

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

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### **MARY SEYMOUR OLMSTED Ambassador Papua New Guinea (1975-1979)**

*Ambassador Mary Seymour Olmsted was born in Duluth, Minnesota and raised in Florida. She received a bachelor's degree in economics from Mount Holyoke College and a master's degree from Columbia University. Ambassador Olmsted's Foreign Service career included positions in India, Iceland, Austria, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Papua New Guinea. Ambassador Olmsted was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: That's an awful lot of responsibility, I would think. Now you went out to Port Moresby. That was in June of '74?*

**OLMSTED:** Yes.

*Q: As principal officer. So in other words, you were made Consul General. Sworn in and so forth.*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: At that time, did you know that was going to become an Embassy?*

OLMSTED: It seemed quite likely. Papua New Guinea, in the beginning, was obviously on the road to independence, and no one knew exactly when it would take place. But it seemed likely it would be within a year or so.

*Q: Were you given any promises that you would have the slot?*

OLMSTED: No. I didn't ask for them.

*Q: Well, I'm sure you didn't ask for it.*

OLMSTED: Well, people do negotiate sometimes.

*Q: Yes, I know, but I can't imagine you doing it.*

OLMSTED: I knew enough about the way personnel matters operate. The person who makes the commitments is usually someplace else by the time you want to call in your commitment.

*Q: I'd love to hear more about the post. How many people were there?*

OLMSTED: I opened the post. The Department sent in an advance team consisting of the young man who was to become our administrative officer and another young man who was sent out from the Department. They looked around to try to locate both housing and office space for us. Then my secretary went out a few days before I did. When I arrived, we had a staff of two people, which was the administrative officer and my secretary, and we moved into some rather shabby quarters over a lunch counter and a bookstore. There was no furniture in our quarters. We had ordered office furniture from Australia, but obviously it wouldn't get there for a couple of months. So we borrowed three battered desks and five chairs from the people we were renting the space from. These were straight chairs, not swivel chairs. As I say, these offices were a bit grubby. They were carpeted with large squares of blue and bluish-green cheap carpeting, and curtains were orange and white. The offices were broken down into little rabbit warrens. There were just a whole passel of these little rabbit warrens.

*Q: Typical embassy. (Laughter)*

OLMSTED: Yes. The floors creaked when we walked across them. We took out one of the walls to make a slightly larger office for me. We did little shopping locally. Things were expensive, and there wasn't very much variety. One day when we had three visitors and all of our staff of three were there, one person had to stand because we only had five chairs. So I told the administrative officer, "For goodness sakes, go out and buy a few chairs locally and we can use them somehow," and we did. We also bought a large heavy table to put out Telex on, got the

Telex installed, and that linked us up first with Australia and then later with Washington. We felt a little bit more in touch with things.

Then one day our shipment from Tokyo arrived. When a new post is opened, they always ask one of the large embassies in the area to make up a shipment of things that a new post will need and send them down. Well, obviously Tokyo cleaned out its attic when it made its shipment for us. This great big lift van arrived and was opened up, and the things were put in boxes in the reception room. We opened them one by one, and the stationery, envelopes, and consular forms, and seals and rubber stamps and all kinds of things that we needed, and there were paper clips. We couldn't get any paper clips locally. Running an office without paper clips is a bit of a challenge. They also sent our flags. They sent one flag that was nineteen feet long, and we had to open it up through the doors of three offices to see what size it was. I'm sure it was the largest flag in all of Papua New Guinea. We found exactly one use for it all the time that I was there.

*Q: Was that for the Fourth of July?*

OLMSTED: Yes. Yes, we strung it up on the Bicentennial Fourth of July.

So we were busy sorting those things out and making acquaintances around town. I knew it was important for me to get out and make calls, which I did, and become acquainted and let people know that the Americans were here and in business. It was quite clear we could not start operating our consular office for some time, because we just weren't set up for it. When people came in to ask for consular services, we just had to tell them, "Come back maybe in October and we'll be able to help you then."

So little by little, we did get established. Our shipment of office furniture arrived from Australia after a few months, and we had swivel chairs and real desks and desk lamps and all sorts of things that made us feel that we were coming up in the world. So you can see there are a series of steps that we took, one by one.

*Q: Yes. You got the entire experience.*

OLMSTED: Yes, and it wasn't until the end of the year that we really felt that we were fully operational. By that time, I think we were. Other personnel arrived. The political officer came, to be followed a few months later by the economic officer, who was also to do the consular work, and then the second of our two secretaries arrived. That was the group that manned the ship until after independence.

*Q: At that time it was Papua New Guinea, and not the Solomon Islands, is that correct?*

OLMSTED: I was assigned to Papua New Guinea. The Solomon Islands is a different political entity. It was under the British. I was told I would be responsible for handling whatever came up in connection with the Solomon Islands, and I should go over there from time to time, and which I did.

*Q: Is it very far away?*

OLMSTED: The small plane that connects them is nearly a four-hour flight. That is, from Port Moresby.

*Q: Where did you live?*

OLMSTED: I lived in Port Moresby, on the side of a hill overlooking the Coral Sea, an absolutely spectacular view of the curving coastline and the little islands dotting the harbor. From my patio I could look 180 degrees around the horizon. Below me at the left, there was a fishing village on stilts built out over the water. To my right there was the curve of Paga Hill.

I was in a very modernistic house which was built by a Greek Cypriot who, according to the story, had arrived at Papua New Guinea practically penniless and was a soda-jerk at one of the downtown department stores initially. Being an educated man and, I think, quite clever and quite determined, he eventually got into more lucrative work and did quite well for himself financially. He built this as a bachelor's pad. You could see that a bachelor had built it, from many of its shortcomings. But it was an interesting house. The ceiling was seventeen feet high in the living room on one side sloping down to about four feet on the other side. There were five walls to the living room, three of which were glass, which gave a magnificent view of the Coral Sea and the coastline.

*Q: Who kept the house for you?*

OLMSTED: I hired a house boy named Kisini, who stayed with me all the time I was there. He had only a little training. I talked to some Australians about servants. Lady Cleveland was one who warned me that you can do worse with having someone who is trained in a way you don't like than in hiring someone with limited training whom you can train the way you do like. So I took the latter choice. This young man, I'm sure, was still in his teens when he first came to me, and spoke very little English. I had an Australian friend who had been a rubber plantation owner in Papua New Guinea for many, many years before he retired, and he had had a plantation in the area where my house boy came from, and he spoke the language. When I ran into real problems, I'd telephone him and he would play interpreter over the telephone for whatever it was that I wanted to get across. (Laughter)

*Q: Did he cook for you?*

OLMSTED: Yes. It was rather simple cooking, but I showed him some additional things.

*Q: Did you buy everything on the local market, or did you import?*

OLMSTED: We bought everything on the local market. There were a couple of Australian supermarkets there. In Port Moresby, they have supermarkets as adjuncts to department stores. There are two of those which had really a surprising variety of things. I could buy Sara Lee frozen goods made in Australia there, and quite a variety. Then I'd go to the local market for the local fresh produce.

*Q: So you didn't import shipments of food for yourself from any other place?*

OLMSTED: No. We could have, but it always seemed like more trouble than it was worth.

*Q: Could you get things like ham?*

OLMSTED: Yes. I think it was mainly canned ham that we got, but there was local beef available, and there was a German delicatessen which had some quite nice things.

*Q: How did the host country react to having a woman consul general and then ambassador?*

OLMSTED: Papua New Guineans are very conservative people. They don't jump to conclusions. They don't go off on rash tangents. They sit down and think things over very carefully. I'm using "conservative" not in the political sense, but in the real meaning of the word. So when I arrived, they were a little taken aback, but they thought it over very carefully and wanted to see what kind of a person I was and how I fitted in. Then after I had been there for some time, Washington appointed Ann Armstrong as ambassador to London. When the Papua New Guineans learned that London had an American ambassador who was a woman and they did, too, they rather felt that put them in the class with London.

*Q: Isn't that charming.*

OLMSTED: That was pretty nice.

*Q: Yes, that's charming.*

*Tell me what happens when there is independence and then our government decides it's going to be an embassy, not a ministry or whatever. How do they technically do that? How do you get sworn in, for example?*

OLMSTED: Let me answer your first question first. I don't believe there's a single legation now. It's almost automatic that if a country becomes independent, the mission that we will have there will be an embassy. There is no question about that, as far as I am aware.

On the day of independence, we had a little ceremony elevating the Consulate General to the status of embassy, and we unveiled our plaque which read "Embassy of the United States" in place of the one that said "Consulate General of the United States." I automatically became the chargé d'affaires. I had hoped, of course, that I would become the ambassador, and I had decided I would not stay on as DCM if they appointed somebody else. I didn't know what was going on back in Washington. Our communications weren't all that good; nobody had visited recently to bring us up to date on things back there.

So I just sat back and waited to see what would happen. I knew I would be very disappointed, because I liked Papua New Guinea and I wanted to stay on. I felt I could handle the job, but I also know that there's many a slip when it comes to ambassadorial appointments.

*Q: When was this, exactly?*

OLMSTED: Well, independence was the sixteenth of September 1975, and that's when the post became an embassy. Then I think it was sometime in late October that I got the cable saying that President [Gerald] Ford wanted to appoint me as ambassador, and was this agreeable with me. (Laughter) I sent back a very quick cable saying, "Yes, I'd be delighted." Then my name was eventually sent up to the Senate, and I was confirmed in absentia. I did not go back for hearings.

We had a little ceremony in my office, at which I was sworn in. I just had my office staff and I invited a couple of people from the foreign office for it. We drank champagne afterwards.

*Q: Who did the swearing in?*

OLMSTED: My consular officer.

*Q: Did you use a Bible?*

OLMSTED: Yes, a family Bible. The second officer in the embassy, my political officer, Mark Easton, presided over the ceremony, and the actual oath was administered by the consular officer, and the Bible was held by the third officer. So people got very much involved in it. As I say, we broke out the champagne.

*Q: Yes. Did that automatically move your political officer to become deputy chief of mission?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: What was he called? Political officer?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and when I was away, he became the chargé.

*Q: When did the Solomon Islands become included in your mandate? At that time?*

OLMSTED: No. It was included rather informally in my mandate initially. As far as I can recall, there were no papers exchanged or anything like that. We just let them know quite informally that I would be looking after matters affecting the United States in the Solomon Islands from my office in Port Moresby, and I would visit there from time to time.

The Solomon Islands was not then independent. I think there may have been some notice given in London to the British, but I must say my memory is a little faint about that now. The Solomon Islands did not become independent until 1978. It was that time when I was named ambassador and presented my credentials and so on.

*Q: And had to be sworn in again? That, again, was under President Ford?*

OLMSTED: No, that was under President [Jimmy] Carter in 1978.

*Q: Who was the head of state of Papua New Guinea after independence?*

OLMSTED: The head of state was the governor general, who was Sir John Guise. He was a political figure whose career had started as a policeman, and he had eventually gotten into politics and filled various positions. He had been a colleague of the prime minister, but there had been some falling out between them, and I think he was more or less kicked upstairs to become the first governor general. He was a man with considerable political ambitions, but I don't think he realized that he would have no powers. It was a purely ceremonial office, I think he was quite disappointed, and he resigned before his term was out.

*Q: What sort of a government do they have?*

OLMSTED: It's a modified Westminster-type government with a prime minister who is chosen by a vote of Parliament.

*Q: How large is the Parliament?*

OLMSTED: About a hundred people. There are about a hundred members of Parliament.

*Q: What is the population?*

OLMSTED: Three million.

*Q: Do they have universal suffrage?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: And education for everybody?*

OLMSTED: No, not yet. It's a very primitive country, very, very undeveloped, and it will be a long time before these things can be arranged. When they conduct a national election, it takes three weeks because they don't have enough trained people to hold it simultaneously in all parts of the country. Therefore, they will send teams out to these very remote areas and election officials will go by small plane, even helicopter, and by canoe, and on foot to reach these remote places. Everyone is given a chance to vote, and then the ballots are kept sealed until the election is completed. Then they're counted.

I was there for one election, and it was my definite opinion that although there were a few irregularities, they were dealt with either administratively or in the courts. I thought that it was a remarkably honest and fair election.

*Q: What's the literacy rate?*

OLMSTED: Well, I think that it is probably someplace around 20%, but it's awfully hard to know. You've also got to make certain assumptions as to what kind of literacy is it. Is it literacy in English you're talking about? There may be some people who are literate in their own

language, which is spoken by only a very few people. There are 750 different languages spoken in Papua New Guinea. They have an enormous--

*Q: Seven-hundred and fifty languages?*

OLMSTED: Yes. An enormous language problem.

*Q: How does that happen? Each little area evolves its own speech?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Isn't that amazing? And do most of them have their own literature, or is it all spoken?*

OLMSTED: It's very largely spoken. There has been a semi-missionary group, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which has done a great deal of work in the languages of Papua New Guinea, and they will send a team into a village, where the language has never been written down. These linguists will learn the language, the grammar and the vocabulary and eventually write articles in that language. Eventually their intention was to translate the Bible into that language.

*Q: How do they vote if a lot of them can't read? Does someone read to them what the ballot is all about?*

OLMSTED: It's the whispering vote, as they say. (Laughter) They whisper to the person who is marking the ballot, whoever it is they want to vote for.

*Q: But they have decided opinions on whom they want?*

OLMSTED: Yes. Clan plays a very important role in this. It's the connections of the people to the person who has been nominated. If they're from the same language group or, even stronger, from the same clan, why, they're likely to vote for that person. But the vote can get divided by two people from the same language group or the same clan.

*Q: Do they have family names?*

OLMSTED: No. For practical purposes, they take the father's given name as their family name.

*Q: Sort of the "Johnson" idea.*

OLMSTED: Yes, except they don't add the "son." Urban people are beginning to give their children the patronymic that the father uses. They're adopting the Western practice, but that is a relatively small group of people.

*Q: Of course you read Margaret Mead's books.*

OLMSTED: Yes.



*Q: How much had things changed since she wrote that classic, Growing Up in New Guinea?*

OLMSTED: Oh, goodness. I couldn't answer that. It's a very hard country to generalize about.

*Q: It must be.*

OLMSTED: There's a great deal of variation throughout the country, difference in customs, in practices, difference in language, difference in standards, and so on. I traveled in the villages a fair amount, and it seems to me that every village has its own personality. You can sense that.

*Q: What is their feeling about the United States? Do they look on us in a friendly way, or as an overwhelming giant?*

OLMSTED: The largest missionary presence in Papua New Guinea is the American missionary presence, and there are many people who have studied at American mission schools and who had Americans as their teachers. By and large, I would say that the missions made a good impression, the mission teachers and also the mission clinics and hospitals. There are, I'm sure, many people who think they would not be alive, or at least would not be healthy, except that there was an American mission hospital or clinic in their village, and they could go to it and get a cure for their ailment. They may also remember that their favorite teacher was an American teacher. I go into a store and buy something, talk a little bit to the clerk, and the clerk would ask me was I an American. I'd say, "Yes, how did you know?" He would say, "Well, you talk just like my teacher, who is an American."

Consequently, I think that Americans are well regarded. I also think that the older people who remember the Second World War regard Americans highly. The Japanese were, in many areas, quite cruel in their treatment of the local people, and there was quite a contrast between the way the Japanese treated them in most places, not in every place, and the way the Americans treated them. When the American troops came in, they brought with them just vast quantities of materiel and things like refrigerators and candy bars and everything in between. They had jeeps, they had airplanes, and so on, much more than the Australians ever brought in. It was the first time that the Papua New Guineans realized that there was a country that was more powerful and richer than Australia, and that impressed them.

Another thing that impressed them was the fact that there were black American troops and there were black officers. John Guise, whose name I mentioned a little bit ago, will say--I've heard him say it--that he remembers when he saw American blacks giving orders to American whites in the military, and they were obeyed. He said he saw them doing what looked like, to him, highly skilled work, technical work of one sort or another. This was one of the factors in starting the stirrings of independence, because the people started looking at each other and said, "That man's black and look what he's doing. Why can't I do it, too?"

*Q: Isn't that interesting? We cast a wide net, don't we?*

OLMSTED: Yes, we do.

*Q: Was it any one particular religion that had missions out there?*

OLMSTED: The two largest were the Catholics and the Lutherans. And in addition to them, there was everything you have ever heard of.

*Q: Did the missionaries fight for territory the way they did in Africa?*

OLMSTED: At one time there was a division established, and even today you can almost tell what a person's religion is, if he's a Christian, by the area he comes from. The Catholics had the Sepik area. I've forgotten exactly how far it ran. Then the Anglicans had the northern province. I can't remember what the others were.

*Q: But they did divide it up into territories?*

OLMSTED: Yes, they did. Therefore, I think there was probably less of the friction that there may have been from other countries. Plus the fact Papua New Guinea covers a fairly wide area, and with three million people, the population is quite spread out.

*Q: How does the Solomon Islands differ in the form of government and people's education and so forth? Ethnically, are they the same? I should say racially.*

OLMSTED: Yes, they're all Melanesians. Papua New Guinea did not receive very much in the way of economic development or education from the Australians until the early or middle '60s. But I guess it was the early '60s, the Australians were beginning to realize they were going to have to do something with Papua New Guinea. Either they were going to have to incorporate it into Australia as Papua New Guinea or they'd have to let it go. About that time, a British-led UN team wrote a very caustic report on the Australian administration of Papua New Guinea. These two things came together to spur the Australians into action, and they started pouring more money into Papua New Guinea. They put new emphasis on education. They built primary schools and high schools in many places that had never had schools before. They established a University of Papua New Guinea and a University of Technology, as well, and they stimulated work in the Teachers Colleges and so on. But you can't educate a nation in the matter of a few years. Consequently, at the time of independence, the number of educated, trained, experienced people was very, very small and has been a great handicap to them.

In the Solomon Islands, many of the government leaders were educated in New Zealand with scholarships from the New Zealand government. I thought that the general level of education among the Solomon Islanders in the government was somewhat higher than in Papua New Guinea, although I have never seen a comparative study.

*Q: Papua New Guineans who were trained had gotten their education in Australia or from the missionaries?*

OLMSTED: Most of them as children went to missionary schools, and then some of them had the chance to go to Australia for their secondary training. The older ones, a few of them, got

university training, but not very many. Then about the time larger numbers were coming into the university level in the late 1960's, the University of Papua New Guinea was opened and they started going there.

Of the older group, the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs, and so on, most of them went to what was a high school at Sogeri. Most of them knew each other because they were the cream of the crop, and the high school at Sogeri was the highest education available to them.

*Q: The teachers were Australians?*

OLMSTED: Probably, largely, yes.

*Q: It was free? The education was free?*

OLMSTED: Not only free, but for these schools, the government pays room and board as well as the tuition and also provides them with spending money.

*Q: I should imagine that the annual income is pretty low out there, isn't it?*

OLMSTED: Yes, it is. Figures aren't very good, aren't very meaningful, about that, but there isn't the sort of poverty that you find in India. Nature is good to Papua New Guinea, and there's plenty of water. In most parts of the country, things grow extremely well.

