy five million dollars in the three countries in fiscal '78. So it was a period of very rapid buildup and commitment of substantial resources. We had not only a range of major technical assistance activities but some economic projects such as road construction that were major facilities that cost significant amounts of money and were intended to undergird the linkage between those countries and such friendly neighbors as they had available to them.

Q: But that was probably just for the three, not Zambia and Malawi?

KEAN: Yes, that is correct: \$75 million just for the BLS countries. Zambia and Malawi were not part of that figure. The Zambia program was very minimal. We had only one resident USAID person there at that time. Malawi was a little more significant but still quite modest, consisting primarily of support to educational institutions and some agricultural activity.

Q: What was the major thrust or the major use of these resources? What was the big project? There must have been some real big projects?

KEAN: In Swaziland we were rapidly expanding our address to education, agriculture and health, and working to strengthen government administration and taxing capabilities, generally supporting them in their effort to build a social infrastructure that would make people more content. We sought to give the majority unrepresented people in the Republic of South Africa some reason to believe that Western Governments, and the U.S. in particular, were sympathetic to the oppressed peoples of the region.

Q: Were any of the projects particularly political in character or were they essentially health and agriculture and education-type operations?

KEAN: I think in particular in Lesotho we had a situation where it was very delicate, and political considerations began to be predominant. Unfortunately, it wasn't clear that the three governments had a good enough understanding of their situation that they were able or willing to collaborate. The King in the case of Swaziland was a traditionalist. I think he saw himself as needing to maneuver to maintain his position of power and to head off any possibility of the development of other centers of political power in the country either through the evolution of political institutions or arrangements in which people would coalesce and undermine his capacity to direct virtually everything in the country. In the case of Lesotho, the King was of no particular significance. The Prime Minister was a person who was virtually, even if not quite, a dictator. He was somewhat drunk with his own power in a small country and made noises as though he had a power base that was able to threaten the Republic of South Africa. Sometimes those were almost ludicrous. But because he was of that nature, he did not have a strong affinity for looking at the larger issues. His government was not well disposed toward collaborating with the others. For example, the University which had begun as an inter-country cooperative arrangement broke apart. This was largely because the authorities in Lesotho were unwilling to specialize and share

responsibilities with the two other branches of the once unified institution. I think this was symptomatic of the lack of effective collaboration among the three countries, granted that being separated by the territory of the Republic of South Africa, opportunities for cooperation and collaboration were modest at best.

But in the case of Lesotho, they were and have remained up to the end of apartheid in South Africa, particularly vulnerable because they are so weak and exposed. From time to time the Government of South Africa intervened militarily with modest force levels, but nevertheless, with overwhelming force so far as Lesotho was concerned any time that the Government of Lesotho got out of line. In order to try to strengthen the position of Lesotho the Ambassador encouraged the development of a project for the construction of a road around the arc in the southwest and south section of the country, a very rugged region where the border between Lesotho and Siskei was very easily penetrated by subversive forces operating from Siskei but clearly serving the interests of South Africa. He felt that it would be useful to build a road through that region where the engineering constraints were of major proportions. Hence, the potential for building a road on an economical scale was very, very difficult, and to try to demonstrate its economic feasibility stretched the credibility of everyone's imagination. The road was clearly undertaken for political purposes but had to be justified in order to pass muster as a development activity.

Q: What was the political purpose?

KEAN: The political purpose was to provide means of access over to the major border crossing point which was felt would become a means of intrusion into Lesotho by subversive forces and that unless you could get some economic activity into that region, it would be easy for Lesotho to be undermined through that channel. I confess I don't know that I can make a strong justification in that sense but that seemed to be the rationale for this project being pushed. My own feeling was that it was less than justified, that it was fraught with high probability of extremely great cost over-runs even after it was designed and constructed and by hook or by crook made to appear economically feasible. I think we had to extend the zone of influence of the road out into very rugged territory beyond what was reasonable to expect to have a favorable economic impact. So that became something of a bone of contention, but I don't mean to blow that out of all proportion. It just was one of the most expensive undertakings in that small country where in fact, we were doing a variety of other things that were quite rational and very much needed.

It has to be remembered that from about 1930 onward, the rapid rise in population and animal numbers had had steadily increasing deleterious impact on the ecology and on the erosion of the steep lands. This was clearly a serious problem from the point of view of maintaining and expanding the base for economic viability of the country. People in that society regard the number of animals they hold as their principal means of demonstrating their status and of having some savings in the form of an asset that can be liquidated. Hence such people as had any resources would buy ever more cattle from South Africa and bring them into the country. So for a period of more than forty years, there had been a steadily increased number of cattle without increased concomitant productivity or valuable production. The animals were in poor health, very often emaciated and not well tended. It was a nominal evidence of wealth but not a real source of wealth in the sense of creating income.

We sought to expand agricultural production in Lesotho because this was a means of improving the domestic product and one of the few ways in which that could be accomplished. Research, training, credit and extension were supported with an emphasis not only on maize and other grains but on tree crops (fruits and nuts) and specialty crops for processing and export such as canned asparagus. Special emphasis was placed on assisting women farmers because so many able-bodied young men were away at work in the mines in South Africa. Mohair was also supported as a valuable export product.

Q: It was a big food importer country?

KEAN: Yes. One has to remember that the remittances of laborers working in South Africa were about equal to the gross domestic product of the country. Hence they had a flow of resources but domestic production lagged. They had to import large amounts of food. Lesotho had limited sources of foreign exchange earnings other than the remittances of laborers working primarily in the mines of South Africa under very very difficult and exploitative conditions. People, therefore, carrying on agriculture in Lesotho were in large measure young people, women and old men - old men, meaning people of 45 whose health had been broken by long periods of working in the mines and who were therefore not in a position to be very vigorous in their prosecution of agriculture pursuits.

Lesotho is the country in the world for which its lowest elevation point is higher than that of any other country in the world. That's more than a geographic oddity or anomaly. It indicates the degree to which agriculture was under great threat in every production season, that is, the probability of frost in the late spring and the early fall was ever present. Crops were threatened; they were being produced on steep hillsides in many cases. They didn't have adequate inputs or irrigation where it was needed. They didn't have much in the way of tools and equipment or strong labor to apply to the land. Hence, looking out at fields under cultivation in Lesotho, one often got the impression that this could hardly be a farm, that it must be somebody's abandoned land where corn plants were popping up from seeds left over from a previous season while, in fact, this was the best they could do under the circumstances.

We therefore were looking for specialty crops, for more seasonally-adjusted varieties that would respond more appropriately. We were trying to introduce new crops, notably tree crops which would have greater viability under these difficult soil and climatic conditions. That was truly an uphill battle and one in which we had some resources to apply to the urgent need but were battling in a situation where the government itself was not terribly well-organized, had limited human resources to try to bring about the changes or make improvements.

That then introduces, perhaps, the other major subject that is characteristic of all of the small countries of Southern Africa, namely the human resource base being extremely limited. That being the case, we were engaged in a variety of programs which included educational activities at all levels in the country, primary, secondary, and university level as well as taking people out of the country for training abroad, training at other institutions in the region and in the U.S. on a scale which was in per capita terms pretty dramatic. We worked at this both through projects and through non-project participant training but it was a long term effort and one in which the need

was urgent at the moment and clearly beyond our capacity to achieve to the extent we would have liked.

A very large number of people were brought into the country for operational tasks, not just technical assistance advisors but actually importing specialists to perform duties within government agencies and institutions where there were no qualified local people. This is an expensive process and one in which a large amount of money was being used for those purposes to try to address that very broad and deep problem of developing adequate human resources for the future and, at the same time, finding ways to accommodate to the limited availability of qualified people.

DONALD R. NORLAND
Ambassador, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland
Gaborone (1976-1979)

Ambassador Donald R. Norland was born in Laurens, Iowa in 1924. He joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Morocco, the Ivory Coast, France (NATO), the Netherlands, and Guinea, and ambassadorships to Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Chad. Ambassador Norland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: It must have been an exhilarating time.

NORLAND: It was demanding. I can remember spending weekends and nights assessing the papers that I'd be given by each of the bureaus as to why they wanted additional resources. Larry said, "Don't ever talk more than three or four minutes; point up the differences and the specific decision the PPG has got to make. The question before you is: Should you respond favorably to this or that request, or can you somehow reconcile the two and split the difference?"

And, it was thanks to that that I got to know Larry Eagleburger. And it is no mystery in this business that if you don't have that kind of patron, it's hard to be made ambassador. If you want an explanation of how I got to Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (the BLS countries), in 1976, it lies in this experience.

Q: Well, how did it come about, then?

NORLAND: Well, four years in the Department is considered appropriate. Earl, my dear friend, was sensitized to the fact that I had been in Washington four years. And through his smooth workings, he would nudge Eagleburger and say, "You know, Don has been back here almost four years. I know he's only been here for a year and a half, but he's done his work here." And Larry was really very generous in his performance evaluations where he was the reviewing officer. He agreed with Earl that the time had come. And my name went up for one Embassy in the summer of 1976. I was close to getting a mission, but they decided, for reasons of balance within the Service, that an administrative officer should get that post. Meanwhile, I had talked

with Bill Schaufele, then the assistant secretary in AF. Art Wortzel, who was prominent in the personnel system, was important in helping me. The BLS countries came up, Larry approved my nomination, and I got the assignment.

Q: You served there as ambassador from '76 to '79.

NORLAND: Three years.

Q: What were American interests there?

NORLAND: That's really the question. American interests at that time were much as they are now; but we were not attuned to what was going on in that part of the world. It is just amazing to think that just fifteen years ago we had no hesitation in sending out one person to three countries, all bordering on South Africa. All reflected, in one degree or another, what was going on in South Africa. And our contacts among South African blacks were not good. Contacts endangered blacks. I've had people tell me that Botswana reflected the most accurate source of black public opinion in Southern Africa. As a result of the Soweto riots of June 1976, we had probably a thousand hard-core black-nationalists in Botswana, which was only two hundred and fifty miles northwest of Johannesburg. The riots in Johannesburg were such that it was very uncomfortable for many blacks to stay on. Schools were closed. So we were able to monitor what was going on there, to test reactions and attitudes of these black nationalists, black-liberation-movement representatives.

Q: You went out there in '76, which was still Kissinger and all. And then came the Carter administration. Now did you see a major change? Kissinger was renowned for having no real interest in Africa except to see it in an East-West context; you know, Angola or something like that, but only as a reflection of our antipathy towards the Soviet Union.

NORLAND: It was a position that he maintained until April of 1976. He was on a tour of the area and, from what I've heard from insiders, was getting ready to go to Lusaka, capital of Zambia, to give another speech reflecting the policy that South Africa's monopoly on modern, organized military force in this part of the world meant it would remain in charge for the foreseeable future. At least to the end of the century. So we had to work with South Africa; together we were going to confront the onslaught of Communism. I hope someday you'll get the people like Win Lord to give the background. I read the...biography very carefully on this, and it's not clear. But Win Lord apparently got to Henry and said, "You can't give this speech any longer. The forces represented by the black nationalist movements are forces we should be sympathetic to. They are taking much of their rhetoric and much of their philosophy from our own experience; that is to say, human rights, civil rights, the right of self-determination, and so forth." So in April of '76, Henry's speech changed a little bit. It was nuance, but he did change; he did say that South Africa was going to have to come to terms with events in the world. As I recall, that was the main thrust. But it wasn't more than a little opening.

At that time it was absolutely forbidden for our officials to have official contact with the ANC (African National Congress), the largest of those groups. And the non-ANC black groups were so small they were mere splinters.

We in Gaborone didn't know the refugees were ANC. We just knew that they were blacks from South Africa, and so we contacted them.

It was depressing to hear what they believed and what they thought were the major forces at work in the world, and specifically in South Africa. There was strong pro-Communist ideology. You'd look at the books these people had in their refugee quarters (and I visited some of them, in so-called refugee houses, on the outskirts of town). They'd have a half dozen books; three or four of them would be Lenin, Marx, Castro, or Guevara. We had a problem.

Q: But you were under tight reins then, is that right?

NORLAND: Yes. It was considered provocative to South Africa if we had meetings with the ANC. So people would meet informally, the ANC had a big office in Lusaka, for example. Mutual friends would invite ANC and Americans to the same party, and you'd interact. The CIA got special dispensation. I've never been impressed by their knowledge in this area. But some of our people had made an effort to really get to know the languages and the people, and they would have sustained contacts--but never official.

This was only broken in January of 1987, when Secretary Shultz received Oliver Tambo in the Department of State. That's ten years later. Unbelievable.

Q: When you went out, did you get any instructions about what you were to do and what you weren't to do?

NORLAND: [chuckle] That's a fun question. The country director at the time was Frank Wisner. I put in a request, through Frank, to pay the customary call on Secretary Kissinger before going out. Frank came back and said that it was not necessary to make a call, and that the Secretary only had a couple of things he wanted me to keep in mind. The first was, we don't need any new ideas from the field. We have all the information and all the initiatives we need back here. Secondly, keep a low profile. We do not need any diversion. Maybe Frank extrapolated a bit, but the spirit of the Kissinger era was: There is one focus of public attention, and that is the Secretary. A couple of other things came up along the same line. I wrote them down at the time.

Q: Lesotho and Swaziland, I take it, were really too small to...

NORLAND: In Lesotho, there's almost nothing in the way of resources. Swaziland has got a lot of resources, but the U.S. was not in there; it was South African dominated.

Q: You had three countries, how did you play this?

NORLAND: I was under pressure from particularly Lesotho and Swaziland to spend more time there. My predecessor, David Bolen, did not like Lesotho and apparently did not conceal his lack of interest. He was not comfortable in Swaziland. So he spent most of his time in Botswana. When I got out there, it was in my interest--almost a duty--to try to level this relationship. So I established the practice of spending a week every month in Lesotho, one week a month in

Swaziland, and two weeks a month in Gaborone. I'd vary it slightly. But when I was asked where I was resident, I always said, "In this country," because the Department had residences available in all three. While I was not there they served as housing for TDY communicators or others. But I regularly made the tour. I visited Lesotho some thirty-three times in thirty-six months.

Q: Well, the housekeeping, how did this work? Your main administrative stuff was in Botswana?

NORLAND: The main political activity was in Botswana. But in each of the countries, we had a resident mission; that is to say, there would be about an O-3 DCM, plus a communicator and an administrative officer. We also had AID missions and a USIS operation in all of the countries. When I first got out there, as a matter of fact, the AID mission was centralized in Swaziland as the most agreeable of the three places in which to live. And there was a kind of a division of labor that had been informally developed there. But each of the three posts had a basic infrastructure of personnel and of resources--vehicles and so forth. When I was not there, a chargé was.

You could call the bluff of these various countries, particularly Lesotho and Swaziland, by saying, "I am here for the week. But even if I'm not here, if you will simply inform the embassy of your interest, I will be glad to come back at any time, for any meeting of importance; don't worry about that. Stay in touch." And, of course, they didn't have much important business with us. Only on one occasion was I asked to go to Swaziland on short notice.

Incidentally, the Department also was kind in authorizing the use of light planes. The embassy in Pretoria had an air attaché aircraft. And they liked to fly over the region to get better acquainted, taking pictures. They eventually got into trouble, as you may remember, and the aircraft, the air attaché and all were thrown out.

The trip was two hours door to door. I would leave one embassy, hop in the plane, and I could be at work in another embassy in two hours. Each was almost exactly four hundred and fifteen miles apart, the three capitals--Gaborone, Mbabane, Maseru--you can see them on your map, almost a triangle crossing South Africa. My wife didn't particularly enjoy flying, and she'd often want to do some shopping, so she would take the car and chauffeur, stop in some South African towns en route before rejoining me. Meanwhile, I'd already done a day's work.

Q: Did any initiatives come out of the Carter administration, from your perspective?

NORLAND: Yes, some of them important. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of the Botswana example in human rights and democratization, something the Carter administration pursued vigorously. At one point, Pat Derian, assistant secretary for human rights and humanitarian affairs, had in mind making a major speech in Gaborone to say just what I said; mainly, that Botswana had paved the way.

I'm proud of the fact that from the moment I arrived and tested the theory of Botswana as a democracy, Botswana stood apart. I tested it going to Parliament, talking with members of the opposition, and asking, "Do you have freedom to speak? Do you fear intimidation? Do you have

an independent press? If you make a public speech that's contrary to what the president says, do you have any fear whatsoever?"

And the response was, "No."

I became confident that Botswana was a democracy--with freedom of expression, movement, religion, and so forth--and that their elections were meaningful, not perfect, but meaningful. And it was rooted in a traditional system called the Kgotla, which means "village council." Sir Seretse Khama insisted that his ministers campaign between elections, as well as at election time, and explain what the issues were. Even though the people might not always be literate, they had ideas. And there is a tradition in Botswana that says, "A chief is a chief by the will of the people." That's the foundation of democracy.

This tradition helped set Botswana apart. I couldn't say quite the same about Lesotho or Swaziland. The Botswana experience was the one I stressed, saying this is something we ought to build on.

And the Carter administration (you were asking about initiatives). They weren't inspired by just the Botswana example, but they did make something of human rights. I think they were encouraged by Botswana's success.

Q: What about the other two countries?

NORLAND: Both are monarchies.

During my time in Lesotho, the country was run by the prime minister, Leabua Jonathan. I often call him a Chicago ward politician. He kept saying, for example, how important it was that I spend more time in Lesotho. And I'd ask, "What for? We are giving you more aid than you can usefully use. What do you want me to do?" He came to power by annulling an election, in 1970, seizing power. He wouldn't let go until he was deposed by a military group in 1980.

In Swaziland, there are two separate governments. The monarchy (in my day, Sobhuza II), with a clique of advisors strongly traditional in their actions and attitudes. They hovered around the king down in the valley. Up in the capital, Mbabane, you had a Western government, people in dark suits, etc. The king wore leopard skins, very often. When I presented credentials, he had a feather in his hair, and was in leopard skin. That's where power resided. When you went to the capital, you had these men in three-piece suits but with little power.

We have some officers who can tell you in great detail about Swaziland, Jim Wachob, for example. Do you know Jim?

Q: No, I don't.

NORLAND: I'll ask Jim to come in. No one made a more concerted effort to penetrate Swazi society than Jim Wachob. And yet he will tell you to this day that he had great difficulty.

I went regularly because we had work to do. There were missionaries. We had to reiterate the importance of treating refugees from South Africa correctly, through the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) or bilaterally. The Swazis had special detention camps in the hills. Of course, it's a beautiful country. The economy is evenly divided between agriculture and industry--South African dominated, of course. They have, I think, one of the largest tree growing operations in the world, a great source of wood pulp. They have some mining: coal, asbestos, which is not very popular.

So I made the rounds as best I could, using a combination of activism and dialogue. I would always be seen calling on people, even if I knew I wasn't going to get much in the way of results. It was part of showing the flag, so they couldn't say, "Well, you're in Gaborone. You're spending all your time in Botswana."

But Botswana had these three wars requiring more attention, more reporting. But I had a good deputy in Botswana, too. Frank Alberti was there for much of the time. Do you know Frank?

Q: Yes, I know Frank.

NORLAND: He had this tragedy, during that time, when his wife, on her way back from Johannesburg for medical appointments, had an automobile accident and was killed.

Q: Oh, I didn't know.

NORLAND: She's buried there. And one son was seriously injured, but he apparently has returned to health.

Frank would do a great job of filling in for me while I was there, seeing the president if necessary. I didn't feel threatened if chargés were seeing the ranking people. It was all in a good cause.

Q: What about your relationship with the South African authorities in these various places?

NORLAND: Well, they were not welcome in these places. There was no official South African mission.

Q: Really? In none of them?

NORLAND: None. There were South African businessmen, South African spies, South African domination of the police force, as in Swaziland. They were functionaries behind the scenes. You'd have a sign that said: "Mr. Dlamini" (the most common name in Swaziland; almost everybody is a Dlamini); but behind the scenes was a South African.

Q: What were your relations with our embassy in Pretoria, Cape Town?

NORLAND: They were not always as smooth as could have been expected, they were naturally apprehensive that we might be having contact with ANC people. If the South African

government found out about such contacts it would protest: "Why are your colleagues in Gaborone having contacts with these black terrorists?" So we were discreet, trying to minimize the problems for our colleagues.

We had our own interests. And we thought what we were doing was more in harmony with the overall U.S. policy objectives--namely, to encourage democratization, freedom of movement and expression, voting rights, that sort of thing. We didn't think we should be inhibited by always deferring to the South African government. After all, they were on the wrong side of these issues.

We had a lot of sentiment to overcome; for a long time, the American government was in bed with the South African government. We had various ambassadors out there, many of them political appointees, who felt that our future was with South Africa. Until very late, Kissinger felt that our future was with South Africa. He had such bad judgment on these issues. He really thought power was measured principally, if not exclusively, by force of arms, ignoring the ideas that have produced revolution around the world. And he still is a little slow to recognize those virtues.