*Q: It's an agricultural country?*

OLMSTED: Yes, agriculture is the basis, and fishing along the coastal areas. The ratio of population to land area is very favorable, and therefore there isn't the kind of rural slums that you find in other places. [Tape recorder turned off.]

*[Interview of July 11, 1985 begins]*

*Q: Ambassador Olmsted, we were talking about your experiences in New Guinea. Since they were so different from those of most of the other women ambassadors, I wonder if you would give me a day in the life of the American ambassador to Guinea.*

OLMSTED: I often began the day with a quick swim in my little pool, and then had breakfast. One of the things I always missed at breakfast was not being able to read a newspaper, which I had done all my life. But they don't deliver newspapers in Papua New Guinea. You have to go down to the store and buy them. The arrangement was that my driver, after he took me to the office, would pick up the paper, so I would have it in my office maybe five minutes after I got there.

But after breakfast, my driver came and took me to the office. The security people used to tell us we should use a different route going to the office every day but that was quite impossible. There was one way to get there, unless one went perhaps twenty miles out of the way to take the ring road all the way around Port Moresby. So we followed the same route, driving along the

coastline of the Coral Sea, looking out at that magnificent view. I never got tired of looking at it. Then swinging up Paga Pava Hill and to the office.

Once in the office, I would look at the cables, and read the newspaper when it was delivered to me. Then the day would begin. There would be things to discuss with various staff members, perhaps a staff meeting or perhaps just individual discussions. There would be people outside the office to see, perhaps someone to call on in the government, or perhaps a discussion with a colleague from the diplomatic corps. Often I had lunch in town with someone, but I also stayed home, occasionally having luncheons, as was appropriate for the occasion.

We had a surprising number of visitors from the United States in Port Moresby. I sometimes thought that among the well-traveled people of the American Government, there are many who thought they'd been almost everywhere except Papua New Guinea, and therefore they had to stop to see Papua New Guinea as they were making their swing through Eastern Asia. So I might have a visitor to talk to or to take on a call or something like that.

Then I would perhaps have a cable or two to write, and the work of my office staff to review and sign, and then the day would end. We did not often work overtime in Port Moresby, and the office closed at 4:30. We opened at 8:00 and closed at 4:30, because athletics and sports were very important in the lives of people in Port Moresby, and my staff, of course, wanted to be included in that. Many of my staff played golf. Some of them were boaters. One very enterprising young officer built his own sailboat, did a beautiful job on it. Another bought a small boat, and others had other pastimes that they enjoyed. Squash was popular with some members of the staff.

So after work, I would go home and usually check around about household matters and oversee what the house boy had done or had failed to do and what the gardener had done or neglected. Then often there would be a cocktail party or dinner, and perhaps both.

There was a rather lively small social life in Port Moresby. People did quite a bit of entertaining because there really wasn't a great deal of other things to do. There were a couple of theatrical groups which did put on plays from time to time, and I always went to those. Occasionally there would be performances that the government would put on of one sort or another. The National Arts School regularly had showings of their students' work, along with a little reception. I regularly went to those. However, the kind of cultural attractions that one finds in a city like Washington are, of course, quite missing in Port Moresby.

The cocktail parties were sometimes held in the big hotels--they would not be big by American standards--and sometimes in people's houses. So fairly frequently I would go to one of those, and I myself entertained. I had a beautiful view of the Coral Sea from my patio, and I found that small cocktail parties at sunset were an effective way to entertain. It was a good way to entertain visitors, for example, a small enough party so they'd have a chance to talk to people and could enjoy watching the setting sun over the Coral Sea, which is a lovely, lovely sight, and then watch the lights come on around the coastline as the sun went down. Of course, sunset came very quickly and darkness followed promptly as we were close to the equator.

*Q: Very dramatic.*

OLMSTED: Very dramatic. Some of the dinners that were given, again, were in hotels. When the government entertained, it usually entertained in a hotel. There were a lot of official visitors for the government around the time of independence, and they did indeed entertain them and invite the diplomatic corps.

The diplomatic corps itself usually entertained in their own homes, as did the expatriate community, which was largely Australian. There were a number of Australian businessmen there, banks, insurance people, and so on. They formed part of the group. I found that I circulated in several different groups. First the official group, the government and diplomatic corps. Another, which was related to, but a little apart from it, was the business community, which I, frankly, did not enjoy as much as some of the other groups. The business community tended to be people who were not terribly well educated, not very broad in their outlook; interested in making money and going home. I found them a less appealing group. Another group was the university, and I did make a real effort to cultivate contacts in the university, and I enjoyed people there. I saw quite a bit of them socially and otherwise.

The faculty of the university was like the UN, there were so many different nationalities there. It had originally been Australian, but a ceiling was imposed on the salaries of the faculty at the University of Papua New Guinea when the salaries were still rising in Australia. That meant the Australians, one by one, went back home, and they were replaced by New Zealanders, by Americans, by British, by Indians, Pakistanis, Africans, and so on. There is quite a lively group out there, and I did enjoy them. And another group that I circulated in, which was close to, but not quite the same, was the arts and crafts group, the people who were interested in the arts and in the artifacts and in buying and learning about the New Guinean artwork, particularly from the Sepik, but also some of the other carvings and weavings and things like that.

*Q: Wood carvings?*

OLMSTED: Yes, largely. A few of other things, but largely wood carvings, bone and a few other things.

*Q: Do they do any work in bronze?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: No metals?*

OLMSTED: Copper beating is not traditional, but it is done there. It has been introduced by the Westerners, and that top piece there is a Papua New Guinea copper beating. I have some others. The National Art School was trying to teach the students to use their traditional motifs, but in modern or different media, and one of them was copper beating.

*Q: Do they do the feather weaving?*

OLMSTED: No. That is Polynesian. They traditionally have done some tapa work, but that is dying out. Wood carving is surely the most important of their styles of art, and some of the pieces are quite large: poles, for example, and very large masks, what they call the orator's stool, which is a large mask, sometimes six feet tall or even taller. It's built on the side of a small stool which is not intended to be sat upon. In the men's houses, (where all the men of the village live) when a speaker is making an address to his colleagues and friends and neighbors, he will stand beside his orator's stool with a little batch of vines in his hand, or reeds, or something like that. When he makes a point, he will strike this little seat there to emphasize what he is saying.

*Q: Fascinating! The picture there with the men with their head pieces. What did you call those?*

OLMSTED: Those are called the wig men of the Southern Highlands. They cut off their hair and then weave it into a sort of a hat and decorate it and dye it and so on. I have a picture of one man who has decorated his wig with what is obviously a label from a can of salmon.

*Q: Charming. Do they still do this?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Is this a token of their virility or that they're chiefs?*

OLMSTED: No, not that they're chiefs. They all do it. I went to a ceremony at which a school was named after an American missionary who wrote me and invited me to come up for the ceremony. This was in the Southern Highlands, and it was at a point where two tribes came together. The land was divided, one tribe on one side, one tribe on another. They had a great big sing-sing with representatives, vast numbers of people from both of the tribes, which dress somewhat differently, and that gave a particularly colorful appearance to the scene.

The ceremony started out with speeches and gift-giving. This was during the elections and the politicians came to take advantage of the opportunity to make political speeches. Then the organizers presented me with two stone axes and two grass skirts and a live chicken.

*Q: And a live chicken!*

OLMSTED: I gave the chicken to the missionary quite hastily and I never saw it again.

*Q: Did the chicken represent anything particular, or were they just being kind to give you a chicken?*

OLMSTED: Well, it was an appropriate gift from their point of view.

*Q: What are the lives of the women like in Papua New Guinea? Of course, they would be quite different in the highlands than they would in the city, I suppose.*

OLMSTED: You have to make several distinctions. There is one part of Papua New Guinea which is referred to by anthropologists as the Massim, which includes most, but not all, of the

groups of people along the coast and in the islands off to the east of Papua New Guinea, along the east and northern coast and extends into Irian Jaya. Generally speaking, among these people there is a matrilineal society. The inheritance goes through the mother, and the father plays a relatively small role in his family. The mother's brother will bring up the children, and he will be the important man in the family. He will pass the secrets of sorcery down to his nephews, not to his sons. In those areas, the woman has a considerably more important position than in the others. Customs vary considerably throughout even the Massim, but a woman may have the right to decide who gets which piece of land, clan-owned land, and this gives her really quite a strong position. The women from those areas have a higher position and are moving into government jobs and so on in a way that the women from the rest of the country find very difficult to do.

The other women, the highlanders and those from many other parts of the country, are very much pushed back. There's no question about that. When I went to the Southern Highlands, it was announced on the radio that a big important visitor, a foreign visitor, was coming from Port Moresby to be present at this ceremony. They told me that the announcer had a very hard time saying that a woman was important. It was very difficult for him to bring himself to do that. Finally, he managed it. (Laughter)

*Q: It flew in the face of all his traditions.*

OLMSTED: Absolutely. And the practice of having several wives prevails in the highlands. The men generally live in men's houses, as a group apart from the women, and visit their wives from time to time.

*Q: Do the women live together?*

OLMSTED: No, they live in separate houses.

*Q: Each mother with her children?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and the pigs.

*Q: The pigs are in the house?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Are the pigs there for foodstuffs?*

OLMSTED: Yes. They're very important in the traditional economy, and they're a sign of wealth. The more pigs a person has, by all means the more important he is.

*Q: Is it considered somewhat of a disgrace to have a baby daughter, to give birth to a girl?*

OLMSTED: I don't think so, no. You see, they still have a system of bride price, which means that the family of the prospective husband has to pay the family of the bride in order to get her, and that means that a daughter is a source of wealth.

*Q: Of course. What do they pay, usually?*

OLMSTED: There are traditional forms of payment. It might be pigs and cassowaries. It might be shells and shell money and things like that, but in addition, as the modern world moves upon them, you will sometimes see, in a procession, a long pole to which paper money has been tied, and that is part of the bride price.

*Q: Is divorce current?*

OLMSTED: No. Strange, I can't even remember hearing about divorce. I think a husband would probably take another wife.

*Q: And just ignore the first one?*

OLMSTED: Just ignore the first one.

*Q: Does he have to provide housing for each one of these families he sets up?*

OLMSTED: I'm sure there is some variation in the country on that. Ordinarily I think they would all live in the same house, but in some places they may be accustomed to have separate houses.

*Q: Then when they become old, the children take care of the mothers?*

OLMSTED: The clan takes care. The family does, yes.

*Q: There is a social security built into the system.*

OLMSTED: Yes, and an older woman has a place of respect.

*Q: Very good. They spend most of their time in domestic pursuits?*

OLMSTED: Well, the women do the work. (Laughter) They're the farmers. The men will clear the land and the men will go to war, the men will sit around talking and smoking and enjoying themselves. It's the women who go out and plant and cultivate and harvest.

*Q: And have the children and raise them.*

OLMSTED: Yes, and do the housework.

*Q: How do they dress the children nowadays? In Western-type clothing?*

OLMSTED: Yes, except in rather remote places you will see the children wearing shorts and little shirts and that sort of thing.

*Q: Are they purchased or made?*



OLMSTED: Largely made. I visited the Western province, a really quite remote place, a town called Kiunga, and visited a shop that had been set up under the guidance of some very enlightened missionaries there. First they taught the women to cook food in bulk so they could sell hot meals to the men who were working on the roads, most of whom had come from the highlands and were there without their wives. After they made a little money from that, they bought some sewing machines and the missionaries taught the women how to make clothes. First they clothed their own families, and then they started selling the clothes. They sold the clothes again to the highland workers on the roads, who would take them back to their families when they went home. They built up a nice little business like that. This is where the status of women can be tremendously improved when they become breadwinners and they do things for the family, bringing in money and recognition.

Shortly before I went there, the missionaries told me with a good deal of pride, that now the men were coming to them and asking would the missionaries teach them how to run a trade store, because they had seen the women making money, and they thought, well, the next step was that they would do the selling.

*Q: Did you find among the women that they desired upward mobility for their children, the mothers for their daughters?*

OLMSTED: Not in all cases. Life in the village still had its attractions, and there was a certain amount of burnout among the young people who went to university, then got a job in the government and were under stress and pressure. Some of them would go home again and want to have a quieter life. I think this had some effect on the way that people viewed moving into the modern life. They wanted some of the things that modern life could bring them; not all of them.

*Q: Good sense of values, then.*

OLMSTED: Yes, yes, that's true.

*Q: How many wives did the typical man have? Was it prescribed by law, the way it is here?*

OLMSTED: No. Oh, no. Probably three or four, yes. But in Port Moresby, they rarely had more than one wife.

*Q: Because they couldn't afford it?*

OLMSTED: Yes. Members of Parliaments could leave their families at home and they might have two or three wives. Of course, as they became Christian, the Christian Church frowned on this, and sometimes there would be one wife who was the church wife and the others were married by local custom and were outside the church.

*Q: Ways to get around it! (Laughter)*

OLMSTED: Oh, yes.

*Q: Do the different families get along or is there a lot of squabbling among the half-siblings and the wives?*

OLMSTED: I don't really know.

*Q: It wasn't something that was sung about or jokes made about?*

OLMSTED: No. I think they probably got along fairly well together, but I don't really know.

*Q: Did sisters, perhaps, marry the same man?*

OLMSTED: Not particularly.

*Q: Fascinating. Was life very much different for them in the city, in Port Moresby?*

OLMSTED: Yes. Housing accommodations were really quite tight in Port Moresby and there were the squatter settlements. If someone came into town without a job, he would probably live with one of his relatives or, to use the pidgin word, wan tok. It means "one talk," one speech. It means a person speaking the same language. And with 750 languages, you could see that this is important. The person coming in from the highlands or elsewhere wanting the bright lights of the city would probably move in with the wan toks and would scrounge around trying to get whatever work he could. But ordinarily he wouldn't speak English. He wouldn't have the skills that are needed, and this would be quite difficult for him unless he were particularly fortunate. Consequently, all too many of them turned to theft and burglary, and so there's a real crime problem in Port Moresby, which I understand has become considerably worse since I left.

*Q: You mentioned that the security people suggested you go by a different route each day, which is not physically possible. Do they have a problem with terrorists now?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: This was just--*

OLMSTED: This is just garden variety petty crime.

*Q: Mugging?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and snatching purses and breaking into houses. I might add, many of the houses there, particularly the older ones built by Australians, were really quite flimsy. They were built of fiberboard, and many of them had the louvered windows. This combination provides very little security.

*Q: In the highlands, what was the form of housing? Were they built of wood?*

OLMSTED: Thatched houses and dirt floors. In many parts of the country, the houses are built on stilts, but that's not generally the practice in the highlands.

*Q: How large is Port Moresby?*

OLMSTED: A little more than a hundred thousand--a hundred fifteen or a hundred twenty.

*Q: Is there a regular Western-type shopping section?*

OLMSTED: Yes, there are several. It's built more like some fairly modern cities, small cities in the United States, with shopping sections scattered around and houses around the shopping sections.

*Q: You mentioned the American visitors coming. Did you have to put up any of them, or did they all stay in hotels?*

OLMSTED: I put them up for quite a while, and then when the hotel situation improved, depending on who it was perhaps they stayed in hotels.

*Q: Are there American hotels there?*

OLMSTED: No, they're all Australian. If not Australian-run, there's probably some Australian money in most of the hotels there.

*Q: The Australians, of course, are still a very large presence there, but America is coming in more and more, economically?*

OLMSTED: Well, at the time I was there, there was interest on the part of Americans, and I might add it was the big firms. It's too far away for a small firm to get interested in. Just for selling things, the American firms usually depended on their Australian subsidiaries to handle the sales. But big firms like Weyerhaeuser and Kennecott would come through from time to time, look the situation over, and perhaps make some moves in the direction of an investment, but then pull back. Bechtel built the copper mine in Bougainville and also has the contract for building the new one in the Western Province.

*Q: I'm surprised there hasn't been a Marriott Hotel. It sounds such a beautiful country. I thought it could be developed for tourism.*

OLMSTED: Well, there is some tourism, but the government, as of the time I was there, had not really made up its mind that it wanted a lot of tourism. It had very mixed feelings about it. Fiji, as you may know, has gone in a big way into tourism, and the Papua New Guineans were not entirely sure they liked the result. They felt that there were a few jobs created, but not many. A lot of money was being skimmed off and taken out of the country, and a lot of things that they didn't particularly like were being brought in. They did not want to have the drug culture brought in, and they were concerned over the flaunting of wealth and so on that might make the people dissatisfied.

*Q: They sound like a very sensible people.*

OLMSTED: Yes, they are. One of the things they were trying to do, which I thought made a lot of sense, was very small-scale specialized tourism like orchid safaris and butterfly safaris and white water rafting and things like that.

*Q: Where a certain amount of knowledge is necessary before you can appreciate it, so you get a different class of clientele.*

OLMSTED: And also it's not the class that demands the best of accommodations, because they're willing to put up with the hardships and in fact rather enjoy it.

Lindblad made an arrangement with a little resort up on the north coast that they would bring a certain number of tours, but they did it specifying that no improvements would be made in the resort, no changes. For bathing, you would go out to a cloth-enclosed area and take your shower from a bucket that has some holes punched in it hung on a pole. That's the sort of thing that they wanted left intact.

*Q: Give their customers something to talk about when they got home.*

OLMSTED: Absolutely.

*Q: What are the natural resources there? You've mentioned that they have copper.*

OLMSTED: Yes, copper, and there is gold and probably other minerals. They spent quite a bit of money looking for oil, and they found some natural gas, but they haven't found, as far as I'm aware, anything in the way of petroleum. They have very rich forestry resources, which they are a little reluctant to develop too fast because of the fear of deforestation.

*Q: That's why Weyerhaeuser came in?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and there were others that were looking around.

*Q: Have they developed the natural gas resource?*

OLMSTED: No, not as far as I'm aware. Not as the time I left. They have fishery resources which will probably become quite important, and they have agricultural resources. In the highlands there are broad, fertile valleys with rich volcanic soil and lots of rain, lots of sunshine, and they can grow just about anything that doesn't require cold weather. They can get two and three crops a year. They are developing coffee and have quite significant coffee areas now. They found coffee was much more appropriate than tea, because coffee doesn't require the same careful care that tea does. The non-disciplined worker who won't show up can ruin a tea plantation by neglect, whereas with coffee, they can pick the coffee berries when they get around to it and go off for tribal fighting the other times.

*Q: The men do this work?*

OLMSTED: The men do some of it. The women do a lot of the coffee picking, too.

*Q: Do they have canneries for the fish?*

OLMSTED: Not as of the time I was there. They were negotiating with Star Kist, the tuna company, for a long time, but had not reached an agreement as of the time I left, and I don't believe they have yet.

They also have copra as a traditional crop, and the coconut plantations are really very lovely. They are very, very pretty. But they are being replaced by palm oil and things like that, which are much more profitable. Those are growing very well on some of the islands and some of the coastal areas, and they have cocoa, as well.

*Q: Is the climate similar to that of the Hawaiian Islands, in that it's very even throughout the year?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Does it get very hot there?*

OLMSTED: In some places it gets pretty hot, but the trade winds generally have cooling currents.

*Q: It really sounds like a paradise. Is it considered a hardship post, in that it is isolated?*

OLMSTED: Yes, I believe it's now classified as a hardship post.

*Q: How large was the diplomatic colony?*

OLMSTED: When I arrived there, the Australians, of course, were the administering power. In addition to them, the British and the Indonesians had already established their first offices. So the United States was the third to open there. We were closely followed by the New Zealanders, who came in almost immediately after. Let me see. Who was next? Now my memory's a little hazy. The French then later opened up an embassy. Oh, yes, the Japanese came in then after that, and then I think the French were next. It seems to me we had a diplomatic corps of six or seven, which then expanded after I left.

*Q: Quite rapidly, I suppose.*

OLMSTED: Fairly rapidly. The Papua New Guineans were not terribly enthusiastic about having a lot of foreign nations. They didn't see the need for them, and they weren't intending to open up a lot of posts themselves. They thought that their business could be handled in other ways with third countries, where both of them were represented and so on.

*Q: Were you particularly friendly with any one of the groups?*

OLMSTED: I was on much friendlier terms with the second British High Commissioner than I was with the first. With the New Zealanders, I was on much better terms with the second than the first, again. So you know, it changed from time to time.

*Q: Of course.*

OLMSTED: We were really a close-knit little group and we did have our little get-togethers. I certainly made an effort to observe the niceties of diplomatic relations.

*Q: Did they have a Chamber of Commerce in Port Moresby?*

OLMSTED: Yes, there was one. It was Australian, almost completely Australian.

*Q: I was wondering if you were consulted about business problems.*

OLMSTED: I had American business people coming through and wanting to talk to me, [Begin Tape 2, Side 4]

OLMSTED: . . . to the representatives of the multinational corporations. I had representatives of American banks also call on me. This began a little bit before independence, when representatives of the big New York banks who were in the area decided they would test the waters in Papua New Guinea and they would visit first with the local banking establishment and then come around and see me.

Six months later, I would see the same people or representatives of the same banks again, and they were testing the water again. And six months later, they would come for their next visit. They became a little more interested with each visit, and finally decided that Papua New Guinea was here to stay and they might find some good business here. So they started out with extending a line of credit which was to be used for the purchase of coffee and then sales abroad. Now I expect that has developed considerably, but it was interesting watching it grow bit by bit.

*Q: We were mentioning the host government officials and your interaction with them. Would you repeat what you said about the fact that you were not a young woman?*

OLMSTED: Yes. I did not have any difficulties in dealing with the host country officials, and I think it was an advantage that I was both a foreign woman and an older woman. As I mentioned before, older women do have a status in the traditional community that a young woman does not have. I saw my role as developing a good working relationship with the foreign minister and with his immediate subordinate, who was the secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs. I was fortunate in that both of these men were married to women who were educated and who were strong figures. The wife of the foreign minister had been educated as a nurse and had gone out of the home to work as a nurse.

The story of their courtship, I might tell you as an aside, is really quite interesting. As a young man, Albert Maori Kiki had gone to Fiji to study to become a doctor. Well, he didn't pass his

courses, so he became a medical technician instead of a doctor. But while he was there, he became interested in politics and decided he would also go into politics. At the same time, he decided that he wanted to have a wife to help him in this, so he wrote a letter to one of his relatives in Port Moresby, asking him to suggest someone who would make a good wife for him. This relative suggested a woman named Elizabeth, who was then studying nursing and came from the same area, same general background that Albert Maori KiKi had. So he wrote her a letter saying that he wanted to marry her. She was attending a Catholic school, was quite shocked by this, and showed it to the nuns, and decided that she wouldn't answer him. Then he wrote her a second letter, which she also showed. The nuns said to her, "Well, he seems like a very sincere, honest man. Maybe you should answer." But she was too shy to do it. But he persisted and he was back in Port Moresby on vacation and went around and looked her up and talked to her, and talked her into marrying. That was the courtship. (Laughter)

*Q: By correspondence.*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: He must have had a very persuasive pen.*

OLMSTED: Yes. And the wife of the secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs was a university graduate, and she was working in the Department of Education. She was an intelligent woman.

*Q: These people became your personal friends, as well as official friends?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: You had mentioned that you felt your role was to help establish the U.S. presence there. They had been very favorably impressed by Americans during the war, you said.*

OLMSTED: Yes. I think the American troops were quite highly regarded during the Second World War. They were generous and they obviously had much wealth in the way of material possessions, which impressed the local people. As I may have mentioned before, there were black officers in the American troops. That made a favorable impression.

But after [Douglas] MacArthur took the troops from Papua New Guinea into the Philippines, there was no official American presence at all. Once in a while our embassy in Canberra would send someone out to make a swing through Papua New Guinea, and six months later the person would come back. But there was no American official who was resident in Papua New Guinea until I opened our post in 1974. Consequently, I thought that one of the most important things I could do to establish good relations would be to portray the United States as having a sympathetic and friendly interest in a small emerging country. Consequently, I spent a great deal of time on what was essentially public relations work.

*Q: Representation in the sense of representing your country.*

OLMSTED: Yes, a very broad sense of representation. At the time of independence, lots and lots of small ceremonies were taking place: the introduction of the new currency, the turnover by the Australians of certain military equipment. I was invited--the diplomatic corps was invited to these things, and I made a point to go to them, to demonstrate my interest. Not all of the diplomatic corps did, but I was always there. When they introduced the new currency, I had a twenty-dollar bill that I could take up to the teller and change into the new currency, and the Finance Minister said later it made him feel very good to see someone changing an important currency like American dollars into kina.

*Q: How nice!*

OLMSTED: I tried to entertain more broadly than I think a diplomat ordinarily does. They had a women's conference in Port Moresby drawing in women from all over the country, and I had a reception for the women and displayed some photographs and printed material and so on from the American women's movement. When I gave large receptions, I tried to include university students and some of the more junior people from the government. I did a lot of traveling, and we visited schools and went to whatever they thought was appropriate to go to.

I visited places in the country that most diplomats don't go to. I took a seven-day trip in a dug-out canoe on the Sepik River, and spent the nights in little haus kiaps [huts on stilts] along the way and looked at the artwork and the haus tambarans [spirit houses] and so on. I made sure that I got out of the narrow proper diplomatic circuit as it was traditionally viewed.

*Q: You seem to have had a tremendous understanding of the people's ideas and ways of thinking, that you could lend yourself to so many of their activities.*

OLMSTED: I found them very interesting people, and did a lot of reading. One of my friends was the head of the Anthropology Department at the University of Papua New Guinea, an American woman. I talked with her many, many times.

*Q: That must have been very helpful.*

OLMSTED: Yes. She had done a lot of field work. She had spent fourteen years there. As I say, I tried to get out of the beaten path.

*Q: What did you have your USIS person do?*

OLMSTED: Initially we did not have a USIS person. USIA refused to send someone out for the opening of the post, and my political officer spent about half his time and did, really, a very good job in stimulating activities. It wasn't until I had been there, I suppose, two years that we finally had a USIS officer assigned to the Embassy. He, of course, was more active and had more experience than the other, and he did an excellent job.

One of the things we did was to put in a little amphitheater on the hillside behind the chancery. There we had American films twice a week, free. Sometimes we had things by invitation only, but a lot of them were open to anyone who wanted to come.



*Q: Did you open a library?*

OLMSTED: Yes, eventually we opened a library. It must have been nearly a year after the USIA officer got there that we were able to get that set up. He established contacts with the university and the schools and so on. We had a very active program of leadership grants, and we certainly managed to send to the United States a lot of people who became important in government. That was, I felt, a very important contribution that we made.

*Q: Did any visiting American musicians come?*

OLMSTED: We didn't have very much in that way, but we did manage to get a Navy band to put on three nights of concerts for us, and those were very popular, very popular indeed. It was a dance band, and they put on the big time music. What do they call it? The music of about thirty years ago, thirty or forty years ago.

*Q: The "big band" era.*

OLMSTED: The "big band". That's the phrase I'm thinking of, yes. We had a few others. We had people coming through giving lectures, not all of which were well attended, but some of them were, and we did get some good people coming to them.

*Q: How much of your time was spent actually running the mission--that is, the nuts and bolts and the budget and that sort of thing?*

OLMSTED: I don't know, maybe 30%. That's a very rough guess.

*Q: Did you have any women officers there at any time?*

OLMSTED: Yes. We had a junior rotational officer who came there and spent two years with us.

*Q: Did you have anybody from Agriculture?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: No attaché from Agriculture or Commerce or anything like that?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: What about the other agencies?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: No representation? How did you feel about the quality of your State personnel? Did they send good people?*

OLMSTED: Yes, I thought by and large they did. They tended to be quite young and rather gung-ho, but I sometimes had to hold onto their coat-tails. I'd rather have that sort of a person in a post like Port Moresby than those who had become old and cynical and even embittered.

*Q: I dare say that many of them had asked to go there, hadn't they?*

OLMSTED: Yes. It was considered a very exotic place and the word got back that the assignments there were good assignments. They had the chance to do real things. I had an economic officer there who had completed the work for his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota and was on his first assignment. He set up his own little shop and presented me with an outline of what he wanted to accomplish, and I told him to go to it. He had a very free hand and he found it a very rewarding assignment.

*Q: I can imagine. Did you take particular steps to see that the very junior officers received proper training?*

OLMSTED: Yes, to the extent that I could. But they were doing the training themselves, actually. We had a brand-new local staff with no experience whatsoever, and the junior officers, I thought, did an excellent job in training the local staff and encouraging them. My secretary taught them touch-typing and the officers encouraged them to take correspondence courses, one in commercial work, another in consular work from Washington, and helped them with it, and they helped them with their English. They gave them responsibility. I think we had a loyalty from our local staff that was the envy of the diplomatic community.

*Q: I can imagine!*

OLMSTED: There was a very high rate of turnover among the local employees in Port Moresby, not only of the diplomatic staffs, but throughout. After a young person had been on the job for six months, he looked around for what else he could get that would be new and interesting and pay better. By giving them more responsibility, by teaching them, by giving them increases, we held onto ours. It turned out to be very effective.

*Q: Excellent!*

*[July 18, 1985 interview begins]*

*Q: Ambassador Olmsted, could you tell us more about the seven-day trip you took, that you mentioned in the last session that we had?*

OLMSTED: Yes. I became friendly with the chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Papua New Guinea. She was an American woman who had been in Papua New Guinea about fourteen years. She had done extensive fieldwork, particularly in the small islands and in the coastal areas, and she had a wealth of information about Papua New Guinea. I enjoyed her very much and learned a great deal from her. Once I said to her that if she were going off on a field trip and needed someone to carry her briefcase, or the anthropologist equivalent thereof, that I would like to join her. She thought that was a good idea, and talked to another friend of

hers who was the wife of the head of the Geography Department at the University of Papua New Guinea. Annje Clark was her name. She was a German who was married to an American, Bill Clark.

So the three of us started making plans for some sort of a jaunt, and we finally decided that we would do what is known as the Middle Sepik, which is the middle section of the Sepik River, a very long river that runs slowly through the western part of Papua New Guinea and finally enters the sea along the north coast.

Annje Clark had been taking a series of lecture courses at the university in the art of Papua New Guinea, and she said that she would be willing to do a good deal of the planning of the trip, so that worked out very nicely. Ann Chowning had the extensive background. Anjie would make the plans for where we should stop and what we should look at on the Sepik River, and I went along as a more or less freeloader on this expedition.

We flew to Wewak on the north coast and hired a Land Rover which drove us to the site where we were to get our canoe. We were planning to hire a motorized dugout canoe. We had sent a message ahead to a man who rented such canoes, and to our dismay, when we arrived in Wewak, discovered he had received our message only that morning. However, fortunately, he said that he could accommodate us.

So we took a day's trip over very bad roads in the Land Rover to get to the point where we would start our journey. We rented a 43-foot dugout canoe with seats on the floor and backrests, which was a great advantage, an outboard motor, and extra supplies of gasoline and a crew of two young fellows who must have been in their late teens. Not long after we started out, we picked up a third crew member, who was a freeloader, a friend of the two boys who were our crew, and we had no objection with him going along. He joined in and helped with the work as well.

The Sepik River is a slow-moving, wide river which frequently changes its course. There are reeds in many areas and it's quite swampy in many places. The boys frequently thought they knew a shortcut going from one curve of the river to another, but we regularly got stuck in the reeds as we were trying to save time. I don't think we saved any time at all.

We spent the first night in a house that had been occupied by the district officer, but there was no one living it in at the time. It was terribly dirty, a very, very messy place, but we put our bedrolls on top of the beds and put up our mosquito nettings, which are very essential in that area, and cooked a little dinner. Then the next morning, we had cold rice and bully beef for breakfast, and that was the beginning that gave me an idea of what our cuisine was likely to be for the remainder of the trip.

We started off well loaded down with our gear and the extra gasoline. We took some food along, but we had expected we would be able to buy food from the people as we went down the river. This proved, however, to be a mistaken impression, because the rains had been either early or late--I've forgotten which--and the crops were delayed. Consequently the local people had very little food to sell. Our diet was rather limited.

We stopped at various places that Annje had planned for us to stop, to look at haus tambarans, which are the spirit houses. They are closer to churches than anything else, but it's not exactly the same. They were used for religious purposes originally. We wondered whether they were still being used for religious purposes, even though the area was nominally Christian, and suspected that due to the good condition they were in, they probably were. At one place we stopped, a Catholic church had been built encompassing some of the carvings from the haus tambaran, which apparently was no longer existing. It is rather startling to see this large Catholic church made of corrugated iron roof and open sides, with these magnificent carvings of pagan deities and whatnot in it, but it was very clever of whoever made the decision, I think, to encompass them, to encourage the people to participate in the church.

We stopped at various villages, as I say, to look at the haus tambarans and also other carvings. Some villages were particularly noted for their carvings. It's quite interesting to walk through these villages and sometimes see, just standing out, fenceposts that had been carved, really very beautifully carved, and sometimes there would be a very handsome figure of an ancestor or deity or something of the sort just standing there. The haus tambarans are not very substantially built. Many of them are quite high, some of them as much as sixty feet high, entirely built of local materials, that is, forest materials, no nails or anything like that in them. The front is usually painted with the faces of ancestors. You often enter a haus tambaran through a very narrow aperture often, although some of them are completely open at the lower level and you have to go up a ladder to get to the second floor, which may be the more important place. In a few of them, they didn't want us to enter, and we were very, very careful to follow directions.

Outside some of them are sacred rocks, and we were told, "Don't touch the sacred rocks." Believe me, we followed the instructions very, very carefully. These rocks would be quite different from anything that you would see in that area, and no one knew where they came from or how they had been brought there or when or by whom, but obviously they'd been there for a long time.

We spent the night, each night, at a haus kiap which is a house made of native materials, always on stilts, and built so that government people or others could have a place to stay, because these are really traditional villages with no hotels, no facilities. There was no electricity, there was no running water, nothing like that. There is nothing in a haus kiap. It's absolutely empty. You go up a ladder and the floors are made of palm branches and are not very substantial. You have to be very careful or you'll step through. If you do step through, you're very likely to get a bad scratch on your leg, and if you do that, it's very likely to get infected. I had already had one topical ulcer and that certainly made me very careful not to run the risk of getting a second one.

We would unload our gear and get settled in the haus kiap, and then usually walk around the village for a little while and talk to people. Ann Chowning spoke excellent pidgin, which was widely spoken in that area, and she was the interpreter for us. She said to me that it was very hard for her to explain in pidgin who I was. They understood that she was from the university. They had heard about the university, and she even ran into one or two of her former students. She explained that Annje was the wife of another professor at the university. But to explain what an American ambassador was, was just beyond her. (Laughter)

*Q: How large were these villages, as a rule?*

OLMSTED: Oh, anyplace from 50 to 500 people. One of them might have been 1,000.

*Q: Is it a tribal unit?*

OLMSTED: A clan unit. There are many, many languages spoken along the Sepik River. A tribe usually describes a language group. It has no political significance. The clan is the largest group that has a political significance.

We would walk around the village and talk to people, and then come back and fix our dinner. The boys with us would go someplace else, and they usually had friends or relatives or could make acquaintances and would be put up in somebody's house. When we walked around the village, we frequently asked if we could go into a house and look at it, and the people were quite willing to have us do that. It was very interesting.

*Q: What are they like?*

OLMSTED: Most of them are quite large. They're houses on stilts, and you climb up a ladder and enter into a quite dark but rather large sort of loft area. They're not divided by rooms; everything is out. The mosquitoes are extremely bad in that area, just dreadful. This was a problem for them, and they often left a lighted fire for the smoke to drive the mosquitoes away. The fires were built in a pottery dish, a large dish, curved, which is typical of that area. They're quite handsome pieces. The smoke would just go up from them and filter out through the roofs. I don't remember if they had any chimneys. In one place we saw something that is traditional in that area, but not used very much anymore as a means of keeping away from the mosquitoes at night, and that is a large tube that the whole family would crawl into. It's sort of a crocheted tube, and the whole family would get in that to stay away from the mosquitoes.

In one place we saw where they were having a little ceremony to drive the mosquitoes out, and the ceremony consisted of a group of young people running through the village with flares and with anything that would make noise.

*Q: Noise will drive them away? (Laughter)*

OLMSTED: Well, that was the theory. It made me think of the old saying, "Don't just stand there; do something." And they were doing something, however ineffective it might be.

*Q: Isn't that touching!*

OLMSTED: Another place, a ceremony was being held to celebrate the maturity of a little girl, the puberty ceremony. They said we could come in and watch part of it. The women of the village were singing and dancing; this would go on all night, and then at dawn they would take her out to the stream, where they would ritually bathe her. They said we could not go to that. I didn't want to stay up that late, anyhow. (Laughter) It was quite interesting watching this.

*Q: At what age do the girls become women?*

OLMSTED: I would say ten, eleven, along in there.

*Q: Are they marriageable at that age?*

OLMSTED: Marriage customs differ in different parts of the country. I would say that in some cases they would probably marry fairly soon thereafter, and in other places probably not.

Then we continued on down the river. We took a branch off the river at one place to visit what is known as the black water area, called because it has very dark water in it, and we could see the reflections of the buildings and the trees in the waters. Very, very pretty. The water was quite cool, and we went in swimming and had a nice excursion there.

In another place, we wanted to get out of the canoe and walk to a village about five miles away to see the kinds of pottery that they made there, which was somewhat different from other pottery in that area. So we walked along on a path through the forest for about five miles and crossed many streams on rickety little bridges, or else we crossed on logs that had been put down, and finally got to the village. I was rather tired by that time, so they sent a little boy up a coconut tree and he brought down some coconuts. They sliced them open and we drank the coconut milk. It was cool and it tasted so good.

Then we looked at what they had in the way of pottery. I'll show you one.

*Q: Are the potters the men or the women or both?*

OLMSTED: Mostly women, but I'm sure in some places there are men, too.

*Q: That is nice. [Referring to pottery]*

OLMSTED: This is a completely utilitarian piece.

*Q: Oh, that is stunning.*

OLMSTED: It is used to put around the fire, and you put your pot on two or three of these. You see there are holes in it.

Q: Sort of like a trivet.

OLMSTED: Yes. There are holes here and you put vines, string two or three of them with vines to hold them together, and then you put your pot on it.

*Q: Has that one been used?*

OLMSTED: I don't know.