KEITH P. MCCORMICK
AF, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1977-1979)

Keith P. McCormick was born in California in 1944. He attended the University of California-Berkeley, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy as well as the University of Geneva. He served in the US Air Force before joining the Foreign Service. Overseas McCormick served in Luxembourg, South Africa, Thailand, and New Zealand. McCormick was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Okay, you were doing a B...

MCCORMICK: We all called them the BLS countries -- the former British high commission territories in Southern Africa.. They represent the three tribes that didn't try to fight the pioneers but asked the British for protection, so they became independent little countries when the Union of South Africa was formed. Unlike the homelands the South Africans had set up, these were darlings of the international community. The U.S. was beginning to put some very large aid programs into them. My timing, personally, was fortunate because we were in the midst of a major buildup in these little countries.

Q: You were doing this in '77 to when?

MCCORMICK: To '79.

Q: Let's take them separately. Take one at a time and talk about how we saw it, what were our interests, and what was happening.

MCCORMICK: Our immediate interests were driven by the collapse of the Geneva Conference on Rhodesia at the beginning of 1977. Talks had broken down and there was a good sized war developing. It was a major problem for Britain and therefore for us as well. We developed an Anglo-American initiative to resolve it which gradually became more American than Anglo, with the U.S. providing most of the money. "My" three countries were on the periphery of that war. Also, of course, they were on the periphery of South Africa, which was of tremendous interest to the incoming government. The combination of those two things meant we were going to be shifting assets out of South Africa and putting huge new programs into these little countries. Botswana was the most important. One of the few democracies in Africa. By refusing to get dragged into the Rhodesian war, and by cooperating with South Africa as much as it hated apartheid, it had managed to remain a kind of island of stability at a time we feared the entire region could go up in flames. Lesotho, on the other hand, is this very picturesque mountain country, completely encircled by South Africa. The only country I know of that is like a little hole in the doughnut of another country. It is a very unfortunate country. The people there are actually descendants of the survivors of the Zulu holocaust. They have always had a very difficult time, there is no economy except migrant labor in South Africa. My interest there centered on the possibility that Lesotho could exploit its mountain rivers to build the largest dam in Southern Africa and sell both water and electricity to South Africa. Swaziland is a tiny, rather beautiful country with a traditional old monarchy, of little importance to us except that it was wedged between South Africa and Marxist Mozambique.

Q: On Lesotho, tell me a bit of history, I've read the book "The Washing of the Spears" but it has been a long time. What about the Zulu holocaust?

MCCORMICK: That was the book my boss advised me to read the first day I showed up for work. Dennis Keogh was the deputy director of the Southern African office at the time. He was later political counselor in South Africa, and was killed there by a terrorist bomb. I threw myself into reading books about the place. I've always loved, in the foreign service, the excuse to read everything you can get your hands on about a new place to which you're being assigned. I hadn't known before that when the Zulus under Shaka erupted out of their Zululand coastal area into the interior, up on to the plateau, they killed every living being within a huge area. A handful of survivors came together on a mesa in the highest part of the mountains, and eventually became a tribe – the Basotho – and later a country -- Lesotho. I don't find this well-known here, but it certainly impacts on South African history, because it happened during the Napoleonic Wars, which means that when the Afrikaner wagon trains from Cape Town began to arrive on the high South African plateau in the 1830s there was no one there. It was unpopulated – or rather, depopulated. So the white South Africans are absolutely correct when they claim that they were there first before the blacks. The blacks are equally correct when they insist that they were there first, because they were there prior to that and had been wiped out in an unbelievable massacre. It is typical of the tragedy and salvation of South Africa – everybody's right.

Q: During this '77 to '79 period, did the cold war (we had a new administration who were looking at things a little differently) intrude in your particular-

MCCORMICK: Absolutely, every day. Kissinger had been so insistent on a global perspective

that he had a program called “global outlook” to make sure that FSOs in Latin America or Africa remained aware of global issues, and were thinking first and foremost “how does what I do relate to the central struggle of our times?” The Africa Bureau always resisted that, so I found myself under a certain amount of tension, and now it’s not even under the Kissinger regime anymore, it’s under a regime with a different view but nevertheless, there is still this tension. The incoming Carter people had much more interest in the racial aspect of apartheid, but the State Department as a whole still had to think, and I thought very much, in regional terms. There is a war in Rhodesia, what is that doing to the countries around it? These countries' economies were in danger of literal collapse. How is all this going to relate to the Cuban intervention in Angola, which at the time was heading straight for South African military intervention and a heavy shooting war reaching right up to Luanda.

Swaziland was pro-South African in its policies for a number of reasons which stem from the conservative nature of that government at home. Lesotho was not a democracy. It had its own king, but the power was in the hands of a man named Leabua Jonathan, who was extremely conservative in domestic terms but anti-South African in foreign policy. Botswana was headed by an extraordinary man, Sir Seretse Khama. He came to the United States to receive an honorary doctorate at Harvard, and I had a chance to spend four or five days with him and his family and established a friendship that continued for many years. I believe the family steered a very responsible and stable course, practical cooperation with South Africa but a very principled rejection of toadying to them. Botswana was by far the most successful in this. I was always interested in the regional issue. For example, this was the time when South Africa began getting input for its own electricity from Mozambique, then in turn supplying electricity to other countries including southern Mozambique. I thought if these countries tied their economies closer together it could head off a race war. I became so interested in this that I asked for, and got, a year’s sabbatical to go and study all this. Fortunately, the State Department had and has a program for area studies.

Q: Did you find that the missionary attitude also had a certain amount of condescension?

MCCORMICK: Very good question, and the answer is yes, absolutely. The African Bureau felt, quite rightly, that Africa was always being misunderstood, ignored, unfairly criticized, and victims of a sort of prejudiced and dismissing attitude. But their own view, which I characterized as missionary, had an element of condescension. Can we hold these countries to certain standards? As foreign service officers, should we see our job as being to advance American national interests when we deal with them? That’s how we would deal with any other country. The answer is no; the African Bureau never encouraged its officers to think like that, but rather to think in terms of being custodial toward those countries. So the issue would be how to get more aid for the country we dealt with. Fight against other bureaus to get our word in. You were constantly put in a position, not of being an advocate of American interests vis-a-vis the country you were dealing with, but an advocate for that country in the Washington political arena..

Q: What about AID. One has the idea that often AID would go off on a tangent and devise a scheme for Lesotho, or what have you, that happened to be the scheme of the moment back in Washington. Or they had some expertise or money allocated to say digging wells or whatever, as opposed to really what made the most sense in the country. Did you have a problem with that?

MCCORMICK: A mixed experience. AID officers out there knew what they were doing. Washington didn't. The Africa AID Bureau was not well-led at the time. I saw lots of horror stories of stupid projects and idiotic individual things, but in general I would say AID probably had a pretty good handle on what was going on. Some of these things are very difficult. For example, Lesotho loses one percent of its arable land every year to erosion. It is the most eroded country in the world. It is obvious why: because they value the number of cattle one owns, not the quality. They would rather have a herd of 50 scrawny cows than 20 healthy ones. In pursuit of that, they had denuded hillsides with their overgrazing. Now, AID was perfectly capable of showing them a demonstration. They would fence off a hillside and manage one well, and the other would be denuded, then they would say, "See, we can show you how to do it better." But AID would not - as a matter of policy - impose a western, economically more intelligent way on a deeply rooted cultural tradition. It would be disruptive and they didn't want to do that. Also, they didn't want to deal with issues like the environment. They were afraid that Congress wouldn't support them if they thought that all you are doing was sustaining. You had to have a sense of forward motion. I have every sympathy with AID, I am sure I would do the same thing. But I was critical of that, because we weren't addressing problems like environmental degradation which underlay everything else.

Q: The countries where you were, by being essentially small nations, you didn't have the tribal problems that beset most of Africa, did you? Was this sort of a real blessing or not?

MCCORMICK: A blessing. As you point out, the BLS countries are almost the only countries in Africa that are homogeneous. Yes, it meant that Botswana's internal politics were really very civilized by African standards, very restrained. Swaziland's were traditional – tribal in the sense of unified. Lesotho's were not. There was bitter internal conflict there, and the homogeneity didn't prevent it.

JOHN D. PIELEMEIER
Regional Development Officer, USAID
Gaborone (1977-1981)

Mr. Pielemeier was born in Indiana in 1944 and graduated from Georgetown University. He joined the Peace Corps in 1966 and served in the Ivory Coast. He served in numerous USAID projects in Brazil, Liberia, and Southern Africa. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1997.

PIELEMEIER: My next assignment was to southern Africa. My wife and I were ready and anxious to go overseas. The Sahel program there was pretty well designed and ready to go into the implementation stage. About that time there were riots occurring in South Africa, related to Soweto.

Q: What year was this?

PIELEMEIER: That would have been about 1976 or 1977. Young people were flowing out of South Africa and into neighboring countries such as Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho, especially. There was a growing refugee support program, initially, I think, with help from the UNHCR [UN High Commission for Refugees]. However, the U.S. Government also wanted to help the refugees. As tensions mounted in South Africa, pressures on the neighboring states grew. These were small states, and their economies were being taxed because they were handling an increasing number of refugees. So donor country assistance was sought, and AID became involved.

I was assigned to a regional job in Southern Africa. I was stationed in Botswana. The regional office was in Swaziland. I was the only "regional" AID person in Botswana.

Q: This was under the OSARC program?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. As I understand it, the unusual location was because the American Ambassador under whom we served was accredited to three countries. He was resident in Botswana and he wanted some additional representation in Botswana, which was actually more important politically in the southern African context than Swaziland or Lesotho.

So I was assigned to Botswana. It was a wonderful assignment. As a Regional Project Design Officer, I traveled throughout the region. There was a lot of money available and a lot of project design to be done, not just for dealing with refugees but also with development activities in the region. AID's programs grew rapidly. Part of the challenge in this job was to move across the region without getting "hung up" in South Africa, where travel restrictions and police controls were very tight, as you might imagine. Petrol [gasoline] was controlled and hard to come by.

I can remember more than one time when I had to get special permits to buy gasoline on a weekend because, let's say, I had finished a job in Lesotho and was traveling by car back to Botswana. Driving was much easier than taking two different plane rides through Johannesburg, changing flights and so forth. It was easier just to drive back to Botswana. Often, I would have to get special permission from the local magistrate's office to buy gasoline and sometimes to travel at night.

There were times when it was pretty "chancy." A lot of the Afrikaner magistrates in the small towns were not necessarily excited about having English speaking or American "expatriates" come to the region and then clearly doing something to help the countries bordering on South Africa. So they sometimes made things difficult for us.

I remember one particular time when I was driving back from Lesotho to Botswana. The border closed every evening at a certain hour, when you were going into Botswana and leaving South Africa. Usually, the border would be closed at 7:00 PM, although it seemed that some of the border stations, somewhat surprisingly, closed at different times. I was driving back to Botswana in a rental car that I had picked up. It turned out that when I started driving it, it developed some problems. One of them was that the windshield wipers didn't work. Another problem was that when I got up to a certain speed, the dashboard started "beeping" in red. It was clear that the car wasn't meant to go at that kind of speed. Nevertheless, I had to go at that speed to be able to get

to the border on time and before it closed. At this point, it started to rain, and I was on a muddy road. [Laughter] I was going through one of the then ethnic "homelands." Finally, after racing along through homeland, I came to the border post at the entrance into Botswana. I think that it was five minutes before the border post was supposed to close, according to what I understood. It turned out that I had the time wrong, and the border post had already closed.

However, there was a road paralleling the Botswana-South Africa border on the South African side. This road led to another border post. A person at the first border post said that the other border post would be open for another half hour, if I could get there. It was about a 30 minute drive to the other border post. So I raced along with my dashboard "beeping" at me and trying to see through the rain, without the help of the windshield wipers, on another, muddy road.

I turned a corner and found two huge, camouflaged, strange, semi-military vehicles blocking the road. The vehicles belonged to the South African military forces, operating on the border with Botswana. They were very surprised to see me driving along the road. They flagged me down, stopped me, made me get out of the car, and began to search it. I knew that this would take some time and clearly would make it impossible for me to get to the other border post on time. The young men in this military detachment were speaking Afrikaans together and dressed in camouflage-type uniforms. I had the sense that they were "tough guys." They were big, strong fellows. So I made my case that if they searched the car and took everything out, I would have no chance to make it to the other border post on time. So they said quite nicely: "That's quite all right. We'll give you a note which you can give the people at the border, and that will get you through without any problems." They seemed to take a very positive attitude toward all of this.

So I got back in the car and started to drive off. One of the soldiers yelled at me in broken English as I moved away: "Burn it, baby, burn it!" I raced down this road and came to the other border post. It was, indeed, still open. The people at the border post were processing my papers, and it looked as if everything was going smoothly. I thought about it and then pulled out the piece of paper which the South African military people had given me, written in Afrikaans. Then everything stopped. They came out and totally searched my car! [Laughter] They took everything out of the car, found nothing, of course, that was "incriminating," and allowed me to pass into Botswana. As I learned later, the note essentially said: "We didn't search this guy. You people do it."

In any case there were other occasions which were not as happy with colleagues and other people. South Africa was a tough place to work. However, I think that the programs were good ones.

Q: What kind of programs were you designing?

PIELEMIEER: A variety of programs. For example, one project involved designing and building a road around the southern perimeter of Lesotho, which would give access into the mountains of that country and essentially open up a whole region to markets and to make their products available elsewhere. Lesotho was a very poor country at that time. Its people wore blankets around their shoulders and rode horses through the mountains. They were a very picturesque people but very poor. We also designed several agricultural projects.

Q: What was the rationale for the road and these regional projects?

PIELEMEIER: Within the OSARC area, the projects no longer had to be regional in scope. The programs could be important for any of the three countries themselves. They were simply funded out of a common "pot." That differentiation was clarified later as it became clear that other and more permanent programs were being designed and that separate AID Missions would be required in each of the countries. In fact, AID Missions were set up in these countries within the following two years.

Q: What happened to them?

PIELEMEIER: The road projects worked well. I did the design work on them. It was fascinating, working primarily with a man from Ethiopia who was the Permanent Secretary of Public Works in Lesotho. Manpower was so short that they imported expatriates, in this case an African expatriate. We had to work through a difficult session with the Ambassador, who wanted the road involved to be built "today." He didn't want to go through the normal design process. In part because of some of the complications that resulted from that, there were some "hiccups" along the way and some claims afterwards. However, the road was built and, I am told, is a surfaced, all-weather road.

Q: Were there some issues involving costs?

PIELEMEIER: There were, and there were some issues about how much design is required before you move into the construction phase. That was the issue that related to the Ambassador, who wanted to skip as many steps as possible in the normal process of design and detailed engineering before we moved into the construction phase.

Q: Do you remember where this road went and what the names of the places involved were?

PIELEMEIER: I don't. The road went from just South of Maseru [capital of Lesotho] in an arc paralleling but essentially just inside the border between Lesotho and South Africa.

Q: Did the road go to Quacha's Nekk?

PIELEMEIER: Yes! Very good. The road did go to Quacha's Nekk. Were you ever there?

Q: Yes, I once visited Quacha's Nekk.

PIELEMEIER: When did you go?

Q: We'll come to that later. At any rate...

PIELEMEIER: That's a fascinating area.

As I remember, in Lesotho there were range management projects dealing with livestock. There

were health projects, and there were some educational activities. For refugees AID mostly helped with the construction of hostels for refugees. That was, I think, a contribution to a UN fund, which made it easier.

There were projects in Swaziland. At that time Swaziland was relatively better off. It was also a very traditional kingdom and was not as receptive to some of the newer ideas which the donor countries wanted to move forward with.

Q: Do you remember anything more about the agricultural products, for example, and what they were trying to do?

PIELEMEIER: Range management in Lesotho primarily dealt with range issues and conservation, because of the hill sides and the overgrazing that was occurring, with increasing animal populations. Hillsides were being denuded. Men in Lesotho would go off to South Africa to work. Almost all of them worked in South Africa. They would send back money to their families, and the money would be "banked" essentially in cattle. The people would bank the money and purchase more cattle. The cattle were herded by young boys in particular. Sometimes, even young women would herd the cattle on the hillsides. However, the number of cattle was increasing because more revenue was coming back from South Africa. Range management was really very critical in Lesotho.

In Botswana we had a difficult time obtaining permission to do anything in the agricultural area. AID was a "new donor." The British essentially had a "hammer lock" on the aid donor community and on the Botswana Government's decisions regarding the donors. This is a good example of how you get yourself involved in such activities. My predecessor was unable to "get us in the door" in Botswana to deal with rural development or agriculture, which had critical problems. The rainfall in Botswana was very low, and there was a lot that American technology could do to help with this problem.

We had to go through a British expatriate, who was very well known and who was a compatriot of Robert Chambers, who was also well known in East African circles. This British expatriate had worked in Kenya and in Tanzania with Chambers and others. He felt that he knew what should be done for rural development in Botswana. He was in a key "line" position in the Botswana Ministry of Planning.

Ironically, the way we found our way through the door, so to speak, was that I was reading some academic journals. I found an article dealing with the time when this British expatriate had served in Kenya and was a co-author of an article on the subject. A couple of the other authors of this article were Americans. Among the co-authors I recognized the names of people who were associated with one of the Washington consulting firms, DAI. I contacted the people at DAI. They said that they knew this British expatriate and had had a good relationship with him. They said that they would, of course, be interested in working in Botswana.

I went to see this British expatriate, who said: "Well, American expertise is just not up to it. You don't have the experience that we have in Africa and can get from other sources." I said: "Well, I think that we can bring some real experts, including people whom you may know." Then I rattled

off the names of two or three of these Americans with whom he had worked in Kenya with DAI. His attitude changed completely. Within a week we had a request for assistance from him! It's sometimes amazing how you find an opening.

Q: What about Lesotho? How did that country stand?

PIELEMEIER: Lesotho had a much more difficult, political situation to deal with. Power changed at the top of the system several times during the four and one-half years that I spent in southern Africa. That meant that the cabinet ministers changed, also. With the changes in leadership, we found it more difficult to carry out long term development projects. At that time, and this was fairly novel, the aid program tried to build up local, non governmental organizations in the health sector, for example. This was aimed at strengthening their capacity and to work, to a certain degree, on decentralized programs.

Swaziland was a "small boy" among the states neighboring South Africa and didn't receive as much assistance. I always wondered why we even HAD an aid program in Swaziland.

Q: What was our interest in having these aid programs? Was this left over from the earlier exchanges, when we were building up for the first time?

PIELEMEIER: We started on these aid programs in connection with the refugee situation. Gradually and over time, the countries of southern Africa banded together in what was called the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, also known as SADCC, to obtain assistance from aid donors like ourselves. The first phases of SADCC were overtly development oriented. They were not political, because it was felt that that would "threaten" the South Africans in a way that the SADCC group did not want to "threaten" them. Initially, there was cooperation in southern Africa, involving not only those three countries but also Malawi, Zambia, eventually Zimbabwe, when it gained its independence, and finally Mozambique, Angola, and Zambia. These countries all started at this initial phase. Even when I was in southern Africa, the first meetings of SADCC were being set up. AID was involved in providing some small funding to get some of these meetings "off the ground" and to provide some technical assistance and conference funding.

Over time SADCC has become a viable, regional program, with regional transport links and other kinds of programs that, I think, have been successful.

Q: Did you have any contacts with SADCC?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, it was based in Botswana. Its formation was on the basis of a Botswanan initiative.

Q: What kind of programs were you talking to them about?

PIELEMEIER: At that point it was national planning, and transportation was vital in that connection. Zimbabwe was just gaining independence. The question was, how do you find ways to move goods around the region without going through South Africa, which was becoming "off

limits?" In this context ports in other areas were critical. Rail links, highway linkage, and airports were considered as places for projects. There were some other linkages that were looked at, in terms of potential, industrial production or trade in agricultural goods across borders. This was trade that perhaps hadn't occurred before. Again, this was at a very initial stage while I was in Botswana. From what I understand SADCC has been as successful as any of the regional programs, all of which have their limitations.

Q: Did SADCC have much of a staff? Whom were you working with?

PIELEMEIER: At that time SADCC really didn't have a "staff." The work was done by a couple of people in the Botswanan Ministry of Planning who spent some time on this, cooperating with some of their colleagues in neighboring countries. It probably wasn't until a year or two later that they reached the point of developing a Secretariat.

Q: What was their strategy about the role of the various countries? Was there some special approach to that? You had had the Sahel experience, and so on. Was this approach the same or different?