*Q: It's dark. Is that the color they bake it?*

OLMSTED: I think it's the color they bake it. One of the interesting things about this is how they decorate the most utilitarian things. I understand anthropologists say that a primitive people will usually perfect the item technically before they decorate it, but in Papua New Guinea they decorate it first. They are very artistic.

*Q: Very artistic people, yes. They must be. What are the meanings of those markings? Do they tattoo themselves?*

OLMSTED: In some places. They paint very extensively, but in some places they do tattoo.

*Q: Is that supposed to represent a hearth god or a goddess? It's a person, obviously.*

OLMSTED: I don't know. I would doubt that it has any religious significance. I think that they're just so in the habit of decorating things that when they made this, they just put a face on it.

*Q: That's charming. Did you buy this at that village?*

OLMSTED: Yes. So we continued down until we got to the point where we had arranged for a car to come and pick us up. In our last stop, I've forgotten the name of the village, which was a larger village, there was a little motel there. It was a not very impressive hotel, but it looked great to us, and we were able to take showers. (Laughter)

*Q: Must have been sheer joy! (Laughter)*

OLMSTED: Yes. And we sat down and had a table and had a meal brought to us. That seemed like a really big thing.

But I should mention that at one of the villages where we stopped, we had a letter to an artist in that village who had actually traveled abroad to show his things. He'd gone to some conference in Mexico that the government had arranged for him to go to. When we gave him the letter, he was very interested and invited us to have dinner with him and his family. He served us turtle. I didn't care much for it.

*Q: You mean a boiled turtle?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Probably chewy, wasn't it?*

OLMSTED: Yes, it was. It was. Then the next night, why, he again invited us, and for that occasion, he went out and shot a wild pig, so we had pork.

*Q: You had said that pigs were very important.*

OLMSTED: Yes. It's a sign of wealth. It's a way of accumulating wealth.

*Q: It's something that's always transferable, I suppose. It's liquid wealth. (Laughter)*

OLMSTED: Yes. The vehicle that came to pick us up was not a jeep, which was really needed in those areas, but a passenger car. Very shortly after we got started, it got badly stuck in the mud, and all three of us had to get out and push. (Laughter) Deep mud. And we were sorry that there wasn't someone there to take a picture of us for the final hour of our trip.

*Q: I should say! Did you take any pictures while you were there?*

OLMSTED: Oh, yes. I took a lot.

*Q: I don't think I would have enjoyed the mosquitoes and the insects, but otherwise it sounds like a wonderful trip. One other thing that you mentioned the other day that I would like to ask you more about is the amphitheater that you said you put in. The U.S. had brought property, had it?*

OLMSTED: No. We leased and made an arrangement with an Australian firm there to build our chancery which they built according to our specifications on the upper end of a steeply slanting lot. The chancery is very close to the street, and behind us we had quite an area of land which was being used for nothing. Every time I looked at it, I began wishing we could somehow develop it. So eventually we came up with the idea of putting in a small amphitheater.

*Q: What a clever idea!*

OLMSTED: Where films could be shown and other entertainment provided; lectures and education and so on.

*Q: Did you have it terraced and have benches put on the terraces?*

OLMSTED: It was slightly terraced and benches were put in. There was a little stage with large logs behind it to form the background for it.

*Q: The weather was such that except in the rainy season, I suppose, you could use it all the time.*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: What a wonderful idea! I'm surprised you could talk FBO [Foreign Buildings Office] into it. (Laughter)*

*The other day we were discussing your carrying out policy in Papua New Guinea. I wondered if we could pick up there. We did talk about your representing the United States to the people, and the necessity for USIS in getting to know the people.*

OLMSTED: In addition to that, I was in touch with the government of Papua New Guinea on various items that were coming up in the UN, and asking for their support such matters. I found,



generally speaking, that either they would abstain or would be willing to vote along with us. There were a lot of matters that they felt, as a new country, they did not want to get tangled up in, and they didn't want to devote their rather scarce resources of trained manpower struggling with certain international problems that they felt did not affect them. But on the other hand, where there was something that would affect them or that they had a broad interest in, they were certainly willing to listen to what I had to say, and often did support our position.

*Q: So in other words, the business of the UN is really conducted back in the country of origin?*

OLMSTED: In a case like Papua New Guinea, yes.

*Q: Did they have a representative at the UN?*

OLMSTED: They initially had an ambassador in Washington, who was also accredited to the UN. Later on they moved him to New York when they got more interested in UN business, and he would visit Washington from time to time, but his main business was in the UN. He became very interested in the UN, and he felt there was a role that Papua New Guinea could play. He observed that there were some small new countries which were reaching some prominence in the UN by achieving positions of one sort or another, and he became a vice president of the UN, no small feat.

*Q: I suppose they leave their people at posts a lot longer than we do.*

OLMSTED: Yes, yes. Sometimes they do, not always. He stayed for quite a while.

Another problem that affected the relations between Papua New Guinea and the United States quite seriously came about just at the time of independence. That was the problem of the secessionist movement on Bougainville Island. Bougainville is the most easterly of all the islands out from the main island. It's the furthest away from Port Moresby of any of them. The people there generally have a darker skin than most Papua New Guineans. The Bougainvilleans generally call other Papua New Guineans, Redskins. They felt that they were different, and they felt that they had been neglected because they were the furthest away.

Then in the 1960s it was discovered that there was an important copper deposit on Bougainville, and the firm of Bechtel was called in to develop it, although the mine was owned and managed by a multinational subsidiary of ConRioTinto Zinc, a Spanish firm. It was the Australian subsidiary of that Spanish firm that actually managed the mine.

A good many difficulties came about in the construction of the mine, because it was necessary to obtain land where the copper deposit was found. Land is clan-owned and very, very deeply cherished, and it was extremely difficult to persuade people to give up their land. Further, damage done to the environment when the tailings of the copper ore were washed down. It destroyed fishing, and there was destruction of some good agricultural land. There were very strong feelings about that.

Well, when Papua New Guinea reached the point of becoming independent, Bougainville started talking about becoming independent from Papua New Guinea. There were three leaders of this movement. One of them was a Catholic priest. One of them had been a Catholic priest, but left the priesthood in order to marry an American woman who had been a nun. The third had at one point studied to become a priest, but had not ever entered the priesthood.

*Q: Were these all Papua New Guineans?*

OLMSTED: All Papua New Guineans. Bougainville was very strongly Catholic--the other churches were not important there--and the Catholic bishop was an American citizen. Other Americans were also in the church hierarchy as missionaries. Consequently, there was a certain involvement of Americans in the secessionist movement right from the start. I don't think the church ever officially sanctioned the secessionist movement, but it was known that there were considerable sympathies among many of the people in the Catholic Church for the secessionist movement.

Well, the central government became increasingly perturbed over the American role in the secessionist movement. It was very important to the central government that Bougainville should not secede. The psychological impact of secession would lead other parts of the country to want to secede. And in addition to that, the royalties being paid to the central government from the copper mine were a very important part of the national income, of the government's income.

*Q: This Catholic bishop that you're speaking of, he was an American citizen, but he was a Papua New Guinean?*

OLMSTED: No, he was an American citizen who was there as a missionary.

*Q: I see. He was a missionary. But he let it be known, directly or indirectly. . .*

OLMSTED: Yes. I'm not sure he ever came out officially, but it was believed that he and other American missionaries in Bougainville were very sympathetic toward the cause.

*Q: They felt the United States was actually intervening to stir up trouble?*

OLMSTED: The central government was very suspicious of that. They feared there was CIA intervention. I kept telling them that there was not, but the rumors went on and on. I was at a government reception one evening and one of the senior Australians came over and told me that there had been a cabinet meeting that day at which the CIA's role in the Bougainville secessionist movement had been discussed. It was extremely hard to prove a negative. I saw the prime minister, who was, I thought, very cool towards me, and I said, "I've got to do something about this." So I went over and talked to him.

I pointed out to the prime minister that there was very little American interest, just a minuscule American financial interest in the Bougainville copper mine. I said, "We have just no reason to want to support the secessionist movement." Of course, they were concerned over the fact that some of the secessionist leaders were going to the United States to get sympathy at the UN. The

day after I saw the prime minister at the reception, I called on the foreign minister and discussed the matter considerably further with him. I explained to him that it would be extremely difficult for us to refuse to issue visas particularly to the secessionist leader who was married to an American citizen. I explained that under our laws and regulations, it's almost impossible to refuse to issue a visa to the spouse of an American citizen. So I said, "We'll have to go ahead and do it, but we will keep you informed." Therefore, after that, I always let them know if we had issued a visa to any of the secessionists, and I think they appreciated that. But there were all kinds of wild rumors about the Eighth Fleet being just over the horizon with 30,000 men on it, ready to take over Bougainville. Just incredible rumors going around.

*Q: As you say, how do you fight a negative?*

OLMSTED: Yes, yes. I was very particular that CIA people should not visit Papua New Guinea. Some of them wanted to, and I had rather strained relations with our embassy in Canberra because I just said, "We can't have it."

Another thing that happened about that same time, two warrant officers from the Army were going to the Solomon Islands in connection with a longstanding scientific project, but we received no notice of their arrival. One of my young officers happened to be having a drink at a bar and fell into conversation and discovered these two American military men were going to go to the Solomon Islands, stopping overnight in Bougainville on their way, and carrying all kinds of strange boxes and parcels in connection with their scientific mission.

So I said, "Get those men down to my office now." He did so, and they came in, and they were very reasonable young fellows just doing their job, not at all aware that there was any problem connected with this. I said that they would just have to stay in Port Moresby a few days longer and take a direct flight to the Solomon Islands, do their business there, and take a direct flight out, and not stop in Bougainville.

*Q: Lucky you found out.*

OLMSTED: It certainly was, because it would have been terribly hard to explain.

*Q: Yes, because they would be certain that you knew all the time.*

OLMSTED: Yes, yes. So as time passed the Bougainville issue was settled and Bougainville stayed as part of Papua New Guinea and the secessionist movement died down and everything blew over. But it was a very uncomfortable period.

*Q: It must have been. Was this an ongoing thing when you went out there, or did it come up after you had been there?*

OLMSTED: It came up after I arrived there, because it was at the time that Papua New Guinea decided to press for independence. That was the time that the Bougainvilleans decided that they wanted to be independent of Papua New Guinea.

The next big policy issue I faced came a couple of years later, and that was the question of fisheries. There are rich tuna fishing areas in the Pacific around Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and other islands. Fishing had become more difficult off South America and Central America for the American tuna fleet. As you may remember, some of our tuna vessels were seized, and there were difficulties of one sort or another. I think there was probably some overfishing there too. The American tuna fleet started to come into the South Pacific waters looking for better fishing. This posed a very considerable problem. We have some very punitive legislation on the books in the form of the Magnuson Act, which provides that if an American vessel is seized, the United States shall forbid the importation of fish or fish products from that country. I don't remember the full details of the Magnuson Act now, but it posed a great big problem for us. The Pacific island countries wanted to get together to establish a fisheries unit which could police their waters and keep out the American tuna boats and other tuna boats. They had a big problem with the Taiwanese people who were coming in and fishing in their waters, too. This was further complicated by the fact that Papua New Guinea, like some of the other island countries, had established a 200-mile limit, which the United States didn't recognize. This problem affected both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and continued until I left, and my successors are still struggling with it.

*Q: Did Washington give you a free hand?*

OLMSTED: No, not at all. In the question of the fisheries, Washington kept us very poorly informed. The people who were running the fisheries problem back in Washington were mostly people without much Foreign Service experience, and they thought they could best handle it by going occasionally to conferences and doing the work with representatives of these little countries at the conferences.

*Q: Is this the Maritime Bureau?*

OLMSTED: No, this is the OES [Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs]. They wanted to leave the embassies pretty much out of it. Well, as the days passed, it became increasingly clear that this was a dreadful mistake, and it was only late in the game that they began giving us the information that we needed and clueing us in on what was going on. During that time, the opinions of the island countries began to solidify, and we weren't able to cope with it because we just didn't have the information. I think that was a disastrous mistake insofar as these small countries were concerned.

*Q: Obviously you were not given adequate policy guidance by the Department.*

OLMSTED: It wasn't only adequate policy guidance; they didn't send us the basic documents we needed. We finally got a copy of the Magnuson Act by sending down to our consulate general in Sydney, which had federal records. It was a very, very short-sighted policy.

*Q: While all of these things were going on, did it create enough of a stir back home so that you had any reporters coming through, newspaper reporters?*

OLMSTED: We did not have many reporters. No, it did not stir up that sort of problem. At independence there were a few reporters who came out, but it's so far away from the United States that we didn't have many. Once in a while, a writer would come through, more likely a magazine writer than a newspaper writer, doing an article.

*Q: When that happened, the person would check in at the embassy?*

OLMSTED: At least some of them did, yes.

*Q: Were consular matters a problem at your post?*

OLMSTED: Not in the way they are at many posts. With 3,000 resident Americans, you might expect a fairly lively consular responsibility, but our Americans were mostly missionaries, most of whom had been in the country for many years, knew their way around, and were not inclined to get into trouble. So we issued visas, we issued passports, we replaced lost passports, we issued certificates of birth, and issued passports to children born there, and that sort of thing. Getting an American out of jail was a pretty rare occasion.

There was one person--I think an anthropologist or a linguist, I can't remember which now, who grew marijuana in her back yard. She was quietly asked to leave, but it was done without big fanfare, and the person involved agreed to go.

*Q: Was she growing this to sell?*

OLMSTED: No, to smoke and give to her friends. But the government was very eager that drugs should not get started there. They did not have a drug problem and did not want to have one. There were a few little things like that, but not very much.

*Q: Visas, I suppose, weren't much of a problem.*

OLMSTED: No. Almost no immigration visas. We issued visitors' visas mainly to people who were traveling for the government.

*Q: You said you had some leadership grants. What sort of visas would they go on?*

OLMSTED: They went on visitors' visas, unless they were government officials, in which case they might get an official visa.

*Q: You didn't have student visas?*

OLMSTED: Very few.

*Q: Talking now about your mission, your people, did everyone get along?*

OLMSTED: (Laughter) No, of course not.

*Q: Did you have any problem with rivalries among your officers?*

OLMSTED: There was a certain amount of rivalry among the young officers who were jockeying for position. A little of that, I think, is a good thing. I think a little tension keeps them on their toes and keeps them moving. By and large, it wasn't a serious matter. We had some very promising young officers there, and then some who were not so promising.

*Q: Did you have any fallout among the wives? Oftentimes when the husbands are upset, the wives will be upset.*

OLMSTED: We had a number of single people there, and there were sufficiently few wives that I don't remember problems arising.

*Q: How did they occupy their time? With their children, if they had children?*

OLMSTED: Yes. Some of them worked.

*Q: At the embassy?*

OLMSTED: No, no. One of them got a job as sort of an office manager for a firm in Port Moresby, and one of them was offered a job teaching school but became pregnant and didn't take it. Another played golf and spent her time improving her golf game and enjoying life. Another just stayed home and wasn't interested in working.

*Q: So you didn't have any problems such as are encountered in other places with alcoholism among wives or staff members?*

OLMSTED: No, people managed to stay quite busy in Port Moresby. The secretaries enjoyed Port Moresby very much. They found that they were swept into an active, informal social life, which included a lot of outdoor activities, a lot of boating and swimming. One played squash and another golf, and so on. So they managed to stay quite busy and enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

*Q: Did you oversee any marriages between members of your staff?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: How about your administrative section? Were you lucky enough to have good people?*

OLMSTED: My first officer, I think, was quite good; he was very quick. He was the advance man who set up the post. He did very well. He was replaced by an officer who was not good, who didn't want to come to the post, disliked it thoroughly, and wanted to get out, was just very antagonistic. He was a real problem. Then he was replaced by someone, again, who did like the post and was happy there.

*Q: Were you able to ease that quarrelsome one out of the mission, or did he just stay until his tour was up?*

OLMSTED: It was cut short by six months. I might mention we had a rather surprising variety of foreign wives. One was of Dutch origin, another was Lao, and another was a Moroccan.

*Q: How interesting! You said you did not have any AID, is that correct?*

OLMSTED: That's right. There was one AID representative in Fiji, who covered the South Pacific, and we'd have visits from him. We did not have a direct AID program. We granted aid to some of the voluntary agencies which, in turn, had small projects, some of which were quite interesting projects. It was very small stuff, though.

*Q: The reason that you didn't have AID was because the people themselves didn't want it? It seems as though there would be scope for roads or electricity projects, that sort of thing.*

OLMSTED: A decision was made in Washington, at the time the post was opened, that Australia would be the big aid figure and the big figure, generally, in that area, and that we would not compete. Therefore, it was my job to say again and again and again, "No, we are not going to supply aid to Papua New Guinea." It was rather an interesting situation, rather unusual in the American Foreign Service, to recognize consciously that another country is the big power in a given area, and that we are definitely playing the smaller role. It did pose some problems for me. On the one hand, I wanted to follow the policy, which I felt was the right one. On the other hand, I did not want to appear to be in the hip pocket of the Australian High Commissioner. I made every effort to keep the Australian High Commissioner informed of things that might come to my attention that he might not know about, but at the same time, I never went from the Foreign Minister's office to the Australian High Commissioner's office on the same trip. I always saw to it that there was some lapse in time.

*Q: You have to be constantly on guard, don't you?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Did you have a feeling you were on display? You obviously were a very notable figure in the city, such a small community.*

OLMSTED: Well, I was fully aware that everybody in town knew me and that I was a fairly conspicuous figure there.

*Q: Did it present any strain to you?*

OLMSTED: No. I also knew that there was a very considerable grapevine among the servants and among other groups, too. I knew that my house boy came from a village that was very close to the village that the police commissioner came from, and I knew that my house boy had relatives who worked for the Indonesian ambassador. There were all these little cross-currents that made me warn my staff that they'd better be careful in what they did and where they did it.

*Q: How did the Foreign Service inspectors treat your mission?*

OLMSTED: We had an inspection about five weeks after we became an embassy, and this was a bit of a strain. After independence, we were all exhausted. Yet we had to get ready for this inspection. The inspectors arrived on schedule and really treated us very well. They said they thought we were better established than they had expected we would be at that point. They particularly praised us for having hired Papua New Guineans as our local staff. The chief inspector said to me that he was fully prepared to give me a lecture on having hired third-country nationals in my office, and he was very pleased to see all the dark faces when he walked in.

*Q: Good! Did they come again?*

OLMSTED: Yes, we had another inspection later on. I believe it was five inspectors on the second one, which is a bit much for a staff of seven to cope with.

*Q: One on one, practically.*

OLMSTED: Yes, it was.

*Q: Did you feel they were fair, that their assessments were fair?*

OLMSTED: Yes. By and large, yes.

*Q: How long did they stay when they came to Papua New Guinea?*

OLMSTED: The first group, I think, stayed for a couple of weeks, and the second group, I think, was not there that long.

*Q: With five, they wouldn't need to, would they? What would you call your major successes at the post?*

OLMSTED: When I left there, I felt considerable satisfaction in believing that the United States Government had made its official presence known and recognized in a way that was entirely acceptable to the Papua New Guineans. I thought that the opening chapter of our relationship had been a good chapter and that I was known and respected and well regarded. I felt that was the most important thing to accomplish, and I felt I had.

*Q: Very good. Can you think of any way in which your being a woman helped in your being able to accomplish this so well?*

OLMSTED: I don't know as this really answers the question, but not long before I left, one of the people that I dealt with in the government said to me that if I didn't know it, I would be interested in knowing that my appointment there had caused a good deal of discussion within the government of Papua New Guinea. The conclusion that the government people reached was that if a big and important country like the United States was sending women abroad as their representatives, giving them high positions, Papua New Guinea should also have women that it



could name to high positions. He said that my appointment there had given a real impetus to the improvement of the position of Papua New Guinean women.

*Q: That is important.*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: I suppose up until that time, they just weren't in the government at all, were they, the women?*

OLMSTED: Not very much. There were very few. But I think that, as I say, my being there did help get them into the government.

*Q: It's a question of education, isn't it? Bit by bit, step by step.*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: I guess that would be the reason why it made things more difficult that you were a woman when you went there, because in that society women stayed home. You must have had to work harder.*

OLMSTED: Maybe so. I don't know. I didn't feel that being a woman was a great handicap there. Papua New Guineans are very conservative people and they don't jump to rash conclusions. They don't reach decisions readily. They're willing to sit back and think things over and observe before they come to a conclusion. I think that in my opening months, perhaps even the first year or so, they looked me over very carefully and decided that I was their friend and that they could trust me and that I was all right.

*Q: Did you just do this all by instinct, Ambassador, this gradual way that you got them to trust you, by showing your interest in them?*

OLMSTED: Oh, I think so. I don't think I thought it over very carefully. I was very interested in the country, so it was not hard for me.

*Q: That's the key.*

OLMSTED: Yes. It was very genuine.

*Q: Did you ever discover why it was decided to send a woman as the first American Ambassador?*

OLMSTED: I went there as consul general, and I went there because I wanted to and because I was able to persuade the department to send me. Then I was in Port Moresby when the decision was made that I would be the ambassador, but I'm not familiar with what went into that decision.

*Q: But of course, when you went there, it was pretty well known that it was going to become independent?*

OLMSTED: Yes, but I had no commitments that I would be the first ambassador. I didn't ask for them and I didn't get them.

*Q: You must have been doing a good job. Getting back to the more personal side of things: in the running of your household, you have told me about your staff. How much supervision did you have to give them?*

OLMSTED: Quite a bit. There were certain basic things that my house-boy knew how to do, but to present him with something new, with his limited English and his limited understanding, that was quite a problem. For a while, as I may have mentioned, I had a cook, John Veale, who was an excellent cook, and I thought very highly of him in some regards, but quite the reverse in others. He had been a cook in a restaurant or a hotel, and he was really a very good cook, very imaginative in what he prepared. He would decorate a table just beautifully and he'd strew small orchids across the table. He would arrange fruit flowing out of a basket on a side table, so it just looked like a picture. I was very happy with that side of it. But he wasn't dependable. Sometimes he would just disappear, and once in a while I had to go out in the kitchen and do the cooking because he hadn't appeared for a dinner party. And I can tell you that didn't make me very happy. Also he helped himself very liberally to anything in the kitchen or the store-room that he could get his hands on, and my bills went up and up and up. Finally, we reached a parting of the ways.

*Q: You handled the accounts, obviously. Your household accounts, you had to keep those accounts yourself?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and I did a certain amount of the shopping, as well. Sometimes I'd take the house boy along and we'd do it jointly. Sometimes I'd do it by myself. But I depended a good deal on caterers for my official entertaining, and, of course, that meant that I'd just get the bill.

*Q: They had caterers?*

OLMSTED: Yes, there were some caterers there, some of them not entirely dependable, but we all used them.

*Q: Were they Australians?*

OLMSTED: Yes, except there was a good Chinese restaurant there that had a carry-out business, and I could send somebody around to pick up the food from the Chinese restaurant.

*Q: Am I right in remembering that your favorite type of entertainment was on your patio? Sunsets?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Sounds lovely. How did you handle little things like your dry-cleaning and your haircuts and that sort of thing?*

OLMSTED: There was a dry cleaner there, but nobody wore dry-cleanable clothes in the Tropics.

*Q: Who did your laundry?*

OLMSTED: My house boy. He ironed quite nicely. He was a little hard on the clothes, but he ironed nicely.

*Q: Did you have a washing machine? U.S.-supplied?*

OLMSTED: Yes.

*Q: Was that post considered unhealthy? You've mentioned this tropical ulcer problem that you had. You don't recall any special problems other than that infection that you yourself had?*

OLMSTED: No. I would say all of us, the Americans, were really quite healthy. One of our staff members had a chronic sore throat problem, which continued there. Another had a longstanding skin ailment or skin problem which surfaced again in Papua New Guinea. Skin problems are common.

*Q: That's because of the high humidity?*

OLMSTED: Yes, and it never freezes, so it doesn't kill off the germs. The wife of one of our staff members had a baby there, and the doctors thought she shouldn't have. Afterwards they said she should have been evacuated to have the child.

*Q: What was the local hospital like?*

OLMSTED: It was pretty primitive.

*Q: Run by missionaries?*

OLMSTED: No, it was a government-run hospital. The smaller ones out in the country were, to a considerable extent, missionary-run, but the one in Port Moresby was a government hospital. There were several Australian doctors in town, and there was one Chinese-Australian doctor. There was a small medical school and Papua New Guinean doctors were gradually entering into practice.

*Q: Did you have many little children at the post?*

OLMSTED: We had four originally, and then with transfers the number increased.

*Q: Did you have a first-aid unit at the embassy?*

OLMSTED: Yes. We had regular visits from the regional health doctor, and he was able to deal with various problems and give advice.

*Q: Did you have any evacuations for medical reasons?*

OLMSTED: One.

*Q: That was to New Zealand?*

OLMSTED: No, to Australia. It wasn't an emergency. She went down under her own power. Had a D & C.

*[July 26, 1985 interview begins]*

*Q: How did you celebrate the Fourth of July, ambassador?*

OLMSTED: The post was opened on the 30th of June of 1974. We did not have a Fourth of July party that year, although some people asked us if we were going to. I met that question with a laugh. But the next year we did, and in following years we did. We tried different things. It wasn't always the same. One year we had the Americans and the Australian business community at noon, and then the official community in the late afternoon.

*Q: These were receptions?*

OLMSTED: Yes, at the residence both times. I found that very tiring, two parties in one day. So I tried to avoid that and have them on different days, but we ordinarily did have one reception that was either primarily or entirely for Americans, and one which was for the official community.

*Q: How did you obtain things such as books and periodicals and health supplies and beauty products and so forth? Were they available locally?*

OLMSTED: A surprising number of things were available locally, and yet there were gaps in supplies that were also surprising. I can remember one of the young married men on the staff came back after he had gone out to do some Christmas shopping and reported that there were nine brands of French perfume available in town. Cosmetics were available, not everything, but a lot of things. Medical supplies, the over-the-counter types of drugs, and preparations of one sort or another, usually made in Australia, were fairly freely available, not the newest things, but the standards, I would say.

As for prescription medicine, I think people brought things with them that they specifically needed or perhaps had them sent in. One of my young officers with a fungus skin condition had drugs sent from the United States.

*Q: And books and periodicals? Did you have a bookstore back here that supplied you?*

OLMSTED: Time magazine, Newsweek were both available on the newsstands, the Australian edition of both of them. There were some other magazines. Psychology Today was available. There were some of the other American periodicals and also a number of Australian periodicals.

For the daily paper I read one of the Australian papers in addition to the Post Courier, which was the Papua New Guinean tabloid-size paper.

For books, I myself counted on picking up what I wanted when I was back in the States. I was back every year, so I did buy what I wanted.

*Q: You had said that your health was not a problem there. Has it ever been a problem? Have you had any serious illnesses?*

OLMSTED: No, no.

*Q: Wonderful. Could you describe your energy levels? Are you an energetic person?*

OLMSTED: Yes, I think I am. Sometimes I get tired, like anybody else.

*Q: But you would say you're a person with energy. How do you feel your presence made a difference in Papua New Guinea? You were a very important one because you were the first.*

OLMSTED: I think I was more reassuring to the government of Papua New Guinea on the question of CIA involvement in various matters than some other ambassadors might have been. I think I was more sympathetic to their feeling about it and made more of an effort to reassure them that the CIA was not going to undermine them.

I think that I was able to demonstrate a friendly interest of our large and important power in a small country, and I think they appreciated that. I think that this would not have been as important possibly to others who might have been in my place.

I think the fact that I was a woman did make a difference. As I think I have mentioned earlier, I heard not long before I left that the government had started thinking about women more seriously and their role in public life, because the United States sent a woman ambassador.

*Q: Do you think perhaps because you are a woman you were less threatening to these people? After all, you represented a super, super power.*

OLMSTED: I think that's possible, because of the fact that I'm not six feet tall, I'm not a domineering personality, and I didn't try to tell them what to do.

*Q: Was your successor a woman?*

OLMSTED: No.

*Q: When you came back to the United States, did you have difficulty decompressing, as it were?*

OLMSTED: (Laughter) Oh, not really. I came back and I was still mildly interested in getting another assignment, but nothing worked out. So I made the decision that I would retire, I would

not look for a paying job, I would do volunteer work and would perhaps take a little more time to smell the flowers and enjoy life.

*Q: Would you have accepted another mission?*

OLMSTED: Yes. I looked for a couple, but none was available.

**HARVEY FELDMAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1979-1981)**

*Ambassador Feldman was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. Educated at the University of Chicago, he joined the Foreign Service in 1954. His early assignments took him to Hong Kong and Japan, which marked the beginning of a career dealing primarily with Chinese Affairs. Mr. Feldman also served in Bulgaria as well as in Washington, where he held senior position dealing with Chinese and United Nations matters. From 1979 to 1981 he served as United States Ambassador to Papua New Guinea. Ambassador Feldman was interviewed by Edward Dillery in 1999.*

*Q: Did the staff just continue, although in a new status? Did you and your staff just moved over to the AIT?*

FELDMAN: No, we stayed in the Department. The Office of Republic of China Affairs was folded into the Office of Regional Affairs and thereby ceased to exist as a separate directorate. It was renamed some thing like the Taiwan Coordination Staff. I had argued very strongly against Chas Freeman whose proposal was to fold the ROC office into the Office of Chinese Affairs. I won that argument and therefore I and my staff became part of the Regional Affairs Office in EA. I stayed on briefly; it was made eminently clear that in the interest of smoothing relations within the Executive Branch and to give further indication of our break with Taiwan, I should move on.

I was assigned to the Senior Seminar, but at the same time, Warren Christopher, the deputy secretary, called me to his office to ask what onward assignment I would like. I told him that I had been assigned to the Senior Seminar, but that I also knew that the post of ambassador to Papua New Guinea (PNG) was coming open and that I would like to be considered for that job. Christopher said that he thought I would be better off going to the Senior Seminar; he didn't think I really would like to be ambassador in Papua New Guinea, which was quite primitive. My answer was that in fact that was what attracted me to that country; I always had an amateurish interest in anthropology and I thought I really would enjoy that assignment. Christopher agreed to place my name in nomination, even though he had these reservations. It turned out that Christopher was absolutely right and I was absolutely wrong.

While waiting for my nomination to be processed, I occupied office space in the Regional Affairs Office. It took a long time before my name was submitted to Congress-White House

vetting, security clearance, etc. I also took a lot of leave. I tried very hard to refrain from giving advice. The nomination finally got through the process just in time to be submitted before a summer Senate recess - it was sent up in June and was not acted upon until September. The hearing was held shortly after Labor Day; it was chaired by Frank Church. All the members of the Foreign Relations Committee were all there, only because Tom Watson, former head of IBM, was being considered as ambassador to the Soviet Union at the same hearing. The hearing lasted probably an hour and a quarter of which an full hour was devoted to Tom Watson. He was sponsored by Senator Pat Moynihan. Senator after Senator exulted Watson's virtues - and IBM's. Finally, they turned to me to ask two or three questions of no particular note or interest. The only notable remark was Senator Pell's who urged me not to have the Papua New Guineas like me so much that they would eat me. That, as might be expected, caused some consternation in PNG.

I also remember one Senator coming up to me after the hearing and told me that he had appreciated all the work I had done on the Taiwan Relations Act. That Senator was Jesse Helms. I was confirmed right after the hearings.

By the end of September, 1979 I was in PNG.

*Q: Let us move on to that new phase of your career.*

FELDMAN: En route to PNG, I asked to stop in Australia for consultations because Australia was still the major power in the region. In fact, I think the reason we had opened an embassy in Port Moresby was that Australia asked us to do so. I went to Canberra where I met Andrew Peacock, the Foreign Minister, who is now the Australian ambassador in the U.S. He was fond of purple shirts with white cuffs and collars. The name and the attire suited each other very well.

I flew from Sydney to Port Moresby on a Saturday. I put on my ambassadorial suit - pinstriped dark blue suit. When I landed on the tarmac, I found that there was no jetway. You got off the plane and walked from the plane to the terminal - a distance of 250-300 feet. By the time I had walked that stretch, I had soaked through my shirt and jacket - it was very, very hot in Port Moresby. I was not used to that much heat; I don't think I ever felt so uncomfortable in my life.

Papua New Guinea is a very Christian country. It is evident when you notice that every session of Parliament opens with the Lord's Prayer, which in pidgin, of the three main languages, reads like this: Pap bilong Al, you stop on top. Name belong you i mus kamup hol. The other sign that it is a deeply religious country is that at least in Port Moresby it rains only between Christmas and Easter. There is no rain in any other season. There is however an iron sun in a clear blue sky making the temperature on the ground always in the 90s when it is not in the 100s. The humidity is in the 50s. People say that when it is dry like that one does not feel the heat. That is partially true because when it is in the 100s with a humidity in the 50s, it doesn't feel a degree over 99.

So I had sweated through all of my clothing and was ushered into the VIP lounge, which was fully air-conditioned. That sent me shivering in my sodden suit. I was greeted by the chief of protocol, the dean of the diplomatic corps - the British High Commissioner - and by Tim Hamilton, my DCM, and by the embassy's administrative officer. We sat there making small talk, until I was informed that my baggage had been cleared through customs and had been loaded in

the ambassadorial limousine. I was then free to depart. Escorted by my greeting group, I went out to the limousine, which as an Australian Ford Falcon. I climbed in and Bem, the embassy's chauffeur, turned the starter key and the motor groaned and groaned, but would not start. I should add that I noticed that Bem was barefooted. Finally, it didn't even groan; it died completely as I was sitting waving goodbye to the receiving group. The administrative officer ran to Budget-Rent-a-Car and rented the largest - indeed the only - vehicle available which was a Datsun 210 - a two door car. The luggage was crammed into the trunk, into the front seat and some of it in the back seat. I got in as best I could and waved goodbye again. The Datsun did start and we drove to the ambassador's residence.

That residence was reached by a very steep road which had a right angle turn. When we got to the turn, the Datsun also died. So I walked the last fifty yards to the residence. There I was greeted by the single household servant, Kisani; he ushered me into the residence, which was a rather unusual structure. It was actually dumbbell shaped. There was a large round building which was the residence proper; then you got to a covered walkway which led to a much smaller round structure which was guest house. The roof was conical; it had been build to sort of replicate a hut that might be found in the highlands of PNG. The major difference was that the wall and the roof were not of thatch as one would find in the highland. In the residence, the wall was made of glass - not windows which could be opened. There were some very tiny windows at the bottom of the walls. The floors were bare cement because my predecessor, Mary Olmsted, had owned the rugs and had taken them with her. She had been first our consul-general and then ambassador.

I entered and discovered to my horror that it was not air conditioned. There was a revolving table fan sitting on a coffee table; that was the sole air conditioning in the 95 degree heat. Mary had also taken most of the furniture which was hers. What was left was mostly rattan - of the kind we used to refer to in Taiwan as "early Chiang Kai-shek." So I sat in a rattan chair sweltering in his beehive hut with the glass walls radiating waves of heat at me, with the one little fan doing its best. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. In fact, my first thought was to find a telephone to call Dick Holbrooke to tell him that I had made a terrible mistake and that I wanted to be relieved immediately.

*Q: I gather that you arrived without your wife.*

FELDMAN: Fortunately, Laurie was not with me. That was my second thought because had she been there we would have been on the first plane out of PNG. As I was sitting bemoaning my fate, the DCM and administrative officer drove up. They welcomed me again. I asked where the air conditioning was. I was told that Ambassador Olmsted did not approve of air conditioning. She thought it was bad for you and furthermore it drew a distinction between the way Americans lived and the way the Papua New Guineans lived. I asked whether their residences were air-conditioned. They assured me that, of course, they were!

I then asked about the rugs. That is when I found out that Mary had taken them and most of the furniture. But they did say that they had stocked the refrigerator with what I might need during the rest of the week-end. They parted, saying they would see me at the office on Monday. So



there I was: all alone with a car at the bottom of the driveway. I was in a sweat box completely lost about what I should do.

The clincher came a few minutes later when Kisani came in to inform me - in his halting English - that Ambassador Olmsted had been in the habit of giving him a daily lesson in English. He asked what time I thought might be convenient for such a lesson. I explained, as politely as I could, that I did not believe that I had been sent by my president in order to teach English - to Kisani or anyone else. I suggested that he get his lesson elsewhere; I suggested rather strongly that he had better do so if he wanted to continue his employment.

Fortunately, at this point, the phone rang. On the flight from Sydney, I had sat next to an executive of Air New Guinea - the airline we were flying. He was a white Rhodesian, who had left the country, as many others did, when it achieved its independence and became Zimbabwe. He went to Australia and ended up subsequently in Port Moresby where he joined Air New Guinea. He called me and asked whether I was busy in the afternoon. I told him that I thought I would just have a collapse - or something like that. He suggested that we go swimming instead. He said he would be by whenever I was ready. I said I was ready and the sooner he could get me, the better. I ran upstairs, peeled off my sodden clothes and put on a bathing suit and a tee shirt; I grabbed a towel, found some flip-flops and went to spend the rest of the day with my traveling companion and his friends.

It was there that I first learned that three Australians equaled one case of beer. We drove about an hour to a beach, where we sat around, taking a dip every once in a while. We drank a lot of beer, told a lot of stories. They invited me to join them for dinner that evening which I readily accepted. We went off to a club called Aviat and had dinner. That was my first day in Papua New Guinea!

*Q: I hope things improved as time went by. Did the situation change?*

FELDMAN: On Monday, I went to the embassy. By this time the Ford Falcon had been "repaired;" it failed many times subsequently and ultimately I was able to persuade the powers-to-be to let me get rid of it and get a Holden - an Australian Chevy - instead. That was a great improvement.

The first thing I did was to ask the administrative officer to come to see me. I asked him the name of the main air-conditioning firm in PNG. It turned out that it was not an American firm; it was Daikin, a Japanese firm. I was told that it was the biggest and the best. I told the administrative officer that I wanted to go there right away. We went and spoke to a neat Australian who was the general manager. I explained my problem. He said he had been to the residence and knew it well. He recommended a "split" system which had the compressor outside and the air flowed through tubes to fan units inside the house. He thought that with two compressors he could cool the whole house easily. The guest house was then provided window units. So that is what we did and within four days, the residence was fully air-conditioned; in fact, it could be really cold. I loved it.