PIELEMEIER: This was very much a home grown, southern Africa run program. They wanted to take it very slowly. Botswana has always been very cautious, politically, and has avoided antagonizing South Africa. So they wanted to go gradually and carefully. At that time the Portuguese had just left Mozambique and Angola. The new leadership in those countries was quite far to the Left, much farther to the Left than the Botswanans themselves, for example, or the leadership in Lesotho, Swaziland, or Malawi, for that matter. There were really stark, political differences within the region. So the countries starting SADCC, Botswana and their other colleagues, wanted to go slowly because they were also a little uncertain about what their African neighbors would want to do with a program like this.

Q: Was that the time when there was a big study of southern Africa?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. That's a very good point. There was a large study of the development potential of southern Africa. I believe Roy Stacey was very much involved in that. I did part of that study. Tom Quimby, I believe, was the Office Director for Southern Africa at the time. I wrote one or more of the monographs, perhaps including the one on Botswana.

Q: Were you aware of any efforts by South Africa to "destabilize" the country in which you were working?

PIELEMEIER: We were aware, from time to time, of kidnapping in Botswana. There was an isolated grenade thrown, here and there. Most of these incidents were directed toward South African refugees located in Botswana, Lesotho, or Swaziland. Usually these were aimed at a particular leader, perhaps trying to kidnap that leader and take him back to South Africa. Of course, there was a lot of political activity going on.

Some of the better known South African musicians at that time were actually living in Botswana. So you found Miriam Makaba, for example, in Botswana. Who was the man who performed the

"Lion Song"? (Hugh Masekela) Anyway, they were living in Botswana, to the degree that they stayed in Africa.

So there was some tension because the South Africans would object to Botswana allowing refugees to "do too much." The South Africans said that this would be "destabilizing" for South Africa. And they had the power to do something about it. Botswana, for example, had three airplanes in its air force. Botswana had a very small army. Botswana really had almost no capacity to defend itself. Lesotho and Swaziland were even worse off. Lesotho was totally surrounded by South Africa. Swaziland was surrounded by either South Africa or Mozambique.

FRANK D. CORREL
Mission Director, USAID
Maseru (1979-1982)

Frank D. Correl was born in Germany in 1929. He received his BS from Rider College in 1950, and his MA from Columbia University in 1955. He served in the US Army from 1953 to 1955. His postings include South Korea, Vietnam, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Lesotho, and Zambia. W. Haven North interviewed him on September 29, 1990.

Q: When did you go to Lesotho?

CORREL: That was in August of 1979.

Q: What was the situation there when you got there?

CORREL: Well, I had been in Lesotho some three years earlier as head of the Evaluation Team on Manpower Development, the OPEX project, so it wasn't a completely strange place to me. What I found in Maseru was something that I had always been concerned about in my AID work once I'd left the Far East. We appeared to have committed ourselves to a goodly number of activities, all of certainly some merit, but with very little capability to keep these activities under a careful watch, to make sure that they were accomplishing their objectives and that they basically made sense. I think the thing that I remember best about arriving in Maseru was that it all sounded very familiar, but that there were some significant implications and other problems that I wasn't comfortable with and required my very early attention.

I was most concerned about our single largest project, the Southern Perimeter Road. This was part of the anti-apartheid strategy of not only the United States, but also of other Western donors. The United States had agreed to help with the construction of a series of roads around Lesotho on the principle that this network was designed to remove Lesotho's total dependency on South Africa and its road network. As people generally know, Lesotho is totally surrounded by South Africa. Of course, it's inevitable that there will be a very close relationship between the two countries any way you look at it, short of having a blockade, and the Southern Perimeter Road was part of a multi-donor effort to reduce at least the transportation dependency on South Africa.

Our road had been grievously over-designed. I don't remember the numbers exactly, but essentially something like 35 million dollars had been made available by the U.S., including funding for the design of the road. There was a provision for perhaps three million dollars worth of contributions by the Government of Lesotho. In taking a detailed look at the project, it was very obvious that this was grossly insufficient to get the kind of road built that had been designed. Thus, one of the first things I ran into was a great deal of pressure to get funding increased for the road and that ended up becoming a major imbroglio.

Q: Why did the design get so elaborate, did you understand? I presume it was originally not intended to be so complex a project?

CORREL: I think that one of the problems was that the firm that had originally been asked to design it did not fully recognize the difficulties of moving through the kind of topography where the road was to be located.

Q: What was the setting that the road was being built in?

CORREL: The road traversed a mountainous area of Lesotho in the southeastern part of the country. A lot of the design work had apparently been done on the basis of aerial reconnaissance, rather than on ground development. The company that actually did the construction and also was in charge of construction supervision proceeded to challenge what had been agreed. This came to a head in the first three months after my arrival. When we asked for a presentation of what they thought was necessary in order to get the job done as had been agreed, it turned out that we were 83 million dollars short to do what \$38 million project was supposed to finance.

Q: Was it because the design became more sophisticated, was that a factor? Or was it a different concept of the road?

CORREL: I don't know that the concept was very different from what had originally been expected and hoped for. I think what happened was that the contractor proceeded to enrich the overall formula for building the road some. One of the problems was that the engineer at the AID Mission in Lesotho had a real problem in challenging what had gone on beforehand, and again was most reluctant to challenge what was evolving there. He did refer me to another engineer in the Africa Bureau whom I had come out together with, who was an engineer, and a lawyer. We did a complete review of the project and came to the conclusion that we had to reduce its scope very significantly and still accomplish the objective of providing a serviceable road to the point where the next donors would take over. We finally came up with a far more labor-intensive type construction involving more Basotho workers under a system called "force account." We were actually able to save a very substantial amount of money that had originally been factored into the redesign, but it did mean a somewhat more direct involvement by the AID Mission and the Lesotho Ministry of Public Works than, I think, the contractor had ever expected. Coming up with our revisions certainly took a great deal of time on the part of all of us. But, we ended up with a 41 million dollar total project that we and the Lesotho government felt comfortable in supporting. The Government increased its own contribution by \$2 million more, to \$5 million.

Q: Was it completed, was it built?

CORREL: By the time I had left it wasn't completed yet, but it was well on the way. The one party that was not satisfied with these arrangements was the company that had made the very high estimate and we had considerable trouble.

Q: Was it an American Company?

CORREL: Yes, it was. They were not easy to deal with. But, I must say it was a very gratifying experience to see how we were able to defuse the crisis with the help that we could get, both from staff up at REDSO and our excellent lawyer from the Regional Office in Swaziland. These supporting officers and we in the Mission took a good look at the overall concept of what we were trying to do here, what we could get away with and get the job done properly, and we worked very effectively, together with the Lesotho government, which participated fully in the whole process all along the way.

Q: They weren't part of the process of jacking up the design?

CORREL: I think previously the Ministry had been relegated to being told what was going to happen. What we did after I got there was to consult with them. We reviewed all the different elements that were causing problems and we were very careful to outline what the different options were and consequences of those options. The Basotho ended up feeling that they had a very distinct stake in this project. When perhaps two years later, Finance threatened to cut out funding for their part of the project, we objected. At a meeting with the Prime Minister - an informal meeting in connection with one of his big public rallies called a "Pitso," which is part carnival, political consultation, and social event - the Ambassador and I were his guests and afterwards at lunch got to talk to him about the project. I explained to the Prime Minister that if the cuts were to happen to the Southern Perimeter Road, there unfortunately wouldn't be a road. We found that they felt strongly about the road, so whatever they did in the budget their funding allocation for the road remained intact.

Q: What did you think about the objective of having the road that allowed travel within Lesotho without having to go into South Africa? Did it make sense?

CORREL: I remember being of two minds at the time. Economically, it didn't make very much sense at all. But, there were some important political imperatives, both from the point of view of the Basotho and then also from the point of view of the United States and the outside world. After all, 1979 through 1982 when I was down there were the heyday of apartheid. P.W. Botha was President and he may not have been quite as completely hard line as his predecessors, but he still was a solid, stubborn supporter of and believer in apartheid. I can see where it was very tempting to undertake a project like that.

Q: Did the South African government react to building this road?

CORREL: Certainly not in my time. I don't know that the South Africans ever really reacted to AID projects that we undertook in Lesotho. They might have prior to '79 when I arrived, but not once during my three years there was it a consideration that we would have to watch out for an

adverse South African reaction. I think the South Africans figured that as long as what was going on in these countries didn't pose a threat to them, to hell with it.

Q: What were some of the other projects that you were concerned with?

CORREL: I've made reference to one of my favorites, which was the Southern African Manpower Development Project. After having evaluated this activity three years earlier (in 1976), I ended up in charge of the Lesotho part of it. My fellow Directors in the other two Southern African countries affected by the project and I used get together at periodic intervals to compare notes on how the project was working and to see how we could strengthen its effectiveness in the three countries and learn from each other. We also sought to create and maintain a united front in dealing with the contractors and outsiders regarding what to do with that project. I think that we had very effective coordination. We developed excellent relationships with the contractors, which was gratifying. I think the project worked very well in all three countries.

Q: How did it work in terms of a particular position in Lesotho? What was the process you went through?

CORREL: Initially, the government of Lesotho and we would identify likely positions to be filled by an OPEX person. Indeed, in connection with the road, such a position was identified for filling by an OPEX appointment for a while. After such an identification, we dealt with the contractor to identify and select a candidate. Usually, we would receive a list of candidates and the Basotho and we would review those and agree on a mutual choice. The Basotho depended to some extent on us in the evaluation of each candidate's qualifications and background. I remember that they were very careful in evaluating these things themselves. They would ask a lot of questions and then we generally got agreement on a candidate. We had some good choices and were able to get some very good candidates. One of the things that I have to really emphasize is that I don't know that a Mission Director coming into a new place ever had as well qualified a staff in practical terms as I found in my little mission when I got to Maseru. I had nine Americans, including a secretary. I also had probably about 12 local employees, and among these 20-odd employees, I would say I had no more than a couple of dubious people. I had well-motivated people with excellent judgment. I found early on that we were able to function most effectively together.

Q: Where was the contractual relationship of the OPEX person?

CORREL: The OPEX person was an employee of the government. This person signed a standard employment contract with the government, whereby he or she would have the salary of a certain position, like our GS grades. Perhaps that paid eighteen hundred dollars a year. That was the contract that bound that individual to the government. Then, there was a separate contract between the employing contractor, our implementing contractor, and the OPEX person. The difference between the standard government's salary, which always was extremely low by U.S. standards, and what an experienced engineer would have been making in the United States was paid for with AID funds, which were administered by the implementing contractor. There was a further contract between ourselves and the government, or an implementation order under the

particular project agreement, whereby the government recognized that we were making these payments, and that this was part of the AID Program. So, it was really a three contract system. The important thing is, these people were employees of the government, took their orders from the government, and they understood that.

Q: What are some of the other examples of positions that you filled?

CORREL: We had some people in the Ministries of Education and Agriculture. I keep seeing some of the names in front of me, and trying to associate them with specific jobs. But agriculture and education were two of the key ones and possibly someone in the Ministry of Health. We had a very interesting rural health project. I think we might have had someone in the Health Ministry at the time. We definitely had a person in the Ministry of Public Works.

Q: What were the expectations in terms of how long these people would stay and eventually be replaced by Basothos

CORREL: Our expectation was that each OPEX person would have to stay a good four years. They should come for two years on the initial contract with a renewal of two years more, conceivably even more after that. It was keyed to getting Basothos trained and ready to assume the position. Of course that involved at least four years. I would say our expectations were between four and ten years

Q: Do you think it worked?

CORREL: My recollection is that it worked reasonably well. We had on our staff an outstanding education and training officer who had remarkably good relations with the Basotho. This man applied himself very hard, working with ministries and other organizations in order to identify candidates and keep track of their performance. And, being there only three years, I can't say much more about it because, ironically, in AID one doesn't really get a chance to go back again. I had the feeling that we were on to something pretty good.

Q: About how many OPEX positions were we filling when you were there? We're talking about a number of people, approximately?

CORREL: I would think about 15, maybe 20.

Q: These were fairly senior positions?

CORREL: Yes, without exception.

Q: They were head of departments or that sort?

CORREL: Yes. Head of departments. However, we did not have anybody in Lesotho who would have been a (inaudible).

Q: Principal Secretary?

CORREL: Even an Under Secretary. I know we had people like that in Swaziland at least, but in Lesotho they were below that level.

Q: Well, what about some other projects that you had?

CORREL: An interesting one that I remember and one with which we had fewer problems than with the road, was a rural health project. Lesotho is a very mountainous country. In fact, the capital city is at 5,000 feet, but at least it's on the high plain. There are extensive mountainous areas and communications are not all that good. Our project was designed to provide health facilities in areas like that. It involved the provision of nurse practitioners and nurse practitioners' training. This was because it just wasn't realistic to staff these areas with doctors. The nurse practitioners were able to provide the kind of basic primary health care that would do the trick in most cases. To the extent that physicians were available, they could be consulted in appropriate cases. The health system in Lesotho was not particularly good. We had a three-person team there who worked on this project and who also arranged for the training of these nurse practitioners. I remember that one as working well. It was another project that I inherited. We also had a project in agricultural planning.

Q: On the health project, were there many nurse practitioners that were actually trained and sent out to the rural areas during your time?

CORREL: I won't say many, but we did get some out. Again, if I had to guess, I would say it was about a dozen or so in my time.

Q: Were you involved in building clinics as well?

CORREL: You know, I'm not certain. I don't remember anything about building clinics. I don't think we were. I think the clinics came from some other source. We probably had responsibility for some equipment and maybe some renovation or something like that. But I don't recall encountering the kinds of problems that I would have expected from a construction project.

Q: Did we include family planning in that program?

CORREL: We did, but I don't know that it was that big a part. I think that family planning was an automatic part of the project and never got that much highlighting because we did not encounter resistance or other problems with it.

Q: Do you remember any of the health services being provided? Immunization?

CORREL: There was immunization, but one of the biggest problems was to provide education with regard to safe water and to take care of intestinal diseases. In Lesotho, respiratory diseases were also a major problem. We sought to introduce the concept of preventive medicine in Lesotho, although an awful lot of the work they had to do was of curative nature. I would have thought that intestinal and respiratory diseases would have been two of the biggest problems. In Lesotho, it is important to remember that a lot of the people living out in the rural areas were

families where women were the effective heads of households and the main workforce. There were only old men and youngsters.

Q: Why was that?

CORREL: Because a large number of men went to South Africa to work in the mines or in agriculture or other jobs. In rural Lesotho, there was a clientele that was largely women, old people, and children.

Q: I see. Well, you started to talk about an agriculture project.

CORREL: Well, we had an agricultural planning project which involved providing assistance through a team on the spot, but also a very important training element where agricultural planners were sent to Colorado State University. It was a high profile project. I can't honestly say I remember very vividly what all was accomplished there, except that we had regular monitoring meetings and evaluations. I know that we had to redesign the project at some point. By the time I left, I believe some people were coming back to Lesotho under it.

Q: Was there any particular agricultural strategy? What were we trying to promote in a country like that?

CORREL: I remember telling the first of the two German Ambassadors who I met out in Lesotho that one was tempted to think that anybody who engaged in agriculture in Lesotho was an economic idiot. As I recall, diversification and improvement of yields were important goals, and also introduction or improvement of higher value horticulture crops that could grow there. One thing I remember particularly well was asparagus, because they were growing a kind of spindly asparagus and there was some improvement. The agriculture strategy in Lesotho basically was to do better with pitifully limited resources.

Q: Were we in the mohair project when you were there?

CORREL: Yes. That actually was a little side project. That wasn't associated with any of our major projects. It was a project that involved the Winrock Mohair Center down in Arkansas. I seem to recall vaguely that it ran into some trouble, partly because of the volatile nature of the market for mohair. It was not as rosy a prospect as had been expected.

Q: Other projects?

CORREL: We had an agricultural production project, which caused a lot of trouble, partly because the implementing university seemed to think that the project was primarily for their people to do their own research. There was a real problem (inaudible).

Q: American University?

CORREL: Yes. With getting the University contract team, the Lesotho Government, and ourselves on the same wavelength. There was a change in chief of party toward the end of my

time out there, and some evidence of greater receptivity by the University to what the Basotho wanted to have done. That was not one of our shining successes. We also had a rural water supply project. That session where the Prime Minister and I had a chance to talk about continuing their support of local currency for our Southern Perimeter road project in the context of their budget cutback was actually at the dedication of a section of our Rural Water Project which then led to the Pitso where I mentioned it to the Prime Minister at lunch.

Q: How about PL480 Program? You must have had some PL480 assistance?

CORREL: We had some Title Two.

Q: This was school feeding or what?

CORREL: I believe there was some school feeding associated with it. School feeding and some rural feeding. Quite likely, the PL480 Title II Program assisted with maternal child health in the context of that rural health project.

Q: Any other projects come to mind?

CORREL: I'm sure there were. A teaching center and maybe a couple more.

Q: How was your relationship with the people in the government? How were they to work with?

CORREL: In most cases, extremely good. The Mission had good contacts throughout the government. According to the Basotho system, our key contact was the Senior Permanent Secretary of the government. He was both the government watchdog on the one hand and the coordinator and facilitator on the other hand. In our relations with the finance ministry, we had a sufficiently close relationship with the Minister, who was one of the key men in the government. Indeed, on one occasion when we needed to obligate some money, our Program Officer went over to his house on a Saturday morning and got him out of the bath tub to sign the documents. We were complimented several times by Washington on our obligation level. My personal policy was always to keep in mind that things could get awfully aggravating on this obligation business. I tried hard to make sure that we had our obligations done as promptly as we reasonably could. I saw no reason to delay on these things and we gave the Basotho to understand that it was in their interest to expedite the process when we came to them . There wasn't much haggling about it. This could be done because we were in constant touch with them throughout the year and didn't have to nail a lot of things down when the documents needed to be signed. I think that especially with the Rural Development Ministry and the Ministry of Public Works, our relations were very close and very effective. I give credit for that to people on my staff and some of those OPEX and other technicians who really managed to generate a great deal of respect and loyalty from the Basotho. I think I had an outstanding staff and mission operation.

Q: How about the relationship with Embassy? Were they heavily involved in the program?

CORREL: They were not. When I first came to Lesotho, I had an absentee Ambassador who was deeply suspicious of AID and who apparently bore me some personal animus regarding the

circumstances of my nomination. He apparently had felt that somehow his prerogatives had not been sufficiently recognized. He was stationed in Botswana, but he was on his way out and came to Lesotho within a week or two after my arrival and then also to Swaziland in order to make his goodbyes. I remember that the Chargé at the embassy, with whom I got along very well, and I went out to meet the plane. The ambassador came out and talked to the others. I was introduced to him. I would say the meeting was chilly.

He did tell me in what he undoubtedly considered his very imperious way that I should call on him to get the benefit of his ideas about the development situation in Southern Africa. I sort of mentally flinched and gave thanks that this guy wasn't going to be around very long. I recall, this happened on a Monday. I went up to the Embassy and very carefully made an appointment right away. Word came back to me that my appointment was for Thursday. I guess he thought it might be about for an hour. I very carefully let him talk and would step in very carefully. After a while, it seemed I was doing a little bit more of the talking. Well, to make a long story short, we were together three hours. He took his leave of me in quite a cordial way and before leaving the country, he made it a point at his farewell party to introduce me to every leading Basotho and third country person and to tell me how much he had appreciated having had that talk with me. I must say from there I never looked backwards regarding my relations with the Embassy. We were the early American presence of Lesotho and the Embassy was very small. As luck would have it, the man who came as the first resident ambassador in Lesotho was the man whom I had met as DCM in Lusaka. With him, I had a very close and friendly relationship and he not only was supportive but apparently really pleased that I was there.

Q: Was there any pressure or demands on you? Did you do certain things because of our political relationship there?

CORREL: Never, never. I don't think that our people thought that way. I don't recall ever that the Ambassador said the Basotho asked him for something that they wouldn't have asked of the mission. I'm trying desperately to remember for what, if anything, we ever used the Ambassador's special self help fund. I'm sure we did. While the junior officer at the Embassy messed around with it a little bit, there was never any attempt to do something that was unreasonable. We were always consulted. It was a very good relationship, which carried over to Ambassador Clingerman's successors. He left after two years. During my last year in Lesotho, before I was pulled out, I had two Chargés for about a month or two each. Then, a political Ambassador was appointed who was one of the most charming and supportive people that I've ever had the pleasure to work with.

Q: Who was that?

CORREL: His name was Keith Brown. He had been a Republican National Committee man or something like that in Colorado. I believe his background was real estate investment. He and his wife were personally very warm and friendly people. That atmosphere prevailed on a professional, as well as on a personal basis. I've always had the feeling that I have a special section of Heaven reserved for me on account of the kind of State Department I dealt with in Lesotho.

Q: How was it living in Lesotho?

CORREL: It was somewhat of a mixed bag. Physically, the place was interesting, it was fun, and it was very attractive. I had a very nice house with a beautiful view. But we had a fair amount of crime and we had to protect ourselves from that. With quite a few visitors, we had to make a very special point of briefing them on the overall personal security situation. We also had an incipient rebellion against the government.