The next thing I did was to go with the administrative officer to the local carpet merchant. I wanted carpets, but I recognized that the administrative officer might have some problem paying for all these improvements. I told him that he had to find some way to pay for these purchases because I just wasn't going to live in the conditions that I found the residence. So we bought a wall-to-wall carpet which were installed in about a month. For both the carpet and the furniture we had to get Foreign Buildings Office (FBO) approval, but the furniture was a different challenge because it had to be delivered from the U.S. We ordered and waited for arrivals which spread out over some time. I think we waited for three months for the living room furniture; the dining room table came later - without chairs; the box spring and mattress came without the bed frame; so we slept on the box spring and mattress for a while. So it was probably six-eight months before the residence was made livable. However, once the air-conditioning was installed, I could tolerate all the other deprivations. I am glad we got that much done before Laurie arrived which was about two months later. We were still living with the rattan furniture and the old creaking bed with sagging mattress, but it was certainly far better than what I had found on that fateful arrival day.

*Q: How was Kisani?*

FELDMAN: He vacillated between a disaster and generally tolerable. It turned out that essentially he couldn't cook at all. Ambassador Olmsted had taught him one or two dishes; he could make an omelette, for example, and he could make sandwiches. He could also pour dry cereal into a bowl and bring it to the dining room table. That was about the extent of his culinary talents. But we found that essentially, there were no cooks to be found in PNG. We assumed that within the Chinese community, there must have been a cook or two. Wrong; there wasn't. The Chinese who lived in PNG were all businessmen. We tried a couple of retired PNG defense force cooks; they were pretty awful. Ultimately, we accepted our fate; if we entertained, we would have it catered usually by a hotel kitchen. That was no great cooking, but restaurants were willing to provide the service. There really wasn't a decent restaurant in the country. But it was tolerable and it was what the local people were used to. When we didn't have a party, either Laurie or I cooked. The same thing might have happened if we had a small party; this particularly true if a number of embassy staff were invited; the wives would help out and bring some food. I would say that our embassy was a sort of "mom and pop" operation.

We had nine Americans on the staff, including myself. In contrast, the Australian High Commission had about 70-75 Australians. So we had a very small operation. Tim Hamilton, whom I had picked to be the DCM, turned out to be somewhat of a disappointment. He was not a take-charge kind of guy. I thought a DCM should be something like what I was to Martin Herz - someone who would run the embassy. Hamilton was not the right guy for the job. The administrative officer was pretty good. He sort of looked like an unmade bed - overweight, mussed hair, shirttails hanging out. But he was very good - creative, which was an essential requirement for PNG. He had a delightful wife. He had served in the consulate general in Tangier. One day, he walked into the major hotel there and had seen an absolutely stunning woman behind the reception desk. He courted and married her. She was an Arab Muslim, stuck in Port Moresby, but she was delightful and the kind of person who could adjust to almost any surrounding. She was a source of cheer and joy for the whole embassy.

The consular officer and the communicator were a tandem couple. We had no political officer; we did have an economic officer, Ira Wolf, who was a Japanese language officer who was later assigned to Tokyo and subsequently was detailed to work for Senator Rockefeller (Democrat, West Virginia). He then left the Foreign Service and went to work for Kodak in Tokyo; then he joined the United States Trade Representative (USTR) Office, before returning to Kodak. He was a very talented officer - outstanding. Now he's a senior staffer to Senator Max Baucus.

*Q: How many other embassies were in Port Moresby?*

FELDMAN: We had the British High Commission, the Australian High Commission, the New Zealand High Commission, a French embassy, a Chinese embassy, the Solomon Island High Commission, the Fiji High Commission and a Korean embassy. Very small diplomatic corps. I didn't really spend much time with them; they were not particularly interesting except for the Australian and the New Zealander. Since the PNG was in their area they sent good people. The British High Commissioner was on his last assignment before retirement; same for the French, who had come to PNG after being a vice consul somewhere. It was not a sterling group.

*Q: What interests did the U.S. have in PNG?*

FELDMAN: At this stage, very few. Our principal interest I think was the three thousand missionaries who lived in PNG.

*Q: tell us a little about the PNG government.*

FELDMAN: The problem with PNG and its independence was that the Papua New Guineans had no experience with running any kind of enterprise. There wasn't even a public school system until after WWII. The University was not founded until the beginning of the 1970s. I think that the first graduating class was in 1973 or 1974 or perhaps even 1975. Education had been essentially in the hands of missionaries; what education was available was a hit or miss proposition - there weren't many schools. So there was no educated cadre when independence came along. When I served in PNG, the average education of the parliament members was probably three or four years of primary school. Members of the cabinet had commonly one or two years of high school - always in missionary schools, which varied widely in performance.

So there wasn't much one could do or say under the circumstances. They had tremendous problems. Under Australian rule, PNG had been a free immigration zone. All of the functioning positions in the government were held by Australians up until about 1970. Even the electrician or the plumber who worked in one's house were Australian as were the attendants at gas pumps. The Papuan New Guineans were household help, restaurant waiters, cooks and bottle washers and outside of towns, subsistence farmers. The principal crops were palm oil, cocoa and coffee. Especially after WWII, coffee became a path to wealth for many of highland clans.

The highlands were quite primitive. In fact there were portions which had been "discovered" only in the 1930s. Yet it was the highlands of New Guinea, PNG's main island, where the major portion of the population lived. There were some other islands that part of PNG, the largest of which was Bougainville which was named after the French explorer Philip du Bougainville.

Some of the other islands were New Ireland and New Britain - the latter being probably the most prosperous part of PNG. Also there was Manus and the northern part of the Solomon Islands. Manus was where anthropologist Margaret Meade had done her major work "Growing up in New Guinea," following her first book "Coming to Age in Samoa." I might just mention that Meade is not very highly regarded in Manus; she never shared any of her royalties from her books with the natives and the Manusians felt that she owed them - big time.

The Papua New Guineans have a keen sense of what is owed to them. Many years after WWII, while I was ambassador, I happened to make a trip to a small island near Manus. I was shown around by one of the chiefs; we came to a strip of crumbling concrete which had been built by the U.S. Army Air Force as an airstrip which cut right across the island. The chief pointed out that this had been a major air strip in WWII; he said that two fighter planes could take off simultaneously. So, he said this strip had been very important to the Americans. When I said I could imagine that, he pointed out that we had never paid his people anything for it!

I should mention something about the law of unintended consequences - Australian colonialism division. When Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party took over in 1974 or 1975 - the first Labor government in a long time - it decided that Australia should not remain a colonial power. That meant giving Papua New Guinea its independence as quickly as possible. It pushed PNG into independence far more quickly than it could really absorb it and even before the PNG leaders wanted it. To say that they were unprepared is to put it mildly. The Papua New Guineans were unprepared in several ways. For one, the Australians had left an enormous infrastructure of government service. At independence and even when I was there, one of every four Papua New Guineans who were wage earners worked for the government. Government "mandarins" - i.e. public servants with an inflated sense of importance - were entitled to all sorts of benefits including for example, "home leave" every two years. What the PNG had done was to copy exactly what benefits had been extended to Australians during the colonial period. Where did the Papua New Guineans go for "home leave?" Nevertheless, they got two months of "home leave" every two years at full pay and they could go wherever they wished. So we would find PNGers going to Australia or the U.S. or Europe for "home leave." Of course, that program was enormously expensive. So the cost of running the government was huge particularly in an underdeveloped country.

There were other matters that were the heritage of Australian colonialism - in strange, sometimes wonderful, sometimes awful ways. The ruling Australian Labor Party, with the best of motives, decided that they should institute an urban minimum wage policy. They set that wage at a level which during my tour was the equivalent of \$45 per week - or roughly \$200 per month. That essentially barred anyone from building an export industry in PNG, which is often the path that underdeveloped countries take to increase their GDP - especially in textiles. From there, they worked their way up the economic ladder. But that was not possible because that minimum wage made PNG exports completely uncompetitive. Productivity was low - much lower than Indonesia where the average monthly wage might have been \$50 per month.

The result of this minimum wage policy was large unemployment. In my days in Port Moresby, the unemployment level was about 40% of adult males. The situation was similar in other major

cities. The consequence, not surprisingly, was crime and urban gangs. The unemployment also spawned major corruption.

The Australians also dictated prohibition. That meant that a Papua New Guinean could not buy alcoholic beverages or receive alcoholic beverages. One consequence was that the Papua New Guineans came to equate the ability to drink alcoholic beverages with political power. The Australians had the political power and the Papua New Guineans had prohibition. The Australians were well known for their drinking consumption - beer and even harder liquor. The Papua New Guineans who lived near Australians would see drunken Australians.

Papua New Guinean women saw that Australian women drank. They also saw that Australian women had far fewer children than they had. That brought them to the conclusion that alcohol must be some kind of contraceptive. So when independence came and prohibition was lifted, PNG went on an unbelievable drinking spree. It lasted for weeks and weeks. Not surprisingly, the birth rate increased. In any case, beer became institutionalized in PNG; prior to "freedom" bride price was paid in what was called a "Kina" shell or pigs or sacks of rice, etc. But post-independence, the currency of choice was beer. When I was there, approximately 10% of GDP came from the sale of beer. There were a lot of people who were drunk for most of their time.

Another PNG fact was that it was and had been a country without refrigeration - despite its climate. So things spoiled very quickly which meant for example, that at harvest time, if someone roasted a pig, the whole thing had to be eaten essentially in one sitting. If you had a case of beer, you drank it all. The concept of leaving something for tomorrow just didn't exist because the concern for spoilage.

*Q: Did they make their own beer?*

FELDMAN: The major brewery was the South Pacific Company - a joint venture of Tiger, a Singapore company and Fosters, the Australian beer maker. Later San Miguel, a Philippine company, tried to establish itself in PNG, but it couldn't crack the market. I knew the San Miguel manager - Phil Telesco, an American, born in the Philippines. He told me that he couldn't get more than 5% of the market despite all their advertisement and promotion efforts. He asked why this ceiling existed and was told that his beer just didn't taste as good as South Pacific's beer. So he had SP's analyzed and found that it contained a little bit of formaldehyde which gave the drinker a headache. The Papua New Guineans assumed that if one didn't get a headache after drinking, the beer did not contain any alcohol. Since San Miguel did not give the drinker a headache, it could not have been real beer!

*Q: Let's get back to the highlands.*

FELDMAN: The highlands was a broad mountainous area, topped by an all year snow-capped peak called Wilhelm (named after the former Kaiser) despite the fact that it is only 8 degrees off the Equator. It is about 18,000 feet high. The highlands themselves are 3,000-8,000 feet high. There are deeply cut valleys, roaring rivers and many fertile fields. The geography cuts the area up into small pieces so that there are networks of small villages in the highland, each populated by 50-200 people. There are a lot of these small villages. The total population on PNG when I

was there was about three million of whom at least one million lived in the highlands. One found pockets in the highland which were simply inaccessible until the 1930s when air travel became possible. A former PNG foreign minister wrote his autobiography which he called “ Ten Thousand Years in One Lifetime.” He recounted how he as a child of 6 or 7 had seen a wheel for the very first time - on an airplane. So there was a major disconnect between how the highlanders and the urban dwellers had lived in PNG, even as recently as the 1930s.

The highlands were an interesting place, populated by clans, many of which were in a state of perpetual warfare. Warfare in the highlands was a little different from our perception of that word. It was probably very similar to what one might have found in Europe 3000-4000 years ago. There weren't any mass confrontations; there would be raiding parties that would hide in the bush and wait until the males of the village, which was to be attacked, had left to go off to their daytime work - hunting or forest clearing, etc. Then the party would swoop down on the village, burn the huts, carry off the pigs and occasionally, although not very often, rape a woman.

Another fighting method was to attack in the early hours of the morning - 4 or 5 a.m., just as people were getting up. They would surprise their enemies and set the huts on fire. They would also kill the villagers who were being attacked by throwing spears at them. This was a rare incident, but did happen from time to time.

Much later, after I had left the Service, I returned on a business trip. I read an article in the Port Moresby newspaper - *The Post Courier* - that some of the highland clans were then renting helicopters to spy out the terrain of their hereditary enemies and then would attack them with spears and bows and arrows. The use of modern weapons was not acceptable - there was no credit to be gained by shooting an enemy - but the use of helicopters for scouting purposes was acceptable.

*Q: How about languages on PNG?*

FELDMAN: There were a number used because the area was so cut up both because of the many islands that belonged to PNG and because on the main island there were those separations that I have described. Linguists have said that there are seven hundred distinct languages spoken in PNG. I have that a little hard to believe, but there are certainly a great number. That resulted in the development of two kinds of pidgin. One was pidgin English which after independence they called by a fancier name Neo-Melanesian, so named by an Australian linguist. Then there was a Papuan pidgin which was spoken along the southern coast. Almost all people could speak pidgin. The constitution, which was a lengthy and very detailed piece of work which tried to cover all subjects - something like 105 pages - specified that PNG was a Christian country and that every session of parliament should start with the Lord's Prayer. I gave it once already.

I do remember when Prince Charles' engagement to Lady Diana was announced the local pidgin language newspaper ran a picture of her with the following caption: numba one pikannini bilong Missus Kween, beling Englan, Prins Chals, ba, maritim dispela yongpela switpela Mari. Name belong clopela Mari i Ledi Diana. Ledi Diana got 19 Crismus. Prins Chals got 32 Crismus. Mamma Kwin tokout long dispela noos long las wik. (“The oldest child of the Queen of England, Prince Charles, will marry this sweet young woman named Lady Diana who is 19 years old. The

Queen Mother announced this news item last week”). I never became fluent in pidgin, but I could understand it pretty well. It is a language that has only about 1600 words in its vocabulary, so it can be mastered without too much trouble.

The government which was in charge at the time of my arrival was headed Prime Minister Michael Sumari, who later became a KCMG (Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St George). We have remained friends for many years. Later, after my departure, we went on a speaking tour together in the U.S. Sumari had been a radio announcer on the north coast in Wewak, his native city. He therefore had a known voice and was easily elected the first chief minister before independence after which he became prime minister. Michael was pretty good; I think he was probably the last honest prime minister of PNG. Those who followed him were increasingly corrupt. Michael was followed by Sir Julius Chan, who was the son of an overseas Chinese father and a native mother. He was from New Ireland. I think the political situation deteriorated after Michael.

Julius had been the finance minister in Sumari’s cabinet, based on the wide spread belief in PNG that if you were of Chinese stock you must be good at finances and mathematics. I once overheard a very amusing conversation at a party between a senior government official, a native and an overseas Chinese resident. The cabinet officer asked why it was that the Chinese were so proficient with money and numbers; the answer was that in a Chinese family, the major subject for dinner discussion was interests rates. I have no way to vouch for the accuracy of that observation, but it was interesting. Of course, a PNG native who was raised in the highlands would not have had a family dinner table. There the men lived in a long house, by themselves. The women lived in round, beehive huts; young male children lived with their mothers until they were 11 or 12. Then they were circumcised and then moved into a long house. So the cabinet official probably never had a family dinner table to sit around to discuss interest rates or anything else.

In some of these villages, the children are not circumcised, but rather scarified - the young person is stretched out on a board, little cuts are made on his back, leaving lifelong scars. I have never understood exactly what it is that is put in each cut. Is something that makes a raised welt. That leaves the boy with what looks like corrugated backs, which are called appropriately called “Crocodile Skin.” I guess that the idea is to make the males as brave and as fierce as crocodiles are supposed to be.

*Q: What was the role of the Australians by the time you got there?*

FELDMAN: The Australians were the principal support for the government. They provided one-third of the budget with direct untied budgetary support. Year after year, both while I was there and since, the Australians have tried to negotiate a reduction in this budgetary support formula, to that the Papua New Guineans could be weaned away from this handout and begin to live within their own means. Not much has happened on this front; twenty years after my tour in PNG, I think that the Australians have reduced their contributions from one-third of the budget to 20%-23% of the budget. But they are still supporting PNG.

The Australian High Commission had seventy people on its staff, as I said before. Some were rather weird. I remember one of the staff - the equivalent of what we would call a political counselor - who when hosting a party, would greet his guests wearing a dress and make-up. Periodically, he would name the members of the cabinet with whom he had slept. I used to complain to the High Commissioner that his staff had an unfair advantage over our staff with this guy!

The Australians also did a lot of training, particularly army and police. The army at the time was headed by Brigadier Ted Diro, who was very suave, gregarious and good looking. He had attended schools in Australia and England; he looked and comported himself as a brigadier should - a handle bar mustache, impeccably groomed. Later we found out that he was on the payroll of Indonesia, which is right next door. While I was in PNG, there was a perpetual concern that one day the Indonesians would just march in and occupy PNG so that the whole chain of islands would be theirs. When it was found out that Diro had been an Indonesian agent for many years, it came as a great shock. It was part of the increasing corruption that went on in PNG.

*Q: What was the Papua New Guineans' attitude towards Indonesians?*

FELDMAN: They cared in the same sense as the West Irian Liberation Movement (OPM), a Melanesian racial group, cared about Indonesian. They were not like Indonesians at all. The West Papuans were the same kinds of people, with the same clan structure and habits and mores, as the Papua New Guineans who lived right across the border. The two peoples had a great deal of affinity for each other. For a long time OPM used the border area, including the PNG side, as a sort of a safe haven, from which they attacked the Indonesian military garrisons and police. There was an OPM office, devoted primarily to issuing propaganda, in Port Moresby.

In 1980 or 1981, an agreement was reached between Indonesia and PNG. The OPM office in Port Moresby was closed. The PNG military attempted to deny the use of PNG territory to the OPM. The uprising sort of withered and died away after that. The area along the border was really wild and incredible - as most of PNG is. For example, Port Moresby exists in a rain shadow; there is absolutely no rain between Easter and Christmas. It was said that because PNG was a Christian country, it rained between Christmas and Easter - 10-15 inches per annum. But it was very dry; brush-fires cropped up all the time. By the West Irian border, it rained 600 inches per annum. Once I flew once to an area called Oktedi ("OK" meaning "river" in the local dialect.) A discovery had been made in this border region of a large copper and gold deposit. PNG also operated the world's largest open-cut copper mine on the island of Bougainville. The mine on the border was opened and worked. An American company, in a joint venture with an Australian company, was trying to develop the mine. It flew me to the area from Port Moresby in a Beechcraft *Baron*, a two engine plane. We flew to Daru, which was the capital of the western province. It is essentially a couple of houses and some huts on a mud flat, near the mouth of the Fly River - aptly named, I would say. From there we flew in a single engine Cessna to land at Oktedi. Just as we were approaching the landing strip at Oktedi, the engine failed. Fortunately, we had a terrific pilot - a Papua New Guinean. He made a dead stick landing on the runway and saved out lives.