The situation in Lesotho was quite tense. The government of Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan had hijacked at least one, probably two elections and there was considerable political discontent. In addition to that, there was the situation with South Africa. My house was just about a mile from the Maseru bridge, which constituted the border, and we had incidents of insurgents or other elements. We never really knew who was behind them, who occasionally fired tracer bullets, once attacked a power plant, and did various other things so that we always had to be a little on our toes. My immediate successor was much more affected than I by this sort of thing, because it never got close to me. But, she was there when South African armed troops crossed the border one time in order to put a stop to what they said were some subversive activities. There was actually firing right around the house where she lived and she spent a fair amount of time prone on the floor of the house during this siege. I never had anything like that.

I found that Lesotho was fun; the work was rewarding, the mission functioned well, we had effective support from our regional folks in Nairobi and Swaziland, and I met some wonderful people there, including my present wife. We got married there on July 3, 1981 and afterwards went to the Independence Day reception of the Ambassador's. When we showed up there, just about the first two people we got to greet were the King and the Prime Minister of Lesotho. Not too many people can say that such guests show up on one's wedding day. What was interesting was that the King and the Prime Minister were political enemies. In fact, the Prime Minister had exiled King Moshoeshoe on a couple of occasions and this was the first time that the two of them had appeared at the same public function. Ambassador Clingerman and we were trying to cope with that. Thus, we had this very interesting experience right after our wedding ceremony. That was memorable enough in itself since we were the only white couple getting married among a large number of Africans, and we all had a great time. I was very happy in Lesotho in a personal way, and most definitely in a professional way. In both ways, I viewed Lesotho as the land of heart's delight.

Q: What was your understanding of a political situation? Was it an ethnic problem or what was this?

CORREL: I don't believe it was an ethnic problem at all, because unlike many, if not most African countries, there was no ethnic minority in Lesotho. It was strictly a question of the one party perpetuating itself in power under this strong-armed authoritarian leadership. Jonathan was eventually overthrown by a military coup. It happened after I left and eventually he died while under house arrest. Unfortunately, some of our closest contacts among the Basotho, people we remember quite warmly, were killed under mysterious circumstances, not all that long after we left Lesotho. The country has had much political instability since then and most recently there was armed intervention by the South Africans and by Botswana.

Q: But these factions were people in the same ethnic group?

CORREL: Yes, that is my understanding.

Q: Anything else you want to add on Lesotho before we move on?

CORREL: I think it worth mentioning that Southern Africa was getting much political attention from the United States because of the problem posed by the apartheid regime in South Africa. Somehow, the way the U.S. did things seemed in much higher profile than some of the other countries. We had a donor coordination committee in Maseru which met once a month or so. We had lively discussions and actually shared experiences and problems and apparently learned something from each other. Our meetings encouraged much informal contact regarding aid matters far beyond what I have observed in other countries. The second German ambassador and I became good friends. In fact, he used to come and see me to get advice on how to say something to the Basotho. He even brought letters that his staff had drafted to get my judgment whether they should be rephrased or if somehow the overall thrust or atmosphere ought to be changed. Other donors included a Nationalist Chinese ambassador, my neighbor, with whom I also had a nice rapport. He and I used to consult quite closely regarding his activities, which had a large commercial element.

I participated several times in meetings of the AID Directors in the region with State Department people. I recall meetings in Botswana and Zambia where we discussed the United States role and potential in Southern Africa. We also had a change in administration. Jimmy Carter lost the election of 1980 and with Ronald Reagan's victory, there were very extensive changes in personnel and direction by AID. While I was stationed in the Lesotho, I actually got to travel to quite a few places in Southern Africa, and also was exposed to a lot of political and other factors beyond little Lesotho.

Q: Were you involved in any of the regional initiatives in Southern Africa? Are they connected with the formation of the SADCC (Southern African Development Coordinating Committee)?

CORREL: No. The regional initiative in my time was the joint manpower project with the other two countries. There were other general discussions. SADCC came later.

Q: And the road, of course was a major project.

CORREL: Yes, it counted as regional. I remember one particular meeting, which was called by the State Department, because we had a visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Carol Lancaster, who subsequently became AID Deputy Administrator. In those days, she was in State and she put forth a whole number of ideas that I found awfully difficult to agree with.

Q: Can you mention what they are?

CORREL: One had to do with creation of an industrial capacity that would overshadow that of South Africa, in the interests of achieving regional cooperation and integration. As I understood

it, the concept was one of essentially becoming a rival of South Africa's in a number of industrial and transportation things, which very honestly I didn't think was in the cards. We also had a couple of AID meetings, including one with the new Assistant Administrator who wanted to meet all the Mission Directors. This was a very fateful meeting for me because this new man decided he'd like to get me back to Washington. Some months later that manifested itself by me being appointed one of his three deputies and having to leave Lesotho. It was really quite a remarkable three years that I spent in Lesotho.

KEITH LAPHAM BROWN
Ambassador
Lesotho (1982-1983)

Keith Lapham Brown was born in 1925 in Illinois and educated at Northwestern and University of Texas. He was appointed ambassador to Lesotho and Denmark. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

BROWN: They called me from the personnel office of the White House and said, "You were on the final short list for South Africa, but you didn't make it. The president is appointing someone else, but he is offering you the ambassadorship to Lesotho." I said, "Good heavens, I know nothing about Lesotho." I had heard of it; they call it "The Kingdom of Lesotho." I knew it was a small, all black country. It is surrounded by South Africa, I knew that.

Q: *Next?*

BROWN: We had been going to La Jolla, California every August for vacation. We went to San Diego. I still hadn't told them I would accept the appointment. We went to La Jolla, rather. I talked to a very good friend from San Antonio who knew South Africa, very, very well. He had been there many times. His name was Frates Seeligson. Frates is a rancher, and he had been to law school with me in Texas. I knew him even before, when I was there in the Navy. He is probably one of my very closest friends. So, I said, "Frates, what about Lesotho?" We walked the beach, I remember, and I said, "I have to talk to you. What about Lesotho?" He said, "My God, it's a backward impoverished country. I can't imagine it's a very pleasant place to go to." I said, "No, I don't think it is. I looked it up and read about it. It is just what you said. It is fairly new and independent." It gained its independence in 1966, and this was 1981. He said, "Why don't we call our friends in Durban?" He actually knew the man who owns the Mala Mala game farm in South Africa. We had met him and spent a lot of time with him when we were on that trip. So, I called. His name is Michael Ratray. He is quite a well known man in South Africa, and very successful. So, I called Michael and said, "Michael, tell me what you think." He is very big in polo. He said, "Well, I have a friend in Lesotho, from Maseru, the capital, who we play polo with. He is quite a wild character, but he is a great guy." He also said, "We've been to the Lesotho many times when I was a kid. It used to be a great place to fish and hunt, but that is gone." He talked to me quite a bit about it, and finally said, "Look here, lad (he talked British), come on down here, we'll make sure you aren't bored to death. Come on, give it a go." So, I talked with my wife. I don't know if we would have made the same decision or not, but we

thought that since our son had died maybe it would be the thing that would change our lives, so we did.

Q: It's terrible.

BROWN: But, anyway, we decided to do it. It was a two-year post. It's called a hardship post. We thought it might change our whole lives. We thought we could have our other kids over to visit, and so forth.

Q: This was from when to when?

BROWN: I got there in March, I believe, of 1982, and I left in December 1983. It was less than two years, but they count the time that you are in Washington. I could have stayed, but I thought it was a good time to go home. I'll get to that. We also decided that the thing to do was instead of having our family Christmas in our home in Vail, we would go down to the Balboa Club in Mazatlan, Mexico. We would take our kids, and we had one grandson at the time. We had a family Christmas down there.

I'm ahead of myself. When I came home from La Jolla in early September, 1981, I called Washington and told them we would take that position. They said, "Well, you'll be hearing from the president. He's made a practice of calling personally all ambassadors, career or non-career." So, in early September, we were at home. I got this call, and a couple of my grown children were there with my wife. They said, "It's the White House calling." We lived in a big apartment at the time. I could hear phones being picked up all over the apartment. So, everyone was on. President Reagan said, "Where did these telephone girls get you? They are geniuses, they can find people anywhere in the world, at a moment's notice." I said, "Well, they got me in Denver, Colorado, at home." He said, "Well, weren't you just in La Jolla?" I said, "I was, I was out there on a family vacation." He said, "I envy you. I love La Jolla. I've been there many, many times." He then said, "I'll tell you why I'm calling." I said, "I think I know." He said, "Well, I'm going to ask you the question. Would you be my ambassador to Lesotho?" He pronounced it "La Soto." I made an instant decision that you don't correct the president. I didn't tell him that he had it wrong, it's Lesotho. I said, "Yes sir, I would be very happy to. I'm looking forward to it." He said, "Well, I want to see you when you get back to Washington. We'll have you to the White House, and we can chat then. I'm pleased and delighted you are going to do this." So, that is what happened. From then on, I went back to Washington several times before my confirmation hearing.

Q: How did you find the briefings that you were getting from the State Department?

BROWN: Very good, really. I was really at a loss. I hadn't been into this kind of thing before. They had what we ended up calling a "charm school," where you come for two days... and Shirley Temple Black, an old friend, and a man named Ambassador Dean Brown, I think. Now, it's Tony...

Q: Motley.

BROWN: Motley, now. I think he was in my class.

Q: I think he went off to Brazil.

BROWN: It was very good. It was an awful lot of information in a very condensed time. I studied as hard as I could and I worked as hard as I could to bone up on everything. That is what you should do. I can tell you something that is amusing. I don't know whether you will want it in my oral history. As I went around on briefings with my desk officer, every now and then, someone I would be talking to would say, "Now, in La Soto..." I would say, "It's Lesotho, isn't it?" They said that it wasn't. I finally said to my desk officer, "I'm getting a little nervous about this. I'm getting ready to go to the confirmation hearing, and half the people I talk to, mispronounce it. They keep saying La Soto." He said, "Ambassador, just say to yourself, 'I laid Sue, you lay Sue, too'?" "Lay-Sue-Too" is the right pronunciation.

I have to backtrack. Before I went to the confirmation, my wife and I were in Washington, and we went over and made a social call to George Bush. He was one of the people I wrote when I was seeking the job. He wasn't even sworn in yet. He was vice-president elect. Just a few days before he was to be sworn in, I got one of these handwritten notes from him that said, "I know I can help, and I would be very glad to. Things are crazy around here. Love to Carol." I saved that. It was pretty wonderful to get that five days before he was sworn in. He did help. I know he helped. I called him, and he said, "Please come by. I want to see you both." We came by his office, which it seems to me was in the executive office building. We sat and chatted and had a quick visit. While we were visiting, the phone rang, and he said, "Just a minute, let me get this." So, he went on to get the phone. He said, "Kurt, as you know, the purpose of my call is we want you to dinner. Bar and I want to have you for a farewell dinner. Is that date satisfactory? That's great, that's wonderful. We look forward to seeing you then," and hung up. He came back and said, "What are you two doing in early March (some date)?" I said, "I don't know what we are doing." He said, "Well, I want you to come to dinner at my vice-president residence on this date, because we are having a black tie dinner for Kurt Waldheim." He was then the retiring Secretary-General of the UN. I said, "We would love to come." We had to fly back for it, but it actually turned out well, and I'll tell you why.

We went home and packed and got everything ready to leave. Then we came back to Washington for Vice President Bush's dinner. I was at the table with Senator Charles Percy, who I had known from Vail. So I was visiting with him. He was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time. So, I said, "Chuck, I'm waiting for the full Senate to vote on my confirmation since your committee has already voted me out unanimously. I just need to get the Senate to vote." He said, "Well, that's no problem. I'll see if I can do that tomorrow." And he did. Two days later, we were on our way to Johannesburg, since we were already packed and ready to go.

Q: Any problems with your confirmation?

BROWN: No. I met with Nancy Kassebaum ahead of time, and I knew her quite well. As I have already related, I knew her father, Governor Alf Landon. She said, "I understand you had a little problem over at the Federal Building Office - FBO. That you got mixed up over there and had

the wrong file.” I laughed and said, “How did you hear that?” She said, “Oh, we hear these things.” We then went out of her office, and went into the confirmation room. Bill Armstrong, Senator Armstrong introduced me, and spoke very kindly for me. Then, it turned out that Nancy was the only senator in the room on the stage. She said, “I want to tell something for the record. When my friends Keith and Carol Brown went over to the FBO to look at the file of their residence in Lesotho, they were given the file, and put in a room to look it over. When they opened the file, here was this big three-story mansion, with a dining room that seated 40 people, with chandeliers. They were absolutely perplexed and astounded.” The end of the story is the lady who was handling it, came rushing in and was embarrassed as could be, and snatched that file - it was Geneva - out of our hands, and threw down this other file. When we opened it, it was a one-story ranch house. It was more what I expected. Nancy told that story at the confirmation hearing. At the hearing, we just chatted for a few minutes, and she said, “I know you and have known you for so long. I know you will do a wonderful job in representing your country. If I can, I’ll come over and visit you.” I told her that would be wonderful. And she was the only CODEL (Congressional Delegation) that we had come to Lesotho. She and her two children came. They were on a South African trip and just came down to Lesotho for the day.

Q: What was Lesotho like?

BROWN: It was more or less what I had learned about it, and what I expected. There was a very small... they call it the European colony. That was the old terminology. What it means is, there were about 600 white people in the country. Some were real colonials, but very few. Most of them had left, when Lesotho got its independence, and the black party took over. I think most of the colonial ministers and staff went home, or went somewhere. I was met at the plane by Alan Lukens, who lives here in Washington. He was consul general in Capetown. Since there had been a vacancy in Lesotho, which was a tiny little embassy, they sent him up three or four days a week as chargé d’affaires. So, he was sort of holding the fort down until I got there. We had sent cables back and forth, and he had been extremely helpful in all of my arrangements to get there. He had the country team at the airport, and we went to the residence, and I met them all, their wives and spouses. We visited about, and they gave me a tour of the embassy, and then they gave me the tour of the residence, and then a tour of Lesotho. Then, we went home and freshened up. Alan Lukens had made all the arrangements for the reception at our residence, for about 150 people. It couldn’t be official, because I had not presented my credentials. There were no ministers of the government there. But, all the AID people, the officials of the Peace Corps, and some UNDP people were present. It was mostly non-diplomatic, or non-government, people because as I said I hadn’t presented my credentials.

Then, Alan Lukens came by the next morning when I had my first country team meeting, and said goodbye to everybody, and he left. He went back to Capetown, where he was on duty. From then on, it was the usual procedure. I presented by credentials to the king, reviewed the honor guard, listened to the royal band play an almost unrecognizable version of the Star Spangled Banner. My wife was not permitted to participate in any of this. She was waiting at the residence. When we finished, I had the country team, more or less, come to the residence, and we had a glass of champagne. From then on, it was night and day meetings of diplomats. This was both the ministers in the government and the diplomats. It was a very small diplomatic corps. There was a British high commissioner, a German ambassador, Irish consul, a Taiwanese ambassador,

UNDP, European community and the World Health Organization represented. That was the whole diplomatic corps, about 14, 15 at the most.

Q: Now, did South Africa have anybody there?

BROWN: Did they have anybody there? No. I don't think they had diplomatic relations, but they had unofficial relations all the time, people they could talk to.

Q: What sort of American staff did you have?

BROWN: I had a political officer who acted as DCM. I had an admin officer who had been in the Foreign Service for about 10 years. He had been married to a Foreign Service officer, and they divorced. So, he was there as a bachelor. I had a public affairs officer, PAO. We had a cultural center. I had the head of AID and we had about 75 people from AID. We had a Peace Corps director, and deputy director. We had about 80 or 90 Peace Corps people, young people mostly. Aside from that, everybody I dealt with came out of Pretoria. The military attaches would come down from Pretoria on a regular basis. A man from the agency would come down. I would go up there to Pretoria fairly often, too, because they had the regional people there. We had to meet with them and get our acceptance on a lot of paperwork. That was our group in our embassy. Most of that embassy was involved in our donor program, our AID contributions to the country.

Q: What were we doing there?

BROWN: Well, it occurred to me, and it occurred to everybody else, when I would talk with them about where I was, or where I had been. They would say, "Why in the world were you there?" I think one of the reasons we were there was because we didn't want the Russians to be there. At one time, the Russians had requested to put an embassy there. This was before my time. Our country had fought it very forcefully, with the Prime Minister of Lesotho. They didn't want to lose all the western country aid, because the British were giving aid, the Germans were giving aid, even the Irish, of all people, were given aid. The Danes had a representative there, but he was not called a consular officer. He was just an aid representative. We had a donor meeting every week, with all the representatives of all those countries, and the UNDP, and the European Community. We would meet once a week, and go over our different projects. As I say, that was the main business on a regular basis that I was involved in. I went to all the different provinces, and met with all the chiefs in the villages.

Night and day, it seemed like, we were going to different types of village functions. They called them PITSOs, which was sort of like a county fair. They would dance and wear their native costumes. They wore the blankets and the Lesotho hat, which was a great tradition. It had a little top-knot to it. It was actually on their flag at the time. I hardly had any business or commercial business of any kind. Eventually, they got into a highland water project, which was a big major thing, but it was being financed by the South Africans and the British. American involvement was practically nil. We had a few engineers who tried to get into the project, but they didn't.

Oh, one of our big projects of AID was a road project, perimeter road, so they could go on a

highway in their country, as opposed to leaving their country and going on a South African highway. That was a special project. It was about a \$30 million project. That was over and above the AID projects, which we funded at about \$20 to \$23 million a year.

Q: Were these projects coordinated? You say they were coordinated with the other donors?

BROWN: Yes. We specialized in water projects and in agricultural projects. We had a renewable energy project that was pretty much a failure. This was all handled through AID.

Q: How about Peace Corps? How did that seem to be working out?

BROWN: The Peace Corps was one of the best things going for us, in my book. You got more bang for your buck out of the Peace Corps. I have been to many other embassies. I did make a lot of visits. All of my colleagues felt the same way. The Peace Corps was really worthwhile. I say that, really, in contrast to my feeling about the AID projects, in some cases, or about the AID people, in some cases. They were a specialized group. They considered themselves professionals. A lot of them had doctoral degrees. They were paid considerably more than anybody in the State Department. They were a little bit aloof. They tended to travel among themselves. For social events, they didn't enter in with enthusiasm. As I say, I think some of them had a little loftier opinion of what they were doing, and maybe of themselves, than the people in the embassies. We did everything we could to bring them into everything we were doing. Of course, it was required that they attend the country team meetings. They would be social with me, but they wouldn't be very warm and helpful with others in the embassy. I know people in my embassy did not really appreciate the AID people. It's an interesting observation, I guess.

Q: It is. What was your impression of the Lesotho government? How did you work with it?

BROWN: Well, when they got their independence in 1966, I was told there was the foreign minister, economic minister, finance minister, and they were all driving around in beat up Volkswagens or beat up pick up trucks. When I got there, they were all in a Mercedes Benz. They were all in pretty nice cars. There is no question, it was corrupt. You just couldn't put your finger right on it. They had an overall audit while I was there, an independent audit. It was the most savaging report I've ever read. It said that the accounts hadn't been balanced in two or three years, that everything was out of balance. Money was missing from every account. All of the diplomatic community had copies of this thing. There is where your money is going. So, it was discouraging. You knew that things weren't being handled correctly. As I say, it's very hard to go out and point your finger at someone and say, "You've absconded with some of our money." We would send grain, for instance. It would be in sacks and written on the sacks, in some language, was "Donation of USA."

We would go the village, and they were handing out the grain to people. They would take the grain out of the sacks and just put it in a truck. They would not label the grain out of the trucks and nobody could see where the grain was coming from. As far as the villagers who were coming up and getting the grain, to them, it was all a gift of the chief of the village. He would be up there with a big smile on his face. The USA got no credit whatsoever. That was not uncommon. You would do everything you could to stop people and you would complain, and

they would say, “Oh, my, that shouldn’t happen. We will look into it.”

Q: Well, were there AID people telling you that maybe they should shut down operations, that they weren’t that useful, or was there sort of a machine there that wound up and just kept going?

BROWN: A few of the AID people were very devoted and, I would say, thought what they were doing was of tremendous importance, and perhaps very worthwhile. I would say the majority of them I talked with were quite cynical. They made snide remarks about it being a big waste of money. They were all there under contracts, if you know how AID works. So, I would say the majority of them realized that it wasn’t overall a tremendous success. The heads of AID really did good jobs, and worked very hard. The first one was Frank Correll and the second a woman named Edna Borrady. She was a wonderful lady, and she worked hard, and was great fun. I think she was over retirement time, so this was her last post.