We later discovered that the engine failed because the oil pan had not been filled for a long time and therefore the engine had simply run out of oil. We stayed on Oktedi for a couple of days until another plane could reach us. It rained and rained and rained; I didn't see how the mine could be worked in that kind of weather. But they did until a typical PNG series of events took place. There is no law of eminent domain in PNG; it was forbidden by their constitution. Land was and is owned by the traditional land owner, which means that almost every village owns the land it is on and the hunting preserves near by and any other land it could claim as "traditionally" owned. The mine operators would have to deal with each individual village or groups of villages who owned land which they needed for a right-of-way. They would have to pay for the land as well as the road construction. Furthermore, the operators wanted to use the Fly River for transportation, but had to negotiate a right-of-way at the point on the river when they had to move their copper and gold inland. These villages behaved like the "Robber Barons" along the Rhine River; they exacted a toll every few miles along the river. It is this kind of approach to land which has discouraged investors from trying to develop PNG. Most of the villages operate in a completely democratic fashion. Every adult male has to agree with a proposition; in some villages, it is the adult females that all have to agree. One "no" vote kills the proposition.

Rabaul is the capital of New Britain. It is the most prosperous part of PNG. For years, people had been trying to extend the runway at Rabaul airport, which only existed because the Japanese had build it during WWII. Otherwise, it would have never been built; the Japanese didn't really care about PNG's mores and habits and culture; they just built the runway - as we must have done in similar circumstances. But because the tribes around it would not approve the extension of the runway, no jet aircraft could land at Rabaul - I am not referring to large airplanes like a 747 or a 707, but rather planes like a fifty seat Fokker - a turbo-jet. Only propeller driven planes could land at Rabaul. It was weird. That was typical of PNG; progress was very hard to come by.

*Q: Did we have any issues with the PNG while you were ambassador?*

FELDMAN: We did, but let me just add one more anecdote. Shortly after I arrived, I was told it was time to present my credentials to the Governor General, who had the marvelous name of Sir Tory Locoloco. Tory had been a high school teacher before becoming Governor General; he was one of the most educated in PNG. As I said earlier, the average educational level of the cabinet members was two years of high school and of parliamentarians was four or five years of elementary school. The Australians had not built a public educational system until sometime in the 1950s. Prior to that, education was left to the missionaries who if they didn't develop a school in a particular village or area would leave the indigenous people entirely unschooled. The University was established in 1972-73 - another heritage of Australian colonialism.

I was told that I was expected to dress appropriately - a dark blue suit, shirt and tie. Furthermore, a limousine would be sent to fetch me. At the appointed time, an elegant Daimler drew up in front of the embassy. I entered and was driven to the Governor General's residence. I was introduced to Sir Tory Locoloco, who was wearing shorts and a shirt torn on one shoulder. He was also drunk, even though it was only 10 a.m. I gave my brief speech on how happy I was to be in PNG; I then handed the recall letter of my predecessor and my own letter of credence. Then Tory gave his own welcoming speech, slurring something like this: "Mr. Ambassador, I want you to know that although we are a dark-skinned people, we are not like Africans. Oh, no. We

are a happy people. Mr. Ambassador, you must understand that we are not like African people. We are a very happy people! Thank you.”

*Q: What about the presentation of your credentials for Solomon Islands?*

FELDMAN: I was concurrently ambassador to the PNG and Solomon Islands. About a week or two after the Port Moresby presentation, I went to Guadalcanal, the main island which is the home of the capital, Honiara. I landed at Henderson field, named after a Marine flier who was shot down during WWII. In the VIP room at the terminal, his picture is prominently displayed. On the beach areas on Guadalcanal, there are signs which mark the spots of the various engagements undertaken by the Americans in their invasion of the island, then occupied by the Japanese. The major battles sites are all marked out. The Solomon Islanders are very proud of their efforts to assist the U.S. Marines - and later the Army which replaced the Marines.

After landing, I was taken to my hotel, named the Mendana. It was a charming hotel with a huge veranda looking out on Iron Bottom Bay, which is named that because of the large number of sunken ship that rest on the bottom of the Bay. The rooms were like those one might find at a Motel 6, but the gorgeous veranda made it quite enticing. The food was very good; there were flowers all over; it made for a very happy stay.

I was to present my credentials to the Governor General. I promptly blotted my copy book. I had found out that one major occupation in these places was to take photographs. On the evening I arrived, the sunset was just magnificent, but it wasn't framed quite right from the veranda. The Mendana adjoined the grounds of the residence of the Governor General. So I climbed over the fence with my camera and found a suitable spot for a pictures, which I still have at home. After taking the pictures, I hopped over the fence to the hotel.

The next day I went to present my credentials. He greeted me and said that he was now welcoming officially, since I had been an unofficial guest the night before. So I apologized profusely, but it was not a wise way to start a relationship.

I found it very interesting to compare the Solomon Islanders and the Papua New Guineans. In PNG, when the nationals - that is the term they use for themselves - got drunk, which was frequently, they started fighting. In Solomon, when the indigenous got drunk, which was less frequent, they went to sleep. I attribute that to the principal difference between British and Australian colonialism. Honiara is a town of about 20,000 people during the week; on week-ends the population would drop to 10-12 thousand because people would return to their native villages. The islands were pretty much unspoiled; there was very little economic activity. There were some sugar plantations and they raised some palm oil and cocoa; no coffee because there were no highlands. The total population on the islands was less than 400,000 people. There were a lot of islands and some were just incredibly beautiful.

*Q: What about the government?*

FELDMAN: It was British style, with the civil servants much better trained and better educated than PNG. The British had developed a public school system; they were far better colonialists

than the Australians. The Australians tended to view PNG as the northern frontier; PNG was the equivalent of Dodge city of 1875. The British, on the other hand, were experts at running colonies and did that well. So Solomon was far better administered by people who were much better educated than their PNG counterparts. The government functioned with very little corruption. I think Solomon Islands are a very neat little place.

The problem was that they had no resources, except fish and the cocoa, sugar and palm oil. It got some international assistance, some from the Asia Development Bank (ADB). But most of the population are subsistence farmers and I am afraid that is all they ever going to be. For procurements that take cash, they basically have to depend on hand-outs from the outside world - from Britain, the UNDP, UNICEF, the ADB and other UN agencies. There were and are a lot of Peace Corps variants - ours, the Japanese, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Canadians, the Germans, the French. The same thing is true for the PNG. One of things we did while I was there was to sign an agreement which would allow a U.S. Peace Corps contingent into the country.

We were fortunate to have a very good Peace Corps director. One of the first things she did was to decide that all the various efforts needed some coordination. She started the first weekly coordination meeting attended by all foreign government contingents working in the PNG. They talked about what they were doing so that their efforts could complement each other rather than over-lap.

*Q: What was your impression of the PC efforts both in the PNG and Solomon?*

FELDMAN: It is hard to say. They did good work, but they worked at the margins. The problems of development in places like PNG or Solomons are so deep seeded - endemic alcoholism; a clan dominated society which requires 100% agreement, as I explained before; the wontok tradition, which means if anyone acquires a certain amount of wealth, by custom, they have to share it with all their relatives. So a surplus can never be accumulated which could be invested in some productive enterprise. Occasionally, some one in the highlands, after a good year growing cocoa and coffee, would accumulate enough money which he used to buy some equipment - before the wontoks descended on him. That increased his productivity, but didn't happen often.

So the international Peace Corps-like efforts were really limited in what they could achieve. In Solomons, the challenge was a little different - the wontok system did not exist and there was no endemic warfare as took place in PNG's highlands. But it lacked resources. There are essentially no basic cash crops on Solomon Islands, except those I mentioned earlier. So there wasn't very much one could do. A PC volunteer could teach English or help develop a rudimentary health system in villages. At my insistence, the PC and the AID contractors on the islands focused on bringing water to villages that didn't have any. This was quite successful. We did this using easily maintainable pumps and PVC pipes. That was our major contribution to PNG's development.

*Q: Did you have any problems with the semi-independent status of the Peace Corps?*

FELDMAN: I didn't have any problems because I didn't try to run it. We would meet periodically and talked about what the development priorities should be. The Peace Corps director would tell me that he had people who were skilled in certain areas, but who might not be competent in some priority area. So she was limited in some respects by the skills of her volunteers. We would then agree on what the priorities would be within the Peace Corps' capabilities. That worked out reasonably well and I had no problems with the Peace Corps.

*Q: You were going to mention your destroyer friend.*

FELDMAN: This was an matter of just getting around. I should mention that PNG, if placed on a map of Europe, it would cover an area from Spain to Poland. It is a huge expanse of islands - and mostly water. I think in this huge area, there may have been as much as 10,000 miles of roads. So we had to use the air to get around. There are 19 provinces in PNG; every one had a bishop and every bishop had a plane. I learned from the start that the way to visit the country was to call the local Catholic bishop and say :”My Lord Bishop, I was planning to visit your area.” The bishop would invariably welcome me and ask me to stay with him. I would thank him for his hospitality and then ask him whether he could send his plane to pick me up. That is how I got around the country - in addition to being efficient, it also saved our travel budget, which was very limited in any case.

My favorite flight was made when Dick Holbrooke, the assistant secretary for Asia and Pacific Affairs, came to visit PNG. Dick wanted to see the country and particularly Sepik River area, which was famous for its carvings. So I called the bishop of Wewak and asked him to send his plane, which was a Dornier spotter plane - a plane that Australian troops had captured from Rommel's forces in the desert of North Africa during WWII. It had a huge wing-spread and a huge bubble canopy that could seat four people. Unfortunately, the plane could not fly from Wewak over the mountains to get to Port Moresby. We took a commercial plane into Wewak and then got into the bishop's Dornier to fly into the hinterlands. The plane flew 600-700 feet above the ground at about 85-90 miles an hour. So we had a marvelous view of the countryside. Holbrooke was just enchanted. After we landed, we got on a boat and leisurely sailed down the Sepik; it was a great trip.

I should mention another air-trip that I also took with Holbrooke on that visit. I think I mentioned that my wife Laurie had arrived two or three months after my arrival. She had managed to become the PNG representative for an AID contractor, The Foundation for the People of the South Pacific. As the representative, she traveled throughout the country starting village self-help projects, chiefly for women - e.g. chicken incubators, pigs, etc. She also subsidized vocational training in elementary and high schools. So she was frequently on the road - she had a much bigger travel budget than I had and didn't have to depend on bishops or the planes of the MAF (the Protestant equivalent called the “Missionary Air Fellowship”). While Holbrooke was in PNG, I borrowed a Beechcraft King-air from my next door neighbor, the ambassador to Indonesia. Technically, we were supposed to share that plane - I could have it one month out of the year. In any case, we took the plane, which was flown by a couple of air force pilots, and headed for New Ireland because the then foreign minister, Noel Levy, was from there. At the time, he was home campaigning for his parliamentary seat in an upcoming election in his district. Just before we left, I got a call from the permanent secretary of the foreign ministry, asking

whether he might be able to come along to Rabaul. I told him that that would be fine; we would stop there on the way to New Ireland. Then he asked whether he could bring some one with him. That made me wonder and I asked who it was that he wanted to bring. It turned out that the extra passenger was a “native healer” who was to attend to his very ill brother who was not improving under the care of a western-educated doctor. As a last resort, he wanted to try the “native healer” who was quite famous in PNG. I said, “okay.” So we took off with Holbrooke, my wife, the permanent secretary, the “native healer” and myself. We dropped the two off at Rabaul and then went on to New Ireland.

When we arrived, Holbrooke of course was the first to deplane. He was welcomed by the foreign minister and the governor of New Ireland. Then I came down the plank and got a greeting. The Laurie followed and she was really welcomed; they were truly delighted to see her again. Her program was funding the entire vocational training program in the province’s high school. Holbrooke turned to me and said, “I am so glad that we made you the ambassador here!” After a few weeks I called the permanent secretary and asked him about his brother. I was told that he was completely cured. I asked what had happened and was told that the “native healer” ran his hands up his brother’s back and discovered that some how two wooden screws had gotten into his kidneys; once he had removed them, the brother got much better. PNG was that kind of place!

Now let me go to your question about the destroyer. Sometime in 1980, the U.S. Navy had sailed a task force - cruiser with destroyer escorts - right through Solomon Islands. They hadn’t asked for permission to do so; they had not even given notice; the navy had just proceeded. A helicopter had been launched from the cruiser which had buzzed the local school and frightened the children. I assume that because that because islanders didn’t wear much clothing, some pilot decided to take a close look at some topless teachers. Not surprisingly, the Solomon Islands government was aghast and protested strongly. I was summoned to Honiara to receive the protests. The Solomon were really angry and made their views known in Washington as well.

This happened just a few weeks before the Solomon’s national day. I sent a message to CINCPAC suggesting that it sent a ship and a band to honor the national day and thereby try to atone somewhat for the unfortunate actions of its task force. I received a message saying that CINCPAC did not have a band it could despatch, but that it could send one of its most modern destroyers which they would open to the public. It would also put on shore a working party to fix up anything that needed to be fixed - playgrounds, schools, buildings, etc. I sent a message to the governor general making this offer; it was readily accepted.

So everything was arranged including my boarding the ship at Port Moresby to be ferried to Solomons. The ship was the “USS Kincaid” - at the time, one of the most modern destroyers in the fleet. Laurie and I boarded, as did Laurie’s parents who were visiting at the time. I should mention that my father-in-law, Bernie Sherman, had been a navy corpsman during the Korean war. He was proud of his service and fascinated by navy things. I don’t think Bernie ever took me seriously as a son-in-law until I was piped aboard the “USS Kincaid” - with all the ceremony that the navy gives to a VIP. The captain gave up his cabin for Laurie’s and my use; that also impressed Bernie greatly. We were on board for about two days until we got to Honiara, where the ship made a major impression; it was the largest ship that had docked in that harbor in a long time. It anchored right off the Mandana Hotel; it was just delightful. The sailors went ashore,

fixed up some playgrounds, re-roofed some buildings. They were welcome guests at the national day ceremonies. Everybody had a marvelous time and we atoned for our sins.

*Q: Any other comments you want to make about PNG and Solomon Islands?*

FELDMAN: There is one other matter that I should mention. Both the Papua New Guineans and the Solomon Islanders were inherently fond of the U.S.; they had fond memories of WWII. They regarded themselves as long time allies of the U.S. In fact, one of the reasons the Solomon Islanders were so upset by what our navy did was that they felt a very close relationship to the U.S.; they had, as I mentioned, preserved an impeccable and visible record of our battle for Solomons. Sometime veterans would come on sentimental journeys; they would be guided up to "Bloody Ridge," shown where the U.S. and Japanese forces had been, etc. The PNG regarded itself as well as having been a U.S. ally.

Part of the heritage of WWII was cargo cults. They were still very big even when I was in PNG. In most of the local religions in PNG, what ever existed in the physical world had been made by their ancestors in the spiritual world; their ancestors were viewed as very beneficent spirits who had sent the things in the material world - the fish, the coconut palms, the betle palms. All that was productive had been put on earth by the ancestors. But all of sudden, the Australians arrived on the scene, with all the goods contained in cargo crates that had never been seen before - everything from desks and chairs and table lamps to power and gas stations. It had all come by ship. There seemed no connection between the manufacturing of a car in a factory and the car that was off-loaded from the ship.

The first thought was that the Australian ancestors were far more powerful than the Papua New Guineans' ones. The PNGers thought that was a very unhappy conclusion, but one that had to be accepted. The next thought was that that was not the case; it was decided that the PNG ancestors were just as powerful as the Australians and that what was being off-loaded had in fact been made by the Papua New Guinean ancestors. The Australians were just powerful magicians who had found a way to divert the cargo to themselves. It had always been intended for the PNG, but had been diverted to Australia. That led to the thought that it was essential to find the magic spell that would allow the cargo to flow to PNG directly. There were a lot of shamans who would announce that they knew the magic formula. All the Papua New Guineans had to do was to pay the shaman and he would reveal the magic formula. Some didn't demand money; they just wanted obedience. That started the cargo cults.

There was another variety of cargo cults, which people watched what the Australians did and then emulated them. The Australians sat in offices, moving pieces of paper around on their desks and they barked instructions on telephones. Some shamans would therefore have their tribe build a desk and a chair and a wooden telephone and they would imitate the Australian office worker. None of their efforts however brought them the cargo. Then came WWII. That brought American ships to PNG; they also unloaded cargo. Some of the American crew members and troops were black. That complicated the challenge because it was not only white folk that had cargo, but blacks as well. That gave even greater impetus to finding out how PNG might get its own cargo.

There was a cult called John Frum that grew up after WWII. The Americans after the war had just abandoned all the things they had brought with them and left them in PNG. So the new cult focused on bringing the Americans back with their cargo, so that could also be given away. In New Hanover, another PNG island, the natives despaired of ever learning the formula - or ever getting it right. They decided that what was needed was an American magician. They sent a cable to the U.S. government sometime in the 1970s offering to buy Lyndon Johnson. They had collected \$10,000 and were prepared to pay that for LBJ so that he would come to PNG to make cargo. By the time, I got to PNG, there were only vestiges of these cults; they were dying out. Actually, the Papua New Guineans discovered a new way of getting the cargo. They filled out grant forms. They would get a grant from AID or the Peace Corps or the Australians, or the British or the Japanese and used it to buy a cargo. That was a sort of a cult; eventually the aid givers became a little more sophisticated and began to turn down some of the more imaginative schemes that the Papua New Guineans had dreamed up, which was essentially to get money which would then go for who knows what. By the time my wife arrived, "The Foundation for the People of the South Pacific" had chosen village women as their primary target group because they were least likely to just abscond with the grants. It was also a way of enhancing the women's status since finally they were able to own something in their own right - the pigs and chickens and the money they got from raising them.

I should add one thought, although this came to me from someone else and I cannot vouch for its accuracy. When the missionaries came to PNG at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, they began to translate the Bible into local languages. That was very difficult because there were not entirely satisfactory translations for many phrases. One in particular, I was told, was "beast of burden." The largest native animal found in PNG was a pig. That is hardly descriptive of "beast of burden." So the missionaries used the word "wife" to portray a "beast of burden." That tells you something about what the position of women had been in PNG.

*Q: Why did you leave Papua New Guinea?*

FELDMAN: The problem of being the American ambassador in PNG with a total staff of 9 Americans and 15 locals is that there was very little to do. It was pretty boring. My principal concern was keeping my staff sane and not going crazy from boredom. That was not easy. We had a tandem couple, the consular and administrative officer were wife and husband; he bought himself a broken down bi-plane that he began to fix. Years and years ago, when Art Hummel was in Burma, I asked him once what he did to while away his time. He said he had found an old Jaguar that he restored. In our case, the administrative officer went one better; he went to work on an old bi-plane. I think he enjoyed it; at least it gave him something to do.

The only interesting thing to do in PNG was to travel. I must have visited all the 19 provinces at least once and often more. Laurie, as I said, had a large travel budget and many times I just went along with her - on her budget, saving money for travel for the staff. One day, while back in the States on consultations, I was wondering around the halls of the Department and bumped into an old friend, Nick Platt. He was then the senior deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau for International Organizations (IO). He asked me whether I would like an interview with Jeane Kirkpatrick for a job on her UN staff. By this time, the Stone Age primitive and penis gourd in feathers had become rather stale. So I said to Nick that I would be happy to have the interview.