Q: What about the government? How did it work? Was there a king, and a prime minister?

BROWN: At one point, they had banished the king from the country because he had gotten political. They didn’t like his political ideas. I think he lived in London. They finally worked it out so that he could come back. They built a huge palace for him. It was really ridiculous. This was a huge palace in a town of real squalor. So, he lived in that palace. He had a few official functions. He did the credentials, as I mentioned, but otherwise he was not allowed to talk about policies. He was never out of sight of a protocol officer. The prime minister ran the country. He was the dictator. He rigged the last election. I’ve forgotten which year. He wasn’t winning, and he extended the election. He stayed and called the election off. So, he was known to be a dictator. With the first election in 1966, he started out as South Africa’s token. They put him up for prime minister, and he was elected. South Africa thought they could deal with him, and that it would be cozy. More and more, he got very alienated. Before I left, he was an active communist. During the time I was there, which was less than two years, he went from a western oriented prime minister to a totally eastern block communist, North Korea type of person. Then, after I left, the military banished him to his farm, I believe, and assassinated two or three of his ministers. This all took place after I left.

So, back to your question. The prime minister had a permanent secretary, named Joe Kotsoquani. Joe was sort of the liaison between the diplomatic corps and the government. Everything you did, you would always call Joe. He came to all our parties, drank and ate all our food. He was quite a socialite type. He was very outspoken and outgoing. He did all the prime minister’s pronunciations. Occasionally, we would meet with the prime minister, particularly if it was ribbon cutting, or something of that sort. But, we didn’t often. When you requested an audience or social event with the king and queen, and had them to dinner and lunches, it was always with protocol. The king was actually a farmer in private life. He was a delightful man and I liked him. His wife was very quiet, and overweight, like most of the Lesotho women. Some see that as a sign of wealth. Every time my wife was there, they were all complaining about their weight. So, I don’t know if it had too much to do with wealth. The old tradition was that if you were fat, heavy, that was good, because that meant you had wealth. They all complained. Joe Kotsoquani’s wife was constantly moaning that she was overweight.

The first night we arrived, I guess I had gotten up in the middle of the night and gone into the library, and was reading. My wife was in bed. All of a sudden, I heard wild gunfire, and I looked out, and there were tracer bullets going off in the sky. I jumped up and started running down the hall, because I thought my wife would be concerned. She was concerned. She realized I wasn't in bed, so she thought I had been kidnaped. She had gotten up, and she was running down the hall, and we bumped into each other in the hall. She was screaming that she didn't know where I was. So, we calmed down, and I called Frank Correl, the AID man who had been there the longest. We didn't have a DCM. So, I called Frank, and he said, "Oh, ambassador this goes on every night. He said, it's the BC... I've forgotten what the initials were... It's the opposition party. They cause mischief down on the river, on the border, almost every night. They try to shell the military installation, which is down there, and the military people fire back at them. It goes on every night. Don't worry." I said, "Well, you know, this residence backs up to the prime minister's house, which is a big substantial house. It worries me that if they are trying to overthrow the prime minister, they are going to come running through our lawn and through our house." He said, "Well, that's why we have a perimeter fence, and a guard. You have to wake the guard, because he is asleep all the time." He said, "So far, that hasn't happened. It is a legitimate concern, but just relax, that isn't going to happen. You are going to hear this every other night, or so." It got to where we would sit out on our patio, on our back lawn, six or seven in the evening, and have a cocktail, and watch the tracer bullets. It was like fireworks. It was sort of an entertainment. That was some excitement. You had that kind of thing a lot in the mountains. You had an opposition party that was constantly causing mischief. The first chief, Jonathan, who was the prime minister, was always screaming about them, and how awful the people were. They never got to vote because he wouldn't hold an election.

The big excitement while I was there, of course, is what's known as the "Maseru raid," or the "Maseru massacre." It was the first December I was there, December 9th, I believe, of 1982.

Q: So, you were there from March 1982?

BROWN: I didn't get there until March 1982, and I left December 1st in 1983. So, this was December 1982. It was December 8th or 9th, 1982. In the middle of the night, it was a real racket. It was real artillery. It wasn't just the border type of thing we had gotten used to. This was major warfare. Of course, I got up, and I could observe what it was. I could see South African Defense Department artillery, and trucks. I don't think I saw any tanks. It was definitely South African forces. We had a radio system, which was the way we communicated. Once a week, we would check our radios with a test call around. So, I put it to real use, and got on it and called everybody on to the radio. At that time, I established what it was. I told everybody to stay in their homes, stay low, and take every precaution, keep doors locked. I've forgotten now who I talked to; it may have been the foreign minister. At any rate, I told everybody that I was advised that this was a South Africa raid, and they are here to eliminate the ANC terrorists that existed in the Lesotho. We had been aware for a long time that there were things going on over in South Africa where the ANC people would sneak over from the Lesotho, an independent country, and bomb a railroad station, or something. South Africa was aware of it, and they had gotten very tired of it. As I later established, South Africa officials talked to the foreign minister, who was one of the "Molapos" (there are two "Molapos" in the government), and he advised that the Lesotho government would make no effort to expel ANC people. Further, he said if South Africa wanted

the ANC out of Lesotho they would have to handle it - and they did. They killed 32 people that night; almost all of them in their beds. They didn't know, but found out later that only about 25 of them were ANC. So, at about 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning, I had a call from the foreign minister. He told me they had soldiers around my residence and embassy to make sure nobody fires at us, and not to be alarmed. He said they were after his people, not me. They had men standing with guns to make sure nobody would come running into our place. The last thing they wanted was to disturb a United States embassy, or officials. He asked me to come to the foreign ministry, as soon as possible.

So, about 6:00, I guess it was, I reported to the foreign ministry as requested, and the British High Commissioner was there, and the German ambassador. It was the three of us. They put us into cars and took us from place to place. Most of the bodies had been removed, but some bodies were still there. Blood everywhere; dead bodies; blood all over the walls. They had pictures on the walls. A lot of them had posters on the walls of ANC leaders, Nelson Mandela posters, Oliver Tambo (who was the head of the ANC). They had all that propaganda, so you knew that some of them were definitely ANC (we called them terrorists); they called themselves freedom fighters, I guess. The purpose of this trip was for us to learn how awful the raid was. They said, "We want you to be sure and cable your government." I said, "We've already gotten that up and going, don't worry." They said, "We want a meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations. We want action taken against South Africa. This is barbaric and can't be tolerated." I actually prepared the cable myself. It was to go out "flash," right away. My political officer, I'm sorry to say, kept editing my cable, and he didn't send it flash. He sent it the next category down. I had done this, and I was called off somewhere. I came back and I think he had just gotten the cable off. By that time, it was noon. I said, "We should have had that cable off at the crack of dawn this morning." He said, "Well, it's gone now but not flash." Before they got the cable in Washington, I got a call from my desk officer in Washington saying, "What's going on. We haven't heard from you." I said, "Well, we have sent the cable. I apologize, it was supposed to have gone earlier." I told him then what was going on on the phone, and then they did get the cable. But, I was criticized for that. In my report, my desk officer said "In two instances, Ambassador Brown was a little slow to get off the dime," or something like that, or "to get moving." I took it as legitimate criticism.

After that, the Lesotho complaint became sort of a joke. The complaint became a wish list of all sorts of aid programs that they wanted. So, this was supposed to be how we were all to react. We were to finance a water project here, a bridge there, and all this. That, as I say, became sort of a joke at our AID agency, because they were asking for millions of dollars because South Africa had done such a terrible thing. It really had no relationship, none whatsoever. I cabled my recommendation to state that we not increase or in any way change our attitude about aid, but that I would openly support the Security Council resolution which condemned South Africa, and we did. President Reagan did support that resolution. It was probably controversial, because a lot of people didn't think we should even do that. I think Chet Crocker, who was assistant secretary for Africa, favored that resolution. His program was called "constructive engagement," as you may remember.

Q: Well, whatever it took, it seems, things worked out there.

BROWN: I think on a pure constructive engagement, it might have taken years and years. What finally happened is they put into effect some sanctions, which I didn't think were going to be worthwhile, but I think, in the long run, I have to look back and say that maybe the sanctions did bring them around. Frederic De Klerk, who was the Prime Minister of South Africa, when I was ambassador in Copenhagen, Denmark, finally released Mandela and changed the country. It is now totally independent, and a total black government now.

Q: *Is there anything else we should cover?*

BROWN: Let me just say a couple things. Following this raid, I guess about eight, nine days after, they had a huge funeral, they billed it as a burial ceremony, in response to the massacre by South African defense forces. It was a big, long title. That was an amusing title because it was really a big, huge political rally. They had people from all over Africa there. Oliver Tambo was flown in secretly. All the diplomatic corps were required to be there. We sat in sort of stands at a big parade ground where they had all their athletic events. I don't know how many thousands of people were there. All the soldiers had automatic weapons and they were everywhere. If you turned and talked to each other, the weapons would turn on you.

Q: *Those are scary.*

BROWN: The British High Commissioner and I were sitting together, and he was a rather amusing, typical British colonial type. We were sitting next to each other, immediately back of Oliver Tambo, the ANC head. If there ever was anybody the western world was out to assassinate, I think it was Oliver Tambo. At one point, I turned to the British High Commissioner, and said, "Are you enjoying this? How do you feel about this?" He said, "Bloody hell, I don't fancy this a bit." Typical British reaction. It lasted seven hours. It was fiery with antagonistic speeches against us and against the British.

Q: *Why at us?*

BROWN: Oh, because we had not come down hard enough on apartheid, and they had been urging us for years to force South Africans to do away with apartheid system. Generally, they just opposed our position, constructive engagement. As time wore on while I sat there, they got worse and worse. There was a lot of condemnation and screams by Chief Jonathan several times. He said ugly things about Reagan. He mentioned that we didn't want the Russian embassy to be in the Lesotho, and that we came down hard on them. They also asked, "Do you do anything against the South Africans? No. Did you tell the world, deny to the world, that there aren't any ANC training camps in the Lesotho? No." Of course, I never saw an ANC training camp, but we certainly knew there were ANC houses there all the time. That's why they had this raid. At the very end of this speech, he tried to maybe backtrack a little to save face. He said, "We do thank President Reagan for voting for the Security Council resolution. Maybe he is beginning to understand us, and if so, maybe we can try to understand him." I remember that language because I put it in the cable.

At the end of the ceremony, they had everybody of the diplomatic corps, all the dignitaries, from other countries, and such, go in a procession, led by the king. We filed by the open caskets which

had been half opened. You could see the bodies from the waist up. There were about 25 caskets there. They had been open for the seven hours, in the sun. This was in December. It was really a ghastly affair. They had us file past. I saw the Brit take out his handkerchief like he was weeping or something, but I knew he was trying to stop the stench. It was awful. You just sort of held your breath. That procession probably took 15 minutes, something like that. When it was over, we walked on out and got into our cars and went home. When I got home, I raced to the bathroom. As you can imagine, seven hours just sitting there. Then, I ripped my tie and coat and had a scotch drink and dictated the whole thing into a tape recorder. The tape I recorded on, which I was so proud of, never made it home. We had several boxes of our goods flooded, and destroyed. I've lost the tape. I did take down a few words and such out of the classified cable, so I did have some of the language. In my summary, I remember I said, "The procession and the grisly affair were probably designed to humiliate us, or make us ill, and possibly hope that we would encourage more aid. On the first account, they certainly succeeded with me, because it was totally sickening." Thus it was probably the biggest thing that happened overall while we were in the Lesotho.

To finish up or summarize, I would say that when 1983 wore on, it was more or less routine, we had our Fourth of July parties etc. We did everything that you were expected to do. About the fall of 1983, my wife said she would certainly like to go home for Christmas. I said, "Well, let me talk to the department." I knew she was missing her grandchildren and so was I. I talked with my desk officer and a couple other people. They said, "Well, you're going to come home in February, and if you really feel like you want to come home then, why don't you just come home for Christmas and terminate then. We'll get to work on another ambassadorship with somebody." So, that is what we did. We left there, and had the usual round of goodbye events and everything. It's amazing to me that in the short period of time we were there, we packed in a world of experience.

Q: Oh, I'm sure you did.

BROWN: It was a whole other life. My wife had grown up in the south, and here she was in almost a totally black country, dancing with the black ministers, and such. It was a great cultural change. I don't think either one of us had ever had any racial prejudices, even though she grew up in the south, and I certainly didn't, in my background. Still, it was a great cultural awakening, to live in that environment. I think I learned an awful lot. I certainly did an awful lot. There were official and social events all the time. We went to different embassies. In the bureau, they asked me to go to Swaziland and meet with the ambassador there. They wanted me to go to Pretoria because they said I needed to get to know those people fairly well. So, I did a lot of traveling, right away. I went to Swaziland, Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg. I went to Durban, and met with the consul general there. He became a great friend. In general, we worked together as sort of a Southern Africa group of diplomats.

GREGORY T. FROST
Political / Economic Officer
Maseru (1983-1985)

Gregory Frost was born in Washington, DC in 1951. He graduated from the University of Kansas and then joined the Foreign Service in 1975. His overseas assignments include Liverpool, Lagos, Lyon, Maseru, Tijuana, Conakry, Hermosillo, Tegucigalpa, Brasilia, and Buenos Aires. Mr. Frost was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2012.

FROST: So that was when I went to Maseru, Lesotho. I did get that job out there. FS-3, Pol-Econ (Political-Economical), international Relations Officer General (IROG) they used to call those positions I guess. And it's kind of funny because I mean it was mainly Political Officer stuff, you know. There was no DCM, and there was a political appointee ambassador. I would be the only reporting officer there. I write a report, the Ambassador clears it, and off it goes to Washington!

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And, and it was a very small post, you know. And I was able to compete equally for this job because it was not called political or political economic/ or -- it was "inter-functional." And so as a consular Officer by cone, which I still was, I didn't have an institutional disadvantage in bidding on it. And since my office had that whole plugged, you know, and I got the Director to recommend me for it, and that's all it took-- I was selected.

Q: Let's talk about Lesotho.

FROST: Mm-hmm.

Q: could you describe where it is and its position when you went there?

FROST: OK, Lesotho was -- is-- a pretty tiny country. I think it's about the size of Maryland or something, or is it Oregon? I don't know, I'm not even sure. Maybe not Oregon, it's too big. I'll say Maryland, I don't know. It's kind of an island in the sea of South Africa, so to speak. It's completely surrounded by South Africa. It used to be called Basutoland. It's a -- it has a fascinating history, but it -- and when you look at the old maps, like when the British colonies were pink or red. You know, it was this little pink spot in the middle of South Africa there. And it has the highest -- it's a country whose altitude ranges from five to 10,000 feet with 5,000 feet being the lowest. So I think it's the country in the entire world that has the highest low point. The low -- the lowest point in Lesotho is 5,000 feet and it goes up from there, maybe average of 7,500 or something. So it's called the Mountain Kingdom, it's a kingdom. It was part of -- Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland, as we call them the BLS countries, were also known as the High Commission Territories, because back when the Union of south Africa was a British dominion and all that, before it became the Republic of South Africa and left the commonwealth or was practically booted out of the commonwealth for apartheid, these territories were ruled from -- they were ruled from Cape Town; they weren't ruled from London. So they were called the High Commission Territories, British protectorates. And Lesotho was kind of, it's kind of -- if you look at the map you can see where Lesotho is because it's all the bad high land, rocky, you know, prosperous farmland around it in South Africa and this bad farmland in on the Lesotho side of the shallow, narrow, and often dry Caledon River that formed the country's northern

border. And what happened is that the King Shaka Zulu back in the 1820's when he was raping and pillaging all of Southern Africa, this, you know, a lot of people -- Lesotho was kind of a refuge to get away from him because it was, like I say it was bad land and you could climb up on these plateaus. And there was this plateau outside of the capital, Maseru, which was on -- right on the border, which is another interesting story. And, and it was called "Thabana Morena," which means dark mountain I think in the local language. And there was kind of big massive plateau thing with somewhat steep sides with a top big enough and fertile enough to grow crops and have a certain level of security against the marauding Zulus. The tribes in southern Africa aren't strictly defined—or at least they weren't back in the early 19th century—there was a certain level of flux and fluidity about tribal identities. The "refugees" living on Thabana Morena came from all directions, but over time they coalesced into a new, or at least expanded, tribe under a single paramount chief and became the basis of a newish tribe that is known today as the Basotho. As the Zulu impis were ultimately defeated and subjugated by the British and the "white tribe" (Afrikaners), the latter kept encroaching on the land they left behind, settling on and farming the good land on the north side of the Caledon River, relegating the Basotho to the poor farmland on the south side of the river in what is now Lesotho. Their leader befriended the paramount chief of the Basotho, and became his foreign affairs advisor. They drafted a letter to Queen Victoria asking if she could take them under her protection: "Madame," the letter read, "we humbly ask to become as a flea in your blanket." The British were used to having to conquer their colonies, and here was a people and its leader who were petitioning her to become a British Protectorate. How could they refuse? I could just imagine saying, "Well, this bloody place, you know, it's not worth a plug nickel, no good land, or any minerals, a scummy little place. But gee, we got to take 'em in, you know." So they became part of, you know, part of the British Empire. Thus the Basotho nation was born, evolving into the Basutoland Protectorate, which became today's Kingdom of Lesotho. The paramount chief became King Moshoeshoe I, the Great. So it's legit -- it's not a homeland, but a recognized country like Botswana (Bechuanaland) and Swaziland (also a kingdom still today). And so Lesotho became independent in 1966 and constituted a little island of black majority rule in the middle of what ultimately became the apartheid Republic of South Africa.

Q: What was the government like and the king and all when you went there?

FROST: Well, the British gave Lesotho its independence in 1966. It was to be a constitutional monarchy—sound familiar? The first parliamentary elections were held in 1970. When one of the two main candidates for Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan, leader of the Basotho National Party (BNP), who I think was already serving as the appointed Prime Minister, realized that the tide of voting was going against him, he staged a coup d'etat, dissolving the nascent parliament and ruled without benefit of further elections from 1970 onwards, and was still in power when I left Lesotho in 1985, an old African Chief/"big man" type. And, and it was -- I mean it was, it wasn't a terribly despotic regime, it was a friendly enough place, you know, but there was an opposition movement that, that had a -- formed a minor league insurgency called the Lesotho Liberation Army, effectively the "military wing" of the original opposition Basutoland Congress Party (BCP). At their origins, the Jonathan's BNP and the opposition BCP were identified with the African National Congress (ANC) and the rival Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) which were vying for the support and loyalty of South African's black population as "liberation movements." So each group had its roots in one of the two principal South African Liberation Movements.

There were a couple of South African hotel/casinos in Lesotho, including the Southern Sun—the same ownership as the famous Sun City in South Africa proper. Before I came arrived a small bomb exploded there, allegedly set by the Lesotho Liberation Army. It was pretty clear that the LLA was covertly funded by South African Intelligence. And, and so it was -- but there was a lot of tension with South Africa, that was for sure. I mean they were, they were under South Africa's thumb. Everything -- all the power came from South Africa, you know, I mean all they had to do was turn off the lights if they wanted to really bring them to their knees, you know? Most of their government revenue came from the Lesotho SA Customs Union, which was actually heavily skewed in Lesotho's favor giving them more of a share than they were entitled to. It was like 70% of the government revenue that came from that. But they were they were at loggerheads with South Africa. Because when I was on the desk, I'm not sure whether it was known yet that I was going there or not, I can't remember, but they, they, they -- South African Armed Forces mounted a raid on Maseru, the capital, you know, where we later lived. And, and they killed 42 people that were and went to people's houses and threw grenades in and machine-gunned the houses where they lived, and you know, it was terrible. Of course we condemned this, you know, naturally. But you know, not strongly enough for a lot of people's liking, you know, at the time. So there was still kind of -- there was the aftermath of that, you know. And in response to that the King went to the UN and demanded, demanded that, you know, that the international community help them out. And so Jonathan's government policy, not that he was a left winger per se, but he thought oh, the international community is the only, the only hope we have in this poor pathetic little place, you know, besieged by South Africa and so forth. So he was going to invite -- he wanted all members of the Security Council to have embassies in Lesotho to protect them, so we had Britain already, France never came, but the Soviets and the, the People's Republic of China opened embassies -- were allowed to open embassies in Lesotho, which was not something that the South Africans liked. But couldn't really do anything about it. And they also brought in the North Koreans for good measure, I guess, the evil, evil North Koreans. So they had these communist embassies suddenly, you know, and, and I remember my house, you could see South Africa from my backyard. It was kind of a down slope to the river, which was the border. And on the other side there were some hills and were in South Africa, you know. Behind our house at the former Taiwan embassy, which looked kind of like a pagoda. And they kicked the poor -- poor Taiwanese got kicked out overnight and you know, they had to go over to South Africa and hang out in a hotel until they could go home, I guess. And then they turned their building over to the "Red" Chinese that came in. And I could take a picture of the Chinese flag, you know, over the Orange Free State, the Afrikaner heartland of the apartheid state, in the background. And so it was kind of a politically interesting time. And they weren't a problem for South Africa because they were such a pathetic little country, but you know, that was the main part of what we did there is kind of manage that conflict a little.

Q: Well, you mentioned there was a story behind the appointment of the ambassador.

We professionals were not involved in this, but we wanted to get the guy out to Pretoria as soon as possible sooner rather than later. The poor outgoing ambassador was a career FSO, but the South Africans considered him "tainted" because he had represented the Carter administration and its very different policy.

Q: This is Bill Edmondson.

FROST: Yes, uh-huh. I mean it was bad for him and bad for everyone, you know. But, but he loyally remained in place until he was finally replaced. But the process was stalled. And it was kind of funny because there was a -- there was a guy that -- I got a letter on the desk claiming that somebody was -- one of the candidates that had been mentioned was, you know, inappropriate -- he was allegedly in league with South African intelligence. He was an inappropriate person to be our ambassador, the "tipster" said, we much later found out that apparently this guy's hobby was collecting Nazi memorabilia so everybody -- there was -- The Washington Post was scouring town trying to find a picture of him in his SS uniform or something, you know. And I just kind of filed this letter away, you know, and then when he didn't get the job I didn't really give it another thought, you know. And he was later appointed to another, another country in the region a step or two removed from South Africa. And Herman Nickel was appointed ambassador to South Africa, like I say. And he was, he was

Q: But a time course was this --

FROST: Yeah, uh-huh, right. And, and it turned out that AF PDAS Frank Wisner's wife was a sister of Nickel's wife—French ladies—not that there was any reason to believe that that had anything to do with the appointment. The neighboring "BLS" countries had each already gotten political ambassadors for the first time. They hadn't even had resident ambassadors in all three countries until the time before this.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: So the region's incumbent FSO Ambassadors were all replaced by political appointees.

Q: Well, it was sort of a quiet little spot.

FROST: It was, yeah.

Q: You know, a good political plum.

FROST: Yeah, and they were, they were nice, you know, they were nice climates and, and, and you know, you didn't lack for anything because you had -- it was all came in from South Africa and you could cross the border and shop and stuff like that. Yeah, so we had -- the three guys I remember that when I was on the desk we were prepping these guys to go out there. And there -- they were -- the -- let's see. The -- and of course they were, they were savaged in their confirmation hearings for not being qualified, you know, which you know, was kind of true. And but the one from -- so they were still, they were still in place when I went out to Lesotho. And the guy in Lesotho was a fellow named Keith Brown who I, I really loved this guy and came to admire him greatly -- but I previously met him in Washington.

Q: That it?

FROST: Yes.

Q: We have a book, put up his -- made a book out of interviews done.

FROST: Uh-huh. And he -- unfortunately I went out in July of 1983 and he left in December of that so I only really worked with him for less than four months I guess, or five months. And he was super. His approach -- he had no, I -- you know, the others were less successful I think. Not -- but they weren't, I don't think, disastrous or anything. Like the fellow in Botswana was a big game hunter and he was complaining well, I can't even go near a game park, you know, it'll be on the front page papers of the and *(laughs)* forget that, I'm not having fun out here, you know, I thought I could do that out here, go hunt big game, but no, I can't even --

Q: No.

FROST: I dare not, you know. And then the guy, the guy in, in Swaziland was best known for being married to the daughter of the founder of Gerber Baby Foods. But while Keith Brown didn't have anything on paper that qualified him to be ambassador to anywhere, let alone a small African country, he did a really professional job. And I got along with him well and I loved working for him. But they replaced him with a second political appointee named Shirley Abbott, a man named Shirley who was an optometrist from El Paso, Texas who had owned this big company that made and sold millions of pairs of eyeglasses to the DOD (Department of Defense) for soldiers. And you know, he was a true Reaganite, whereas Keith Brown was more like a George H.W. Bush type moderate Republican, such as don't exist much anymore. And Shirley Abbott had a different, more ideological, approach whereas Keith Brown was so very professional. You know, he just kind of -- I think Keith was successful at everything he did in life and he kind of sat back for a while and watched how his professionals worked and figured it out and, you know, he was involved in stuff and he didn't micromanage and he listened to us and, and just the -- and all the Brits and other people around were just like -- they had no idea that he wasn't career, because he just -- just his approach was so professional. Shirley Abbott was kind of like, you know, Ronald Reagan was sort of like Reagan himself, you know "I'm not a president, but I play one on TV, that kind of thing. Sort of like, you know, why do it the professional way when you can do it the amateur way?"

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And that's the way, that's the way Abbott was too, you know. So he thought we should go off to fight world Communism together with the apartheid republic, you know, and they should be an ally the same sense that Germany or France -- or Britain, you know. And fight communism together and the ANC was all communist inspired anyway and, you know. He was not on board with the policy. He was to the right of it, which made life difficult for one like me who truly believed in the policy, you know.

Q: Well, how could this work from your point of view? I mean could you talk to him or just sort of keep him in line or --

FROST: Well, I, you know, I -- it was frustrating. I did -- I wrote all the reports, I did all the reporting. And I used to joke about the only, the only country they're going to let me be Econ Officer in is a country where they're -- they don't have an economy. Lesotho was kind of like

that. The main export was people -- black mineworkers to South Africa, you know. And so but I did all the reporting and I loved it and all the contact work and stuff. And I was already -- plus I was already established when he came, you know. They had a chargé in between because I was kind of too junior. They didn't want me to be in charge of the place for very long, which is fine, you know. So they brought in a surplus guy who'd been DCM somewhere else, you know, an old Africa hand. And we got along really well, you know. So I was kind of established when he got there, you know, as the, the Political\Economic Officer. I did the consular work too, you know, 10% of my time, you know. And so I mean Shirley was a friendly guy, very -- like Reagan himself very avuncular and so forth. But I mean, I -- it didn't take me long to realize that problem was that I wanted to extend for a third year and I had like one month to put in my application for that after he was there. So we got along fine and I asked him if I could extend, he said oh, not a problem, yeah, it's great, and we're getting along fine, everything's working, you know. But I don't know, there's -- there were a lot of tensions, you know, because he took a very unorthodox approach, you know. And, and it was hard to tell him that his ideas were very unusual. The officers in Southern African Affairs who I used to work with would chuckle at some of the odd policy things he wanted to do. However it wasn't funny when you were the one who had to try and save him from himself.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: -- if you're out there.

Q: Can you give any examples of where he was sort of off?

FROST: Yes, well here -- there's one big one. There's one big one. The government had a weekly English language paper. A lot of the articles came from South Africa and other places and stuff. But so he got all upset one time because I think that -- remember the Sharpeville II thing I mentioned, I guess that happened after I went to Lesotho now that I think about it, where they all of -- it was an anniversary celebration of the famous Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and they were protesting. And they, they shot some -- it was like, sort of like, you know, happened again, and they shot a bunch of protestors, you know, stuff like that. And so Reagan was asked about this, you know, and sort of lamely said, "Well, you know, they were protesting I understand," you know. While he didn't say they deserved to be shot in the back, I mean that's the way it was portrayed by the media. And that was a very eminent South African journalist called, called Percy Qoboza who wrote for the -- I think it was The Sowetan, which was a black newspaper in Soweto in South Africa. And he, he was the former Neiman Fellow at Harvard and all this stuff. And, and so, so I think he, he made this -- he -- this article appeared in South Africa, said, you know, and, and quoted Percy Qoboza saying, you know, "Ronald Reagan is a racist. That's all there is to say about that." And of course that was a firestorm of criticism from, you know, the right in the US.. And, and, and this was printed in South Africa and the story was picked up by this local newspaper. And Shirley was livid, said, "Well, look at The Lesotho Weekly -- look at -- look at this article, you know, they're, they're insulting MY PRESIDENT!"

And I said, "Well sir, you know, you should see the Times of Zambia every single day." Stuff like this, or much worse. And this same article was permitted by our friends across the border to be published a newspaper with an almost 100% black readership.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: It was printed in The Sowetan, you know, that's where this article comes from. So I mean it's just kind of the way the press is, you know, particularly in this country and in this region and, you know, blah, blah, blah. I tried to sort of -- but you know, he was just determined that he was going to, you know, this government can't -- it's a government paper and they shouldn't -- and, and he took the paper and cut this article out and said, "Here's The Lesotho Weekly without this article. You know, if it hadn't been there, no problem. But they can't insult my president like that! We got to do something. So what do we do?" You know, the question is -- and I mean nobody else would have, you know, thought of this, you know. I mean no sane, you know -- and so -- what he came up with is the queen was about to go to the US for the first time on an International Visitor grant and...

Q: The Queen of --

FROST: The Queen of Lesotho. And the king and queen were like figureheads, they had no power, you know.

Q: How many wives did the king have? Only one?

FROST: Only one, yeah, uh-huh. Some people had up to four wives. You know, they were -- I guess maybe they were Muslims or something, but he only had one wife. And she was seen shopping at the local supermarket pushing her own cart and, you know. But they lived in a palace that looked kind of like Ramada Inn and it was kind of this modern building. And but, you know, he -- they were -- I don't know how -- they -- I'm not sure that you would say they were beloved, but they were at least respected. And they were a whole lot better than the Prime Minister and his inner circle, who were definitely NOT loved. But the people liked them. And so she was going to go on this trip. I don't know if she'd ever been to the States before, but I don't think so. . So, so, so his reaction was that they were going to, they were going to cancel the queen's visit, and tell her it was an inopportune time for her to come -- or something like that. And so my next door neighbor was the PAO who was a former Peace Corps volunteer in Lesotho, probably spoke Sesotho better than any living American I would guess, who was married to a girl about half -- lady about half his age that he met when he was a teacher in her village. And the village was the royal village where the king and the queen had grown up. And so this guy was an expert in the country and he was plugged in. Sometimes he and his wife would go to dinner at the palace with only the king and the queen and stuff like that, you know, fantastic, you know, contacts and knowledge this guy had, you know. So he comes knocking on my door on Saturday morning, he's like, he's like virtually apoplectic. Said, "Do you know what the ambassador wants to do? They want to cancel the queen's visit! He wants to cancel the queen's visit, you know, and what a disaster this would be!" He was like, you know, "This will set the relationship back 20 years! Nobody will understand. It's just terrible! We -- we've got to do something!" (*laughs*) you know? So, OK, you know.

Q: So how did this evolve?

FROST: So I said, "Go talk to the Ambassador" I've -- I said, "Look, you know, I've talked to the him this already but I, I've made no headway," you know, told him about the paper with the article cut out, stuff like this. And so, "I said my piece and it hasn't worked, so the ambassador's over there working, so you know, I, I support you, but you know, I can't really do anything at this point. So why don't you -- why don't you go over there and talk to him and see if you can convince him to back off on this bad idea, you know?" And so he did.

And I think the ambassador realized that, "Oh, I've made a big misstep here, you know, but then he thought, "Well, so what can I do?" you know. And I mean I think, I think we might have already sent a cable saying we were doing this, you know. Whenever I knew I couldn't convince him to back off on one of his colossally bad ideas, I would offer to write the "from Ambassador" cable to Washington asking permission to do it and almost make it sound reasonable, not as crazy and ridiculous as it might otherwise have seemed, put the best face on it, as it were. And so I -- I think maybe the cable had gone out saying we were going to do this and nobody was squawking, you know, until the PAO raised the alarm and stuff. And so, and so I think the, I think the ambassador probably thought, "Oh crap, this is -- I've, I've stepped in here. I've got to do something, you know." So what do you do, you know? Sort of like -- so what they ended up doing is that they brought him back for consultations to, "to review U.S. policy toward Lesotho. But we didn't really have a policy toward Lesotho. Nobody had ever even given it a thought, you know.

Q: Yeah.

FROST: It's just kind of -- you know, so it was -- it's -- but that satisfied him. And I had no idea, he never told me what happened on this visit, never told me, you know. And I didn't ask and I didn't really want to know -- but anyway, so I don't know how that all worked out.

Q: Well, did she go on the trip? Did the queen go on the trip?

FROST: Yes, she did, uh-huh, yes, she did. So that was, that was fine. She went and -- but I don't know -- but to make a long story short, as far as my relationship with him, I don't think it was ever quite the same. Who knows, maybe he went back to Washington and blamed the whole thing on me? Subsequently there was a routine scheduled inspection that came out and they, they said really good things about my reporting and such. I was unfortunately gone when the inspection occurred, which was turned out was probably a mistake, but you know, he said go ahead because I'd already booked a cruise and then the inspectors had changed their dates and I didn't want to lose all the money I had paid to go on this cruise to Greece. But the Ambassador said, oh, I can handle these guys, it's not a problem, don't worry, just go ahead and go. But I found when I came back that they had recommended, as they had done for Swaziland before that, that the FS-3 Political/Econ Officer be replaced by an FS-2 with the title of DCM. You know, which kind of makes no sense because the AID Director was Senior Foreign Service and AID was the big power in this country anyway, you know. You know how it is normally, when they, when they do that it was, it was probably a slap at him, you know, the fact is why do they need a DCM in this place? They're doing just fine with an FS-3 --

Q: Yeah.

FROST: -- Political Officer when Keith Brown is there and, you know, it wasn't a problem. From what my communicator buddies told me, it seemed as if he really wanted to get rid of me. But there really weren't two jobs there, and you can't double encumber a position. And of course if I was allowed to serve out the third year of my tour there would be no point because it would be almost time for Abbott to leave by then, anyway. Abbott told me I could stay, but I wasn't sure if the system would let me, and my heart really wasn't in it. So I decided to request a curtailment, so that my position could be eliminated and replaced by an FS-2 level DCM. They sent out an old, very long in the tooth FS-2 who was desperately trying to make FS-1 before his TIC expired, for an interview. I guess they Washington wanted to make sure that he and Abbott could get along first before they assigned him. And I didn't really want to work for him, you know. There was an awkward moment. Lesotho's first elections in 15 years—only the second in their history—were scheduled in just a few weeks, in September. Abbott didn't have a clue about the political situation in the country. I have been reporting on the planned elections since the interim period before Abbott, but he probably didn't pay too much attention to my cables. And there was hardly any time for the DCM to be to learn anything—and I sure didn't want to be the one to teach him. And so they wanted me to stay -- you stay just a few more weeks until the elections and do a wrap-up report and then, then you can go, you know. And I felt like saying, "Well, the hell with you guys, I'm just," -- talk about feeling used and abused. No, you know. I didn't want to do that. But it turned out that, that Jonathan pulled the plug on the elections shortly thereafter—not enough opposition candidates paid the deposit to run, so they were cancelled and didn't happen. n so no report would be required. So that was fine. So that worked out fine. But you know, so I left and it was kind of an interesting -- I'll always remember this. When I was, you know, we flew in and out of Bloemfontein, because the, the runway in, in Lesotho at the airport had a little, little hill on it. So you know, and it was Lesotho Airways, they had one plane only I think. And, and so I would always, I always --I'd take SAA -- drive over to Bloemfontein, which is an hour and a quarter and take the -- take South African Airways to Johannesburg and then onward to Europe or the States or wherever. And so when we left the country it was September 11th, 1985. And the ruling National Party of South Africa was just finishing up their annual congress in Bloemfontein. And I have a daughter that was born in Bloemfontein when I was out there, by the way, my first child. That was, that was interesting. And, and so on the plane with us -- to Johannesburg with us was virtually the entire Cabinet of South Africa. This was 1985 when the townships were burning, you know. And it was, it was, you know, the, the handwriting was really on the wall, you know, and the apartheid regime seemed under siege. I just remember on this flight I recognized all these Ministers because when I'd been on the desk I knew who they all were and, you know, might have even met one or two. And I just knew -- so I was talking to my wife about...you know, that old guy over there is Minister of Agriculture, a real idiot, and this guy is blah, blah, blah, you know, I was pointing them all out. And they were, they were all kind of drinking beer and, and, and, you know, it was kind of a festive mood on this plane. And I had, I just thought to myself, "This must have been what it was kind of like in a Fuhrer bunker."

Q: Yeah.

FROST: I really had this, this flash of -- it's a memorable moment for me. I thought this is, this is -- this comes on my departure from after being involved in this region, you know, for, for, for almost five years, you know. Sort of a bookend...

Q: Yeah.

FROST: I'm leaving and it's like a symbolic thing, you know, the coming end of an era... you know.

Q: How much contact with the people?

FROST: Quite a bit. Yeah, uh-huh. I had -- it was very -- it was an open society and people were friendly and I didn't speak the language, you know, which would have been nice if I had. But yeah, I had, I had lot of friends and contacts there, you know, and I was -- I felt that -- and I of course had this PAO that was just super, you know, the one I mentioned, you know, the ex-Peace Corps volunteer. And you know, my British, my British counterpart and I worked very closely together. Like, like I say, it was kind of interesting because was this great interest in this country. There was very little except as a sideshow to South Africa as far as back in the State Department or anything. But I mean, you know, it wasn't in the news, you know, so you could really do reporting -- you reporting was, you know, there was no Internet then, of course, but you know, you had to go out and talk to people, you know, so you could report on what was going on, try to figure it out, you know. It was a strange kind of culture in some ways, you know, westernized as people were, you know. There was a police commissioner told me about apparently there was some guy that, he had -- he had four wives and he had four houses out in -- some rich guy and he had four houses outside of town and one for each wife or something apparently. And, and I guess he caught -- he caught one of his, one -- some guy with one of his wives with another man and took him up on the -- chased him up on the roof of his house and they were squabbling, and apparently he cut off this guy's testicle. And then, and then apparently the, you know, I, I'd heard about this incident, the police commissioner was telling me about it. I said, "Yeah! Well, you know, it was interesting because they had a court case, it was like a civil suit, you know," which turned out what is the fair value of a testicle? We laughed and laughed about it, you know. But it was, it was trying to figure out what was going on here, you know, it's really hard, you know. And, and but -- and like there was a, there was a Lesotho Evangelical Church I think it was kind of Lutheran denomination there had a, they had a weekly newspaper, which was in Sesotho. And my British colleague, somehow he found the money in his budget, he paid somebody to translate the weekly -- their weekly paper into English, handwritten, you know, translation of this paper. And he would, he would, you know, give me a copy every week so I could read stuff in there that was not in the government weekly, you know, in, in English, you know. And they were kind of anti-government a little bit, you know, and so it was trying to figure out what was going on in this country. And so it was great fun, you know, to sort of be, be -- and then they -- at the time I -- I did the first report on what became the huge Lesotho Highlands Water Project, because South Africa, all the rivers, the Orange River that flows into South Africa and its catchment area is in high altitude Lesotho. All of water flows into South Africa eventually, but in the wrong place, it goes out in the Orange River towards the Atlantic Ocean. And this water was desperately needed up by Johannesburg in the, in the industrial heart of South Africa. So what actually happened is there was this huge project, a huge engineering

project to dam these rivers up in Maseru, Lesotho and, and to pump that water as much as they could by gravity flow and to send it up north to South Africa where it could actually be used, rather than in the semi-desert in the --

Q: Yeah.

FROST: -- where, where it left the country in the first place. So that was -- Brown & Root was there and, you know, I talked to the guy from Brown & Root and reported on this project and, you know, ultimately became a reality. You know, and, and -- then I had a buddy that was an Irish AID contractor that was kind of the, the guy that wrote the budget for the Finance Minister and would always drop, would drop me a copy of the budget -- an advanced copy of the budget for the next year before it came out so I could report on it, you know scoop everyone (*laughs*). You know, it was just kind of, it was, it was just, you know, it was great fun, you know. And you know, I, I enjoyed writing my reports and, you know. And the ambassador said he -- so I think he was right when I think about it. He, you know, he said, said, said, "Greg, you know, I don't know whether you really are cut out to be a DCM. You're not really into management, are you?" He said, "You, you're more of a -- with your reports and everything, you're more of an artist than you know, a boss or a manager or something like that."

Q: Yeah.

FROST: And he was, said it as a friendly way, you know, and when I look back on it I thought well, maybe he was kind of right, you know. I --

Q: Yeah.

FROST: You know, and, and, and you know, maybe that's -- maybe that's purely the only reason that he thought he needed a DCM. I don't know. But if he'd been competent he wouldn't have needed one, you know, that's the thing. I don't know how that FS-2 ever did with the -- with the Senior Foreign Service AID Director though, or with Abbott for that matter..

Q: Well --

FROST: You know, how's he going to supervise her? I don't know.

Q: Well, this is a good place to stop.

FROST: OK.

ROBERT M. SMALLEY
Ambassador
Lesotho (1987-1989)

Robert M. Smalley was born in Los Angeles and educated at UCLA. He was

appointed ambassador to Lesotho. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: You were then Ambassador to Lesotho from 1987-89. How did this appointment come about?

SMALLEY: Sometime in 1986 the Administration made a decision that it would start looking to deputy assistant secretaries who had been with them for some time and who had worked well for ambassadorships in the concluding couple of years of the Reagan Administration. I said to one or two people that I certainly would be interest and had an interest in Africa which I had developed not only as a DAS, but in my work on the Development Assistance Committee at OECD. I learned late in '86 that I was being seriously considered, but I did not know for what. A couple of countries were mentioned to me as possibilities but they went to others, so I just waited to see what would happen. I did have some political support, but don't think it was decisive necessarily. I did have the advantage of having a very good record with President Reagan in that I had been one of the original people in '79. Those things help and by that time I had a lot of years in the State Department which also helped. I had gone out, as Mike Armacost had said at my swearing in, that Bob has been out doing the Lord's work, and I had. I had been out front and enjoyed the work. I guess I did a good job of it.

So in December of '86, just before Christmas, I was told that I was going to be appointed as ambassador to Lesotho. You know how long the process is. It is interminable, or so it seems, and you have to keep it under your hat for a long time, or at least you did in that era. Then I got my telephone call from the President on April 9. He asked me and I said, "You bet." So we chatted for a few minutes. Then I went through the Senate hearings; my wife and I had a personal meeting with the President at the White House in mid-June and we were sent on our way with his blessings. We arrived in Lesotho on the July 1. So it was really from the December 18 until July 1.

Q: Did you go through the ambassadorial seminar?

SMALLEY: Indeed I did. It was immensely helpful and I understand it has since been expanded from one week when I was there to two weeks. Normally in that period it was conducted by three people: Shirley Temple Black, Charlie Bray, and Tony Motley. Motley was a political appointee who really knew Central and Latin America. He had been born in Brazil and had served as Ambassador to Brazil. Shirley Temple Black's history is well known. Beyond being a movie star she had served as Ambassador to Ghana and is now Ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Charlie was Ambassador to Senegal, and maybe one other post in Africa. It was extremely interesting. However, she was not able to participate because she was off on an international trip some place. So it was just the two men. But extremely valuable. It was both political and nonpolitical appointees. Jack Matlock, who was on his way to becoming Ambassador to Moscow was in the same class with me. He had already been an ambassador a couple of times but he wanted to take it again. I think it is that valuable to everyone.

Q: When you arrived how did you find the staff at the embassy?

SMALLEY: Well, I think for the most part very good. One thing I was told in the ambassadorial training course was that there were two people you will never have good things to say about. One is your predecessor and the other is your successor. I don't know my successor and I don't want to speak ill of my predecessor, but he had spent a lot of time in South Africa and had made a lot of friends across the border and I think the embassy had been run by the DCM who hadn't been there very long himself. So it was kind of a loose ship. I didn't try to tighten things up in a disciplinary sense, but I did feel I had been told by the President and by the Secretary personally as well as by letter that you have certain things to do. So I think we kind of got it going as a unit on track better than it had been. I think we repaired a relationship with the government of Lesotho that had been kind of neglected. At least it hadn't been a close relationship.

The AID facility which had a large number of contractors, around 80, I found was functioning very well. The embassy staff, itself, was quite good. The one real problem I had was the admin officer. I learned later that it is very hard to get good experienced admin officers to go to Africa. Usually they are first or second tour officers and quite often, in the Department's view, kind of the bottom of the barrel. They are people who just can't get a posting anywhere else. At any event, the admin officer left a lot to be desired and caused a variety of problems.

Q: This often can be the real key position because he takes care of the running of the post.

SMALLEY: That is right. But fortunately both the outgoing and the incoming DCMs were very good experienced guys and were able to help correct a lot of wrongs. The man who came in as DCM--I had been fortunate to be able to select him before I went there. He arrived about six weeks after I did. He was the Chargé after I left and I like to think that some intercession by me was influential in getting him the position of first DCM at the new American embassy in Namibia where he is now. A fellow by the name Harold Cheatter [ph]. The communications staff was solid. The consular representative was solid.

Q: What was the political environment in Lesotho when you arrived and with which you were dealing?

SMALLEY: Short and quick history. Lesotho had been a British Protectorate for a hundred years or so up until 1966 when it got its independence. It had a king and a prime minister and a constitution. The first election to be held under that constitution was in 1970. The Prime Minister did not like the apparent outcome of the election so he threw out the election results and the constitution and ruled autocratically until 1986, with the king in a ceremonial role. At one time the king was sent into exile in Holland. Early 1986, the Prime Minister was overthrown by a military coup. The military set up a kind of bifurcated government in which the king was given executive authority and a Council of Ministers, and the military formed a Military Council of six members which in effect advised the king, but more significantly had veto power over whatever the king and the ministers wanted to do. So the ultimate power was in the military's hands. They worked reasonably well together for the first year or so, but then in 1987 began to have differences over some things. I arrived in mid '87 when the differences were beginning to show. Rumors of conflicts were beginning to be heard. Principally between the chairman of the Military Council, General Lekhanya and King Moshoeshoe II. Their differences became pronounced in 1988 and there were rumors that the king had tried to fire Lekhanya. There were

rumors that Lekhanya was trying to run a coup against the king and that one member in particular of the Military Council was siding with the king. It came to a crisis point three times in 1988. You never knew in the morning who was going to be on the top of the pile that night. Somehow it was held together and there were some very tense times throughout all this.

I came in mid '87 and I watched this thing become more and more charged with apparent hostilities. I think what was really at stake was a division within the country's leadership, and in a small country like that the leadership circle is limited, between commoners on the one hand, i.e. the military in this case, and royalists on the other who were supported by the system of chiefs and who wanted to continue to maintain power. Throughout the two years that I was there, there was a growing agitation to develop some kind of representative government under the title of democracy. The king said he wanted it, but there was a common feeling, and I think this was right, probably the king didn't want to go too far in democracy because he liked being an executive monarch and was afraid giving power to an elected parliament would diminish his own authority. He denied that, but never very effectively. General Lekhanya said he was all for going for democracy, but he didn't want political parties in the sense they had had parties in the past because he said political parties were able to concentrate power within themselves and that was what had led to the long twenty year span of the initial Prime Minister.

In '89 things kind of quieted down a little bit during the first few months. But as I was getting ready to leave along about May, 1989, it came to light that the previous Christmas General Lekhanya, who is a rancher in his own right owning a dairy farm and having horses, had been at the agricultural college just on the outskirts of Maseru, the capital city, one night late, about 10:30, with his bodyguard, who was with him virtually everywhere, and somehow had shot and killed a male student. Questions quickly arose as to what was he doing there and why did he shoot this kid? His story was that he caught this young man in the act of raping a 23 year old woman on the college campus and that he fired two warning shots into the air and then a third one which ricocheted off a rock and hit the boy and killed him. As to the question of what he was doing there, he said he had a milk cow that needed the immediate attention of the best veterinarian in the country who was located there on the campus and he was there trying to get the vet and take him back to his dairy, which is on the other side of Maseru. Subsequently he was tried for this in effect and exonerated.

But before the trial and the immediate aftermath of the revelation of this thing, the king called upon him to step down until it was decided by the courts. He was supported in this by one member of the Military Council who had been rumored right along to be in league with the king against Lekhanya. This man's name was, he was a colonel in the army, a young man, well-educated, a good soldier, Sekhobe Letsie. Sekhobe became a pretty good friend of mine. He called me up one night about 10:15 or so and said [this was back in '88], "I would like to see you urgently tomorrow." So we set a time and I went up to his office. He wanted to know what our rules were for applying for asylum if he had to do that. This was during the tense period of '88 when apparently he was fearful of what could happen in the event of one of these splits actually occurring. Well it didn't, and he didn't, but I had to get guidance from the Department and we were all living on tender hooks for a while.

To come back to '89, in the course of being kind of cornered on this murder charge, General Lekhanya implied that he knew where some bodies were buried and if he got strung up, so to speak, he could point a few fingers at others and they should think carefully. Well, it turns out that shortly after, within two or three months after the 1986 coup, two ministers of the previous autocratic government and their wives had been found murdered. Their murders have never been solved. It was claimed that no one knew who initiated the murders, although I heard rumors while I was there as to who it might have been.

In any event, to make a long story short, after his own exoneration, Lekhanya in late February, 1990 came to a breaking point with the king. At the end of about a two week strained period between them he escorted the king down to the bridge and gave him an airplane ticket to London where he moved into the residence of the Lesotho High Commissioner. He lived there for several months although in the interim most of his staff came back to Lesotho.

Lekhanya at the same time arrested two members of the Military Council, one of whom was Colonel Sekhobe Letsie. He was charged with complicity in the murder of these two ministers in 1986. Sekhobe has been on trial for that crime and it is now before the judge for review and we are waiting for a verdict.

Now the king went to London on the basis that he was going to be there for only six months, they called it a sabbatical rather than exile. General Lekhanya came to the United States in October of last year and I saw him a couple of times--had dinner with him. He was very upbeat as he always is, although he can be as tough as nails. On his way back from Washington he stopped in London and met with the king and asked if he was ready to come back--meaning on his terms. The king apparently said, "Yes." And I guess they talked about what those terms were and what the limitations on the king would be. So Lekhanya went back and reported this in Maseru.

Now immediately, after the king had gone in March, he had convened a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution to result in a democratic system of government with the first elections to be held and the first popularly elected government to be in place by June, 1992. That Constituent Assembly is still in session. The conditions were that the Assembly would start with the 1966 constitution as its starting point and that the monarchy would be maintained.

The long road towards democracy had begun to unfold by the time he had returned from the US and meeting with the king in London. So it was to the Constituent Assembly that he went and said the king was coming back. So they sent the king an airplane ticket. The flight time came and the king wasn't there. He wanted all sorts of guarantees about his perks, prerogatives, salary, etc. So these were all unacceptable to Lekhanya and to the Constituent Assembly so they asked the chiefs to elect a new king declaring the old king out. They chose his son, the Crown Prince, as the new king and he was sworn in right away and his official coronation will be later this year.

So there is the situation. They are trying to move toward democracy. I don't know if they have decided what is going to happen with the military--what the military's role in a new government will be. What the role of the chiefs will be, and they are a bit of a thorn in everybody's side because they still give advise in their villages, but basically they are turning out to be a lot of

drunks. The third thing I guess they have to decide is what the structure of the monarchy is going to be. Now they may have decided all those question, I just haven't been able to stay in touch with them.

Q: What was our policy while you were there, outside of having friendly relations with the country? Did we stay aloof from this political turmoil?

SMALLEY: I tried not to get involved with the turmoil, but two things: One of my specific instructions from the President and underscored by Secretary Shultz was to work for the development of democracy in Lesotho. That wasn't just an abstract as far as I was concerned. I kept talking about it with them individually and collectively and publicly, at every opportunity. I think it was fortunate that 1988 was an election year in the United States and I seized every opportunity I could to talk about the political process in the United States. I did so several times at the university. I was constantly meeting with the full range of press people who where there. There weren't many, but there were more than I thought there would have been. I talked to the government leaders about it. I went out and talked at various civic clubs like the Rotary, Lions, etc. I went as broadly as I could go, including some things in South Africa--a couple of radio and one television interview on it, which fed back into Lesotho. There was a constant thinking about democracy. And here was this big country saying we function well under this system. It was during that period that agitation in Lesotho really began to get noticeable. In fact, I had one of the senior government ministers say to me that they can't go on with this kind of structure of government much longer, because there is simply too much growing pressure to move towards representational government of some kind, which is what they are now doing.

How did you phrase your question?

Q: I was wondering what our interests were, what role were we playing in this?

SMALLEY: We were after the development of democracy. Did we have a role in it? Yes. I haven't even mentioned that in the course of the long autocratic government that preceded 1986, there had been a resistance movement formed called the Lesotho Liberation Army and it had gone outside of Lesotho into South Africa. The South African government was largely its sponsor. The LLA remained outside of Lesotho even after the military took over because there leadership felt that their leader having once rid the country of the old prime minister should have been part of the government. He, Moekehle, finally was induced to come back into the country while I was there. Sekhobe Letsie was the principal agent although it was done at Lekhanya's behest. And all of Moekehle's people came back. The terms were fairly simple. They could not bring their arms, they could not come back all at once, they could not engage in political activity.

Not very long after Moekehle came back, this was in '88, he sent word that he would like to talk to me. So the DCM and I had him over as a guest at my residence one morning. He stayed, and stayed and we talked for about three hours. We listened, he talked about what he wanted from Lesotho and how he saw it. And he asked me to convey all of this to General Lekhanya. So I asked General Lekhanya if I could meet with him privately and he said, "Yes"--we had met privately on a couple of other things. I heard of an assassination attempt against him once. I didn't know whether it was valid or not, but I felt I had to tell him so I went to his house one

Sunday morning and told him. He was very appreciative. So, anyway, I sort of became a go between with Lekhanya on the one hand and Moekehle on the other. I was definitely the first non-Basotho to meet with Moekehle, there is no question about that.

Q: I assume you were reporting this to Washington. Were you reporting that if not given specific instructions you were going to continue to do this?

SMALLEY: Well, I was acting on my own, but I felt and they quickly confirmed, that it was okay for me to continue to do this because I think what we wanted was not only the end result called democracy, but we wanted to create an atmosphere of political stability and anything we could do contributing to that without getting involved in the process was desirable.

The role I played was in effect a messenger between the two, but they sought me out and I went to Lekhanya and told him what Moekehle had said in great detail and his reaction was some positive and some negative, but he said he would be glad to meet with him any time. He said that I should go back and tell him such and so. So I said, "Okay I will go back and tell him that but this was the last time I was running your messages." He laughed. In the event, he and Moekehle finally did meet for the first time in years. Moekehle is not a member of the Constituent Assembly.

However this thing is finally resolved, I like to think that I had a small part in it. Moekehle was kind of anti-king as well as Lekhanya being anti-king. Look, I have to say that Lekhanya was very faithful to the monarchy as an institution. Never was there a whisper that would lead anyone to think otherwise. And he respected the king because he was the instrument of the monarchy. But it was with the king as a person that their differences arose. The young man who is now the king I think is willing to work more closely with the General than his father and willing to accept the limitations or whatever role is designed for him in the new constitution.

So it was a fascinating time to be there.

Q: Lesotho is in the middle of South Africa. We were having what turned out to be a very effective, but controversial policy at the beginning, run by Chester Crockett of constructive engagement.

SMALLEY: That was the phrase that he used. It was a phrase that a lot of people decided they didn't like and they attacked him, George Shultz and even the President. It was enormously unpopular in Southern Africa, mainly by people who interpreted it to mean we were going to continue to do business with the P. W. Botha government, which, of course, was what we were trying to get away from and in the end did. I think Chet should have gotten some marvelous recognition for that but he never did. I guess he got a medal from the President, but I am not sure. I will tell you that there would not be a free Namibia sitting there today, nor would South Africa be in the process it is in without him.

Q: What I gather from professional ranks is that people are certainly appreciative of how it worked out, I mean it was successful.

SMALLEY: And it was very, very complex and very difficult. It involved trips into Angola at a time when we had no representation there and they were torn by civil war. It was carried out under enormous problems.

Q: Was there a Lesotho card at all within this whole element, or were you mainly to try to keep this as a stable place?

SMALLEY: Lesotho has, and always will have, a very close relationship with South Africa. The economy is almost completely dependent on South Africa, although Lesotho is trying to develop an export business of textile and other things. When the P.W. Botha government was still in office, they had a long running feud with the king because he would make trips up to Botswana or over to Swaziland, or some place and talk about apartheid and what an evil thing it was. Finally he had a meeting with President Botha, I guess which he instigated thinking he could say let's be friends, and Botha whipped out a dossier, so I'm told, and said, "On such and such a date you said this about me, and on such and such a date you said this about South Africa and you can't be a friend of South Africa and you can't be a friend of mine." It was not a good meeting from all I learned about it.

South Africa almost always had police within Lesotho. Certainly they controlled the borders, Lesotho does not. In the mid-80s they staged a couple of raids into Lesotho to whip out the ANC, the African National Congress, and in one of those raids more than 40 people were killed. When Lekhanya and king came into power in 1986, Lekhanya had a closer relationship by far than any other official in Lesotho with South Africa. When he came into power he struck a deal apparently with South Africa. He said, "If you will build for us this big water project we want up in the mountains, we will keep the ANC out of here." It was probably the South Africans who proposed it. They said, "Look, we don't want you to be harboring the ANC so if you will keep them out of Lesotho we will put in with you on this water project." It is now the largest water project in the world--an enormous thing. Lesotho has vast mountains, most of it is mountains, most of it is very high mountains--10, 11 thousand feet. There are tremendous basins where they are going to be catching water building five dams, building tunnels through the mountains to carry the water down into the Orange Free State and the Transvaal all the way up to Johannesburg. So it is the first time that Lesotho will have an exportable commodity. It will be ready in six or seven years.

Q: On this, when the police would raid were we protesting or anything--sort of joining in with other countries about the violation of the border?

SMALLEY: Not really. If we had been able to prove conclusively that it had been South Africa we would have. The big raid that I described took place before I got there and I don't know what we did at that point. I think there was an official US protest because there was no doubt about it in that case. They came over in force and shot up people in a lot of places and then went back. Although it was never really clear whether it was South African police or military, or paramilitary units, or who it was, but it was South African.

The incidents that occurred when I was there were more or less individuals. I remember one case of a man who was shot in a hospital. He was a suspected ANC type. His assassin was never

found, but it was widely believed by everybody that it was South Africans. So there were those kinds of things going on. As far as the police being in the country, I think the Basotho wanted them there for some things because there were a lot of problems about rustling cattle back and forth across the river. Stolen cars going one way or another. A negligible, but nevertheless noticeable narcotic traffic. So they had a lot of common things and they did work together.

Q: Did we have the Peace Corps there?

SMALLEY: Yes, about a hundred volunteers.

Q: This seemed to work well?

SMALLEY: It seemed to be working very well. There was a politically appointed Peace Corps director while I was there for about the first year and a half. I thought he was a very good director. There were some of the volunteers who were a little beyond the ambassador's reach. You know you can't run them. I think the Peace Corps is at fault in not making clear to some of its volunteers how much of a really working proposition this is. I think there were some down there who felt that this was a good opportunity of two years for backpacking and a chance to see the region. That is overstated, but there was some of that and doing what they weren't supposed to do, like going into South Africa without the director's approval and that sort of thing. I think Peace Corps Washington should run a tighter ship as far as the volunteers are concerned. After all it is a taxpayers' organization.

Q: We are obviously interested in things that were happening in that area because our policy was highly involved in problems in Namibia, Angola and all this. Do you want to make any comments about whether this was a good center for intelligence or not?

SMALLEY: Yes, it certainly was. If you look at the politics involving the Soviet Union, certainly up to the time at the end of '88 when they concluded the agreement on Angola and Namibia, they were really of an aggressive state of mind as far as Africa was concerned. They were giving tremendous amounts of aid into Angola. They were giving aid to the ANC, to the government in Mozambique. But all that began to recede in late '88 and certainly in '89 to the point that today they have pretty much withdrawn from the African venture.

But the long 20-year government in Lesotho became very friendly towards the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries, generally. In the late 70s, early 80s they invited the Soviets to open an embassy and PRC to open an embassy, the North Koreans to open an embassy and others began to show up ad hoc. The reason the Soviets were particularly, and I suppose the PRC too, interested in going in there was that it was a listening post they could monitor communications in South Africa. They could much easier keep an eye on South Africa's military capabilities.

Q: We are talking about radio listening.

SMALLEY: Yeah, radio, telephone and military communications. I am sure they had very sophisticated stuff in there. Furthermore they were probably sending people across the border illegally. I have never heard that said, but I never doubted for a minute that it was happening.

Almost everyone who came to the Soviet embassy in the first year and a half I was there either had a GRU (military) background or a KGB (political) background. The embassy in Maseru was their furthest south embassy in Africa. The PRC the same. They were unable to get into South Africa legally, but it was sort of a place for them to have an intelligence outpost. So I think that is basically why they were there.

And, I am sure that our intelligence people, if we had any there, were looking at that. Probably trying to monitor what the Soviets were up to. Our people were, no doubt, interested in finding out what the South Africans were up to too. There were military bases in the nearby areas. If there was a threat to Lesotho from South Africa, we had to be aware of it. In fact, after the 1985 raid in which 40 people were killed, the United Nations had sent a watchdog type fellow down there to keep an eye on the borders. There are 14 border crossings and he had to constantly keep an eye on them to see that there was no danger of incursions and I am sure we were interested in that same sort of thing. So the intelligence game I am sure was being played all the time, with good results.

Q: You left there before the end of the Cold War, but did you feel any changes or changes because of the Namibia solution?

SMALLEY: Yes, you knew it was going to change. I was there in the period that de Klerk was serving as Minister of Education, he is now President of South Africa, and I remember very clearly in January of 1989 when President P.W. Botha had a stroke, which effectively terminated his career although he continued in office for a few more months. De Klerk was the logical successor, although he was a bit of a surprise because his father was one of the chief architects of apartheid and his uncle was the man who coined the word apartheid. Along about the late 70s some of the younger members of the party, including de Klerk, began to see that maintaining the system was absolutely too costly in every way. In terms of money, in terms of internal security, in terms of resources devoted to police and military facilities that were badly needed elsewhere, international isolation and disapproval. It was just becoming a burden that South Africa could not endure indefinitely. So when he became the head of the national party in South Africa, which in effect made him the ruler of the government, de Klerk made it clear that the time had come for South Africa to change its ways. You could see this coming and it was almost too much to believe. But still you could sense it.

But also in the period when I was there was when this terrible violence began in the province of Natal between the ANC followers of Nelson Mandela and the Inkatha followers.

They started not very far from Lesotho. The word we were getting was that it was in effect ANC people who provoked the initial violence by going into Inkatha territory in Natal and trying to recruit. That is where the initial fighting began and it went on from there. I am not saying that the Inkathas have been blameless, because clearly they have not, but the fighting that has become so ghastly over the last four years has its roots in Natal which in some places is right up against Lesotho.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover on this that I may have missed?

SMALLEY: I don't think so. You raised South Africa so lets end it there. I will just say that I have kept very current with events that are continuing on down there. It has been a long time since de Klerk said, "We are changing course." They still have a long way to go to what is being called a new South Africa, but I guess I think in time they will get there. But the clock is running on that situation. He has a five-year term and he is well into the second year now, so he has only really about three and a half years left to get the negotiations going, get them completed, have an election and have it all wrapped up. In the meantime he is fighting off the extreme right wing elements that are opposing him every step of the way. And they are certainly going to continue to oppose him.

On the other hand, Mandela has been crippled by divisions within the ANC. He has had all sorts of unforeseen problems of weakness of the organization to cope with that he didn't foresee. He found that his own economic policies are 30 years out of date. So it hasn't been a cake walk for him either. Certainly this trial involving his wife on complicity charges of beating and killing of a small boy has been hurtful to him.

So, I don't see any quick resolution of this problem and I suspect the longer it goes on the more violent it is going to get.

LEONARD H. SPEARMAN
Ambassador
Lesotho (1991-1993)

Ambassador Spearman was professor at a number of colleges and universities in the US before becoming President of Southern University and, subsequently, President of Texas Southern University. Following a number presidential appointments to several international organizations and conferences, he was named Ambassador to Rwanda, where he served from 1988 to 1990. The following year he was named Ambassador to Lesotho, where he served until 1993. He continued his academic career as Distinguished Professor at Coppin State College. Ambassador Spearman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

SPEARMAN: Robert Flaten. I came home in December, spent Christmas with my family and the grandchildren, and then in January we were off to Lesotho.

Q: January 1991?

SPEARMAN: Yes, and if we can think of the date in which the American forces, the United Nations forces invaded Iraq to push back the Iraqis, it is the same date in which we were flying.

Q: It was the launching of Desert Storm?

SPEARMAN: Desert Storm. I always remember it by that. And off to Maseru we went.

Q: Broadly, how would you compare, maybe first impressions, but how would you compare Lesotho with Rwanda, both of them being agricultural societies?

SPEARMAN: Well, both are small. Lesotho, of course, is more mountainous. Maseru is about 5,000 feet above sea level, and the entire country gets up to in the northern part about 11,000. It's rocky in terms of its terrain, less population density, only two million people in the entire country as opposed to seven million people.

Q: What is the size of Lesotho?

SPEARMAN: Roughly the same as the State of Maryland. But the population of Lesotho is -- I mean, the size is not much greater than the State of Maryland. It is located in the belly of South Africa. That is, you can't go into Lesotho or out of Lesotho without traveling into South Africa. It is extremely influenced by South Africa because its economy depended on -- while the French and the Belgians had a great deal of influence in Rwanda, now I'm moving to South African influence, British influence.

I am moving from a Francophone country to an Anglophone country. I'm moving to a country with no television, and very strict rules of Catholicism regarding the conduct of women and young women under President Habyarimana to a more -- a little bit freer society because of access to television, access to local hotels, there were more bars and restaurants available, and while there was limited travel out of the country, people were able to go out of the country even though that travel was limited to perhaps Swaziland or Botswana or South Africa.

The National University of Rwanda was largely a Catholic, self-contained university. The National University of Lesotho was formerly the BLS, the National University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. So the education of these people took on a little broader scope, and, interestingly, Lesotho had the highest, among developing nations, has the highest rate of literacy among women of any country in the world.

Q: Why is that?

SPEARMAN: The phenomenon is probably caused by the fact that men ritualistically enter into the mines at an early age in South Africa. It is kind of expected that you will go across the border into the gold mines, the diamond mines, the coal mines, to earn a living. After all, 76 percent of the gross national product of Lesotho at the time I arrived came from South Africa. So it was, "I hate you, but I can't live without you."

Q: Just a quick insert. It's interesting that it would suggest that the women had to be trained up, had to carry on activities in the country, which reminds me of the Vikings. The Vikings periodically went away and the women had to take on roles of the men.

SPEARMAN: It's the same. That's an important point because it's worth -- the students at George Washington who want to understand the nature of mining and so forth, or any students for that matter, to visit because these camps are extraordinarily complex and elaborate operations, with

dormitory facilities --

Q: This is in South Africa?

SPEARMAN: In South Africa. -- with pool halls, with tennis courts, with everything that you want to see. And on Friday -- these workers must work two weeks rotation before they go home. Now I'm looking at the South African side because I'm looking at the men at this particular point. Now as unprecedented as this is, these men really have to struggle to get home with their money because the prostitutes are lined up on the outside of the place. They know when payday comes, too.

Q: I was going to ask, with so many other needs taken care of, what the situation was with regard to the sexual needs of the workers.

SPEARMAN: This is a big business out here. If you drive up to these camps, from a distance they look like a huge institution of higher education, except that you see the mounds and mounds of dirt that have been removed from the depths of the earth. And I fortunately have had the experience of going deep down into a gold mine a mile below the earth. South Africans weren't comfortable with having an American Ambassador down that deep, but we did participate in that.

Now you've got to get back over here. Here is the problem, because this is an important point. As the squeeze on apartheid and the squeeze on the exportation of diamonds and gold from South Africa --

Q: Because of the sanctions?

SPEARMAN: Because of the sanctions. Now you have a problem. The South Africans no longer need all of these workers from Swazi and Lesotho, and so between 1991 and 1993, I saw the gross national product of Lesotho that depended on South Africa drop from 76 percent to 51 percent.

Now, in the meantime, the women are at home. Sure, they get more education, they do the farming, they do the rearing of the children, they are primarily responsible for that. But Lesotho was changing. There was gambling in Lesotho's hotels, which is allowed by law but not South Africa.

Q: The South Africans ran these enterprises?

SPEARMAN: Of course, the Sun Enterprises is in all of the free states in essence.

Q: I met the man who is responsible for the Sun Valley Enterprise because he also owns casinos in Mauritius. I can't think of his name now.

SPEARMAN: I didn't mean to get off onto that, but the point is, when I arrived, General Lekhanya was the military head of the government.

Q: There was a military government?

SPEARMAN: Yes.

Q: There had been a coup?

SPEARMAN: Yes, there had been a military government in Lesotho. Lekhanya had -- General Lekhanya had taken over -- all right, this gets a little complicated.

Q: That's all right. He had taken over.

SPEARMAN: It's a monarchy, you have to remember, King Moshoeshoe. The prime minister was running the country, Lekhanya. The king kept interfering allegedly into the operation of the government.

Q: What is the period?

SPEARMAN: We're dealing in the late '80s. So the King had been exiled on one occasion, and finally they said to the king, you have to go to London, you have to leave. The king left, he left his wife, the queen mother, and a son, which gets very important. And I'm going to have to edit this thing, but Lekhanya was unpopular with the South Africans. Lesotho was also a stopping-off place for members of the ANC who wanted to get out of South Africa. South Africans had butchered in the early mornings thousands of Lesotho while they were sleeping, looking for ANC refugees.

Lekhanya militarily overthrew Leabua and took over the government and created a military cabinet of generals. When I arrived it was in place. Lekhanya is short in stature, not necessarily a very attractive man, but -- it's almost a contradiction. He was so bright that he appeared to be attractive. He was articulate, yet he had only worked in the mines, he had dropped out of school. He had traveled widely, he clearly loved music from the classics to jazz, could fly a plane, extraordinarily literate, and loved the social event.

Q: How did he get into the military?

SPEARMAN: Came out of the mines. And men joined the military. Almost every one of those generals sitting on that podium has been in the mines. So his ritual and now the person who succeeded him, both are graduates of the diamond or the gold mines in essence. And so you had this experience, you don't want to go back to the farm. In most developing countries, the military has the largest budget, and to be an officer in the military is of course prestige.

I made very good friends with Lekhanya. I got there in January, and we began to relate and to talk. Lekhanya came by my house and I said to him one day, "You know that the street that I live on, the American residence, is muddy, and therefore I can't keep my car very clean out here, and I have noticed that all of the other ambassadors have paved streets. Is there some reason that you don't love the Americans?" We got into a lovely discussion, and he says, well, you Americans

are so rich, you can pay for your own street paving. And I said, "Well, I will only pave it up to the point at which I turn into my house." And so in a few weeks someone came by and began to put some gravel and tarmac the area for me. But we developed a very warm visiting friendship.

Q: What was the human rights situation?

SPEARMAN: In a sense, the military controlled things. We didn't have very good protection of labor laws, environmental protection laws, but you didn't have a great deal of abuse. It was not like you couldn't speak out on television or you couldn't write articles. Lekhanya had been to the United States, and he had made a commitment that he wanted democracy, and he welcomed me to shepherd him through how do we get to it, to this process, and it was important to him that we move toward a democratic reign. But it was important to him that Moshoeshe not return, because he felt that the biggest block to democratization in Lesotho was the presence of the king who wanted to run everything with an iron hand.

Q: The presence of the monarchy.

SPEARMAN: The presence of the monarchy, and so he was not popular with the monarchy. He also had gotten himself into a little bind because he had killed someone from his role as the military head. He killed a young man at a dormitory at a university and had been exonerated, but he retained the power of office. And so he was looking for redemption, he was looking for a way to come out of this.

But he had a strong team around him, and the people were upset with the team, and the military was upset with the team that included the foreign minister, the minister of finance, and one of his generals. And so I met with Lekhanya, and I said to him, "You are going to have to make a decision, General. Do you wish to stay in office because there is going to be a coup to overthrow you."

Q: You knew that?

SPEARMAN: I knew this. "You can avoid this coup if you will dismiss three people." And he said to me, "Mr. Ambassador, I can't do it -- I am a military man, I'm a loyalist -- until you can give me some evidence." I said, "It is not for me to give you evidence, it's for you to ask the question, but here is the moral dilemma which you face. You have a vision of a democratic order for Maseru. Are you willing to give up that vision or delay and defer that for three people? You have to make that moral decision, not the American ambassador. I am here to assist you in getting to it, but here is the dilemma. You will be overthrown." "Do you have any idea about when?" "Yes, in less than two or three months. So you have time to think about it, to consult with your family, and I'm available."

Whether he believed me or not, whether he became bullheaded and said I can overcome this, I'm not sure. But the records do show that I advised him. And he was overthrown by his own military. He was under arrest, he was taken to the radio station, he was asked to give up his -- he did.

He was not brutalized, he was not beaten, he was not placed in jail, contrary to reports that came out. He was treated with every ounce of respect as a general. This was in 1991, the spring of 1991, and I'm going to guess about April if my memory is serving me right.

Another general, Phisoana, but the military remained in power. It was kind of interesting. I think that more than any other time in my diplomatic career, having moved from Habyarimana to Lekhanya and now to a third leader, and I was older than all of them, I think there was this --

Three military people. There was this difference to me. I felt like, and my wife would say, "Wow, they want to talk to you all the time about issues and things of this sort." And I think it had to do with the fact that I was older and the developing world's respect for the graying hairs, I think it was partly that. I think it was that they didn't think I had any ulterior colonial motive.

Q. You had no agenda?

SPEARMAN: I had no agenda except to try to see could we help you where we possibly can, can we get to where we want to go, and can I work with the other embassies in marshaling the support to get there. But anyway, the transition for me was not a difficult one even though Lekhanya kept visiting me.

But there is one little anecdote in here that I have to share with you. Lekhanya went away quietly across the border, and many of his older military people convinced him that the time was right that he could retake his -- well, he failed. His coup of coups or his recouping, as it were, failed, and Lekhanya knocked on my -- about 1:30 in the morning, my guards notified me that someone is on the outside. "It's 1:30 in the morning, who is on the outside?" "General Lekhanya." Lekhanya came in, and I said, "General, can I help you?" And he said, "Well, I've got to get out the country and I need your help."

Well, I'll skip a lot of the particulars in this, but we did manage to get him across the border into South Africa, and he is now -- I have seen him since then, I visited him two years ago. He's an extraordinarily rich and successful farmer.

Q: In South Africa?

SPEARMAN: No, in Lesotho. He has got a lovely home up on top of a gorgeous hill, and he's got peach trees, and he sits out on the veranda, and he has got a trailer sitting out there. So be it.

Q: In any event, the interesting thing is, at a certain point, the king did come back.

SPEARMAN: Yes, okay. We went through a period of time, and I became dean of a small diplomatic corps.

Q: 1992?

SPEARMAN: 1992. And in 1993, we carried out our first democratic elections in Lesotho. That was my pride and joy. I think if I had to look back at it, carrying them through their first

democratic election in 27 years was indeed a highlight. The establishment of an American school, the Lesotho American School and the Rwanda American School, were two of the highlights for most people, but from an education -- as a professional educator, you know that there is a certain amount of satisfaction you see in having 57 different kids from 25 different countries sitting in a class singing to you. It's a real warm feeling.

Yes, the king, back to your question. The king's son was the king. He was sworn in with all the trappings.

Q: How old was he?

SPEARMAN: 29. He was a frequent visitor in our residence and often asked me to come over to his. And the queen mother had my wife and me to her country home on more than one occasion for dinner and we chatted. She felt very comfortable talking to the Americans. She had visited the United States on one occasion.

But she loved her husband. The son was a reluctant king -- King Letsie was a reluctant monarch. Following democracy, following the elections --

Q: What month were the elections?

SPEARMAN: Elections were probably in February because by this time --

Q: February of 1993?

SPEARMAN: Right. Because by this time, President Clinton was in office, and all of us had to resign posts, the typical State Department procedure, and there was a critical issue -- the records and so forth, and they would make a final decision on it, and the prime minister agreed to abide by the verdict of this, I believe, three-country tribunal in essence. And they agreed that Moshoeshoe was officially the king to the delight of the son Letsie, and Moshoeshoe did return to regain his throne.

Q: This was before or after the elections?

SPEARMAN: This is after the elections.

Q: The elections were for a parliament?

SPEARMAN: Yes, the elections were for prime minister and a parliament. They established a prime minister.

Q: Okay. And following the elections, there was an effort to restore the monarchy?

SPEARMAN: Restore the monarchy. Well, the monarchy was never destroyed, but to restore the king to the throne of the monarchy, the father of the king, the rightful king. But they wanted certain concessions.

Q: They?

SPEARMAN: The government wanted concessions, I'm sorry, the newly established government wanted concessions from Moshoeshoe. "Yes, you may return, but once again we're going to tell you, there is a separation of the monarchy from the operation of the government. Please do not dictate to us."

Well, that was the problem. He would have never been exiled, but he had such powerful influence in appointments in government and appointments in the military and appointments every place, so it became extraordinarily difficult, that is, the perception of the government, that it became extraordinarily difficult for them to run the government because the king was running the monarchy and the government. And so they were in essence saying, do the rituals, grow the goats and the sheep and so forth, but do not deal with the operation of the government.

Q: This is extremely interesting because what the politicians and the parliament, the newly elected parliament, were asking, was that a king give up his traditional powers, authority, influence, hierarchical status and remake himself into a constitutional monarch.

SPEARMAN: That's correct. But he had a number of years to practice this. You see, Moshoeshoe had been elected as president 27 years ago. They had exiled him to Holland on one occasion. And so it kept going, going, going. This is an extraordinarily brilliant man, Moshoeshoe. His writings are superb. His legal training in London is phenomenal. This is not a I-grew-up-in-the-wild-come-to-office king. This is an articulate, skillful man who with a pen is as uplifting as deadly.

So the Moshoeshoe line going from the founder, he comes from a very distinguished line, King Moshoeshoe who founded the country of Lesotho. This man is a -- in American terminology -- is a blue blood descendent, and he is very well-educated, as is his son King Letsie, who is also a lawyer.

So Moshoeshoe is a threat to a military government based on mine workers, mine graduates, as opposed to the elite.

Q: But the mine workers would typically be people who had a primary education?

SPEARMAN: Right, primary education. And so his rhetoric and his pen made them extraordinarily nervous, of course.

Q: You say that he had time to practice becoming a constitutional monarch.

SPEARMAN: I say that only because Leabua, who was the prime minister, had run into difficulties, so it was not his first time being exiled under General Lekhanya. He had been exiled once before. But when he returned, he always resorted to the same. Now, would he have done it a third time, I have no idea, because he was killed.

Q: The king?

SPEARMAN: The king. He was in an accident off of a cliff. He and the driver were driving up early in the morning. Whether there was fog, whether there was foul play, no one seems to know. Everybody seems to have reduced it to a sheer accident.

Q: And that was in what year?

SPEARMAN: 1996. Now, I'm out of there at this particular point.

Q: Looking back, I was exposed to people in 1991 or so who were very interested in the hydroelectric potential of Lesotho and the possibility of selling electricity to South Africa. Recently there has been a great deal of criticism of corruption in the awarding of contracts and so forth. Do you have any comment on that?

SPEARMAN: Well, the Highlands Water Project really began during the time that I was there. In effect, to be candid with you, I would try to get there early enough to welcome American bidding into the process because it was strictly a European contest. And so the Highlands water project began during that particular period.

It was extremely complicated because here is a country that is being suppressed by South Africa, preparing to award a dam which is being funded by South Africa to provide water into the Orange Free State to assure that there are no droughts, because Lesotho's wealth is the water in the northern part of the country. So a massive project began. I am not at all surprised that there are stories of corruption involved in this. After all, the selling of water is like the selling of diamonds or like the selling of gold or like the selling of arms.

Q: One cannot look too closely at the history of water in California.

SPEARMAN: That's correct. So the promises that were made that we would rebuild houses, build schools up in the north, for people who were being displaced, the opportunity, the insertion of controls to block off the diamonds which might be swept through by the water, all of these give great opportunity for hanky-panky.

Q: Speculation.

SPEARMAN: That's right, speculation. And so, yes, I have heard, I'm aware of this.

Q: Speak for a moment about diamonds. This is the great export of Lesotho, isn't it?

SPEARMAN: Lesotho has some diamonds, but there has been no really heavy diamond markets identified with Lesotho. What they were doing when they did the water dam was that they had to develop some kind of elaborate mesh that ran through a certain area in which if diamonds were flushed out of this area, they would stop there. A number of companies have said that they tried to go into Lesotho to mine diamonds, but their veins do not appear as prosperous despite its close proximity or they would have pulled them out a long time ago to try to alleviate some of the

poverty.

Q: But there is diamond smuggling, too.

SPEARMAN: Yes, yes.

All in all, it's been a -- I hope that I tried in my two terms' appointment to dissipate the notion that all non-career ambassadors are not well-trained, not well-schooled, have no understanding, are political puppets of the President. But rather, we took this very seriously because, in the first place, how many people get tapped by the President of the United States to serve as an ambassador, whether it is career or non-career? And, two, you represent the most powerful nation in the world, and what you say at a dinner party, what you say at a cocktail party, and of course of your conduct, when your wife's affairs translate into what America is all about.

As a black American, I began to understand a number of things. I was never called an Afro-American, I was never called a black American, I was called an American and perceived as such. Secondly, there was another notion that I think is important as you all put this together. I had heard rumors that African leaders did not respect black ambassadors because they felt they had no power to effect change. I think that's an abusive statement --

Q: It's not true.

SPEARMAN: It's an untrue tale.

Q: To respond to it very bluntly, African-American or Irish-American or Jewish-American or female American ambassadors have as much power as their ability. There are good, bad and indifferent, and that's the answer.

SPEARMAN: Of course, yes. I had someone say to me when I was in Texas, oh, you will be home in three or four months because you won't be able to make the adjustment. Well, here it is 1999, going into the millennium, and I am still traveling backwards and forwards to Africa.

End of reader