So the meeting was arranged and at the appointed time I presented myself at Ambassador Kirkpatrick's suite. Just as I was entering the suite, a woman came out of an inner office and addressed two or three young men standing there by saying :”No, no, no. I absolutely refuse. I will not wear this thing. Take it away!” Then she noticed me and asked: “Are you Ambassador Feldman?” I said, “Yes, ma’am.” She then turned to the men and said, “This ambassador has waited a long time to see me and I will see him now and I will not bother with this.” I was then ushered into the office where she asked me to take a seat.

She looked at me and said, “You are probably wondering what this is all about.” I nodded and she continued, “They have a bullet-proof raincoat that they want me to wear. It is very heavy and very uncomfortable. As you heard me, I will not wear it.” Then there was a long pause; I was wondering what I should say. Then she continued: “I guess I was pretty rough on them, wasn't I?” I admitted that she had come on a little strong. Then she asked me what I thought. I hemmed and hawed a little bit and then suggested that she just might want to try the coat or at least have them carry it behind her, so that if needed she could put it on immediately. So she then went to the door and said, ”Come back and I'll try on your damn raincoat!” As far as I know, she never wore it.

Jeane and I got along famously in the interview and she asked whether I wanted to go to work for her. I said that I would like that, but that I would be interested in knowing what job she had in mind. She said that there were two possibilities: one was in New York at the UN Mission as a sort of DCM and the other was in Washington to run her office there - since she was a cabinet officer she had her own office in Washington. I told her that I wasn't quite sure; the idea of being a DCM again after being an ambassador wasn't terribly appealing. What I didn't understand was that when Kirkpatrick referred to DCM she was talking about an ambassador in charge of running the Mission. I told her that I would prefer the job in Washington. She said she would try to work it out.

I should mention that during my interview I remembered that she just had recently fired Marshall Bremont, a former ambassador. I asked her what had happened. She told me not to worry about him; she would see to it that he got a very good job. I said that I really wasn't interested in her qualities of mercy, but that I didn't want to make the same mistake. She told me that he kept implying and occasionally saying, “Little lady, with my brains and your fame, we will go far!” That sounded exactly like Marshall.

I returned to PNG and about two or three months later I got a call from Personnel asking me whether I would accept the job of chief of Kirkpatrick's Washington office. I said I would. So a few months later we returned to Washington and I started that job. The job in New York went to Bill Sherman who had been the DCM in Tokyo. He was a great Foreign Service officer and one of the nicest people I had ever met.

I said my goodbyes to everyone in PNG. Laurie got very lucky. One day while we were still in PNG we received a phone call from someone who was staying at the local Travel-Lodge; it turned out to be I.M. Pei, the famous architect. He was there with Nicholas Salgo, a friend. The two of them had just returned from a trip on the Sepik River and were very ill - intestinal



problems. They asked whether I could recommend a doctor. There weren't really very many good doctors, but there was a WHO doctor who I thought would know something about such diseases. He was my secretary's boyfriend. She was an unusual person who could write with both hands. Occasionally she could even do that simultaneously. It was truly amazing to watch. So the WHO doctor dispensed the appropriate medicine to the two men and their spouses. Salgo gave me his calling card; he was at the time the chairman of the board of the Watergate Corporation. He had put that complex together. So Laurie and I got a junior suite at the Watergate Hotel when we came back. Furthermore, we were invited to a couple of events at the Watergate. At one of them, we met Sidney Dickstein, who was the lead partner at a major Washington law firm - Dickstein, Shapiro and Morin. He asked what we were going to do and I explained what my new job was going to be. Laurie said that she hoped to go to law school, but unfortunately the application period for Georgetown had closed. It would not accept her application. She added that a couple of years earlier she had been accepted by the Cornell Law School after getting some humongous score on the LSAT. Dickstein said that he happened to be on the board of directors of Georgetown and would see what could be done. A week or so later, Laurie was enrolled.

**MORTON R. DWORKEN, JR.**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Port Moresby (1983-1985)**

*Mr. Dworken was born in the District of Columbia and raised in Ohio. He was educated at Yale University and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Entering the Foreign Service in 1968, Mr. Dworken served abroad in Taipei, Saigon, Phoc Long, Vientiane, Athens, Port Moresby, Ankara, Canberra, Wellington and London. In several of these assignments he dealt with Political-Military Affairs. In his several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC, he also dealt primarily with Political-Military Affairs. Mr. Dworken also served on Capitol Hill as a Congressional Fellow. Mr. Dworken was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 2008.*

*Q: And who was the ambassador to Papua New Guinea when you went in 1983?*

DWORKEN: Virginia Schafer was the ambassador when I got there, and then there was a period of about five and one-half months after she left when I was chargé, and then the next ambassador was Paul Gardner. They were both career officers.

*Q: This was a pretty small embassy.*

DWORKEN: A tiny embassy. It was not an immensely significant country to the U.S.

*Q: DCM Papua New Guinea, a tiny embassy. Well, why don't you maybe talk a little about what if any interests or issues there were, what you did, and anything else that may be of interest in this context?*

DWORKEN: Well, I'll say right at the start that the New Guinea area, the South Pacific if you will, had a crucial importance to the United States during World War II. From the point of view of Australia and New Zealand, that is their neighborhood. Both countries were then close treaty allies, which meant that by extension there were U.S. national interests involved in the region. I learned that there were other U.S. interests as well, related to the region's plethora of natural resources, keeping the Soviets out, and keeping the mainland Chinese influence as low as possible plus our multilateral diplomacy interests.

But there was one thing I should say by way of introduction, which was that I had come out of an environment, including the year on Capitol Hill, where things related to Greece had formed a large and intense part of my working environment, for more than six years. In that environment, the United States was central to host-nation perceptions of what caused things to happen or not happen.

*Q: That might be the resolution of some of those issues.*

DWORKEN: Exactly. And lo and behold, in Port Moresby, that was not the case. As I quickly found out, it was the Australians, the former colonial power in Papua New Guinea, who were not only credited or blamed for every bad or good thing that went on, they were also by far the largest presence, both official and non-official. Their citizens were widely present there, with economic and social dealings and a full relationship. So when storms hit, it was the Australians' fault, not the Americans. It was a nice position to be in, except for one small point, which was that the Australians were a bit suspicious of the United States, thinking that we were trying in some ways to supplant them from their primary role. At least they thought that on occasions. But most of the time, it was a very cooperative relationship. The United States was not the first thought of every PNG citizen, and we had not committed any near-term sins to replace the warmer view of the United States that most Papua New Guineans had of us, based on the World War II experience. That, all in all, was a very good thing.

As I said, Port Moresby was a small embassy. It was situated in what was a relatively large and well-populated island, the eastern half of New Guinea island, unlike the rest of the South Pacific island nations that, for the most part, were much smaller and more spread out across the South Pacific. And the Port Moresby embassy was also accredited to the governments of Solomon Islands and Vanuatu (which was called New Hebrides before it became independent). Having no representation on either of those two island nations in their capital city, I was not only the DCM in the embassy in Papua New Guinea, I was also a frequent traveler to Solomon Islands and the highest ranking American official permitted by the Government of Vanuatu to visit there.

Vanuatu was a strange case. Port Vila, the capital, if you look back at the history, had both British and French colonial influence. These two strains formed what historians have called a condominium, but many thought it was more like a pandemonium, because they ended up having two of everything: two different foreign languages, two different legal systems, two different social traditions, two different ways of organizing police forces, two bodies of law -- it was a confusion in colonial times. As an independent country, they decided that the great powers were the evils of the earth, and so they wanted nothing to do with either. So both were kept at arm's

length, and there were no embassies from the United States or the Soviet Union allowed in those countries. Ambassadors from those two countries were not able to go there or to present credentials.

*Q: But if they were unable to present credentials, were they accredited?*

DWORKEN: No. But they had relations on a kind of ad hoc case-by-case basis with both countries and their embassies. So I, as a DCM, could go there and during the course of my two years in Moresby, I visited Vila I think maybe a half-dozen times, and the ambassador never went. After I left Port Moresby, things warmed up a bit, and I think Paul Gardner at some point late in his tenure was able to go.

*Q: And present credentials?*

DWORKEN: I'm not sure whether he ever presented credentials or whether that was his successor, but I think now it is much easier than it once was. Nonetheless, we still don't have an embassy there; it's just too small a country for that kind of things in these days.

*Q: What interests did we have when you were there on these half-dozen visits?*

DWORKEN: We were in a relationship-building mode, so we began to encourage exchanges sponsored by U.S. Information Service, and I think we might have had our first Fulbrighter ever from Vanuatu during my time. We also tried to do a little bit of military training mainly by our Coast Guard with their Coast Guard, not in Vanuatu itself, but by sending a couple of people to Hawaii and San Diego, if I recall. And there were annual meetings arranged under the Pacific Command. CINCPAC in Hawaii would bring together senior logistics officers from the armies or security forces of the many countries of the Asia-Pacific region, in one case, or management people in another, and sometimes commanders and deputy commanders. It was an outreach effort on the part of the military that we in the embassy thought was a good a way to try and provide a large umbrella under which people could get together or not as they saw fit. I think we worked very hard and finally got one representative from Vanuatu to go up to Hawaii for one of those annual meetings.

We focused in a like manner on Solomon Islands but in a somewhat more intensive way. I think Vanuatu had about 150,000 people and Solomons was about twice that number. The Solomons was more open to the outside world in trading relationships. We had a very positive and long relationship with Solomon Islands dating back to the battles at Bloody Ridge near Honiara and Guadalcanal during WWII. And there were American companies that were interested in exploiting the timber, mining, and fisheries resources there. I'll come back to fisheries; that was an issue of great dispute. And so under IMET we formulated the first security force training for them, Coast Guard as well, and some of the same exchanges, both military and USIS. That's essentially the rationale for those trips. I made many more trips to Solomons than I did to Vanuatu.

*Q: In the case of the Solomon Islands, the ambassador was accredited and did that periodically also?*

DWORKEN: He did. The combination of Ambassadorial and DCM visits was substantial for Solomon Islands. And in each case, whether it was the two of us alternating to the Solomons or yours truly going to Vanuatu, we called on the other half dozen or so embassy representatives that were resident and made the rounds of senior officials.

I never met with Walter Lini, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, although I tried. I got to see people in his office but never him; part of their arm's-length approach to the superpowers, I guess. But I did have time on occasion, although it was very difficult to arrange, with the foreign minister and police commissioner and the lot. In Solomons, it was a broader relationship, including both the government and opposition.

*Q: Talk about the logistics of that just for a minute. How would you actually arrange appointments on Vanuatu or Solomons for that matter, since you didn't have anybody resident? Would just have to call up the office and say: I'm the American deputy chief of mission and can I come see you next week?*

DWORKEN: You raise an interesting point. This is almost going to sound like it is almost out of the Stone Age. Phones didn't work very well and phone calls were really a problem; they didn't fit with the island culture at all, and there weren't that many of them. But they did have commercial telex machines. So we sent a lot of telexes back and forth. In fact, we delivered talking points by telex. That meant totally redoing whatever had come in from Washington, retyping it, even though we had the beginnings of the Wang word processors and we were getting things by some limited form of email. And of course, with the different formats, it all had to be looked at before it was sent commercially. We had a commercial telex in the embassy so we could do that sort of thing, but I can remember that we usually did not get acknowledgements; you might hear that a message had been seen, but you might never get an answer.

And it became very difficult when you had operational kinds of things, like a trainee who needed to have a certain packet of information and to do certain things in order to get travel orders and the ticket to go to San Diego. Things had to be done weeks and weeks in advance. It was very cumbersome. And appointments were obtained by formal diplomatic notes via telex. Each and every appointment had to be specified; if you didn't specify it, you couldn't ad hoc it after you got there. They were developing countries, and they emphasized formality in ways that surprised us, so we had to adapt.

*Q: Both members of the United Nations?*

DWORKEN: Yes. And therein lay another of America's important interests in the area. They were friends; they were fundamentally friendly with the external power, the Pacific neighbor to the north, and also with Australia and New Zealand.

*Q: The Pacific power to the north?*

DWORKEN: Meaning us, sorry; to the northeast I guess.

*Q: I was wondering if you meant Japan.*

DWORKEN: No. But the South Pacific was a ground for competition, if you will, by other outside powers. And there were a lot of UN General Assembly votes to be had down there. I was dismayed that we didn't have our flag planted in more places and that there seemed to be a constant pressure to have even fewer of our flags there, rather than to expand and have a consular office in Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands, or to endeavor to find some way to have a presence in Vanuatu. Proposals we made to that effect were always blocked in Washington.

*Q: For cost reasons?*

DWORKEN: It was always a cost-benefit judgment that they were not of much benefit and could easily be covered from Port Moresby. Well, it was physically difficult to cover them from Port Moresby, and a physical presence on the ground would have been worth much. I have an incident that I can talk about later, concerning Solomon Islands and the fisheries issue, that makes that clear.

But when I say an area for competition, I mean that this was also a time when China and Taiwan were arguing over who should have relationships. China was seated in the UN, but Taiwan was active diplomatically. The Republic of China, as it was called, acted not only diplomatically but economically throughout the region, as it has been and still is in other parts of the world. It sought diplomatic and economic relations to the exclusion of the mainland Chinese. And the PRC reciprocated, so there was a little contest. We had a stake in the outcome of that, and so did the Soviet Union. In addition, for a number of powers, including regional ones, the South Pacific was a good place for intelligence collection so, for example, there were trawlers from the Soviet Union. There were also international economic concerns, such as the exploitation of various minerals, gold, copper, oil and gas, hardwood timber, and fisheries. There were fishing fleets from Japan, Taiwan, China, the Soviet Union, and America.

*Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about fisheries and the issue you mentioned that came up while you were there?*

DWORKEN: It was a longstanding issue, one that Ambassador Virginia Shafer actually had kept pretty much to herself as her portfolio. It related to fisheries negotiations. It arose from a difference of interpretation of exclusive economic zones (EEZ) and the rules governing resources in and under the water.

From the point of view of all the South Pacific nations, including our allies Australia and New Zealand, the island nations themselves owned and controlled all the fisheries, all of the fish that swam in that extended zone beyond their territorial seas. That was not our view, and I don't think we're any closer to agreement on the underlying legal principle today. If the fish were what is called "highly migratory species" – I don't know why that term stayed in my head all these years – to wit, tuna, and they went from one zone to another in international waters over hundreds of miles of sea space, then the U.S. believed they were not the resource of any particular country.

So our American-flag fishing vessels could fish for those fish in international waters wherever they wanted, even inside an EEZ of another country, because it wasn't their territory, and we didn't have to ask permission. The idea that we would ever have to ask permission and pay a fishing license fee for each EEZ that this U.S.-flag fishing vessel went into was something Washington, mainly Congress, would not contemplate. There was an act of Congress (a) to lay out the view I just described and (b) to protect fishermen who might be caught, held, charged, or whatever by foreign countries that were illegally in our view claiming these rights. It was called the Fishermen's Protective Act, I think, that said fishermen acting under the legal view I just mentioned and fined would be recompensed by the U.S. Treasury for any monies they were charged or costs they incurred. Now, they paid a small percentage of their profits into a fund for that kind of reimbursement, but I don't think it ever covered the charges that were levied on it.

While I was Chargé, this issue exploded. It had not occurred in quite the same way before, although there'd been problems with PNG previously and Ambassador Shafer had helped negotiate our way out of that; but she had departed post, and I was Chargé, about to embark on one of my scheduled visits to Solomon Islands. As such, I had increased the level of the people I was calling on and included Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni, known privately by us and the Australians as 'Solo.' He was an erratic prime minister, to say the least, when he was sober and more erratic when he was not sober. He was in the latter condition many times, may he rest in peace.

In any event, an American-flagged fishing boat from the west coast of the U.S. named "Jeanette Diana" was spotted fishing inside the Solomon Islands EEZ by the lone Solomon Islands patrol boat. This Solomon Islands boat apparently warned the "Jeanette Diana" to leave or pay the required fishing fees, and the "Jeanette Diana" apparently went away but immediately came back and took up fishing again. It was doing quite well when the patrol boat arrested it and hauled it back to Honiara, the capital city. (Later, Australia formulated a program to provide patrol boats to the many South Pacific nations so they could better enforce rules in their EEZs, noticeably a different tack than the U.S. took.)

Well, this triggered a great crisis, because not only did it signal a major disagreement but it also meant according to U.S. law that all exports from Solomon Islands were automatically going to be embargoed as far as the U.S. was concerned. All well and good, I guess, since there wasn't a tremendous amount of trade, but it obviously would have had some impact. But it also meant that American Samoa, which had a cannery which was processing Solomon Islands fish, would be harmed as well. So not only was there a looming embargo that might easily cross over into foreign assistance, there also was an American crew that had been arrested, plus an American-flagged vessel and its catch that had been seized.

So there I was, about to embark on what was supposed to be an ordinary trip to pay my calls and suddenly, after informing the Department of these events, I was encumbered by Washington with instructions about what I should be telling the Solomon Islanders about the ramifications of what they had done. Moreover, I was to say that the easy way out of all this was for the Solomon Islands government to let the boat and crew sail on their way, while our two governments would continue to discuss our legal disagreements. That was the gist of my talking points.

*Q: And all of this you learned about from Washington because the crew of the fishing vessel couldn't have really communicated with Palm Beach or San Diego and then in turn Washington?*

DWORKEN: We heard pretty quickly also from the Australians in Honiara and their officials were informing Washington, too. All this was going on at the same time, but you are right, Washington gave us instructions as to what we should lay out for the Solomon Islanders. The how was left up to me and essentially, since I was already about to visit, I thought it best to deliver this distasteful message in person and not by telex, which would have been our normal approach to these kinds of things.

To get to Solomon Islands, you have to stop over night in a place called Kieta on the island of Bougainville, where a giant copper mine was located. Bougainville is a part of Papua New Guinea in what is called the North Solomons. (Arguably it should have been part of Solomon Islands at independence, since its people are different from PNGers, which has led to an independence movement, etc.) In any event, I asked through the Foreign Ministry for some additional appointments in Honiara that were specifically related to fishery issues, and then I set off on my trip. That night in the motel in Kieta, I got a series of phone calls from my friend, the Australian High Commissioner in Honiara, describing to me the situation there and how officials there were stoking themselves up with anti-American feeling.

*Q: For your arrival?*

DWORKEN: Yes. And he was able to learn -- in these island nations, they always seemed to have much better information than we did about what was truly in people's minds or about to happen -- that Police Commissioner Fred Soaki had been ordered by the prime minister to arrest me on arrival at the airport and not let me leave the airport building until he could put me on the next plane out. (I think there was only one plane a day out.) Fred, may he rest in peace, was one of my primary contacts whom I considered a friend, and we'd been working on training programs for months before then for some of his staff.

Well, this was something, needless to say, that the Chargé of the United States of America did not want to happen, and yet I thought it was important that I try to go on to Honiara, because all of this would be better discussed face to face. Yet this environment was getting worse by the hour. I didn't sleep much that night, given the seriousness of the situation and the time differences between the South Pacific and Washington. I spent a significant amount of time on the phone with my political officer in Moresby and through him and directly back to the State Department in Washington. My purpose was to discuss whether they wanted to change my instructions and how they wanted me to proceed.

It was our mutual judgment that it would be a mistake for me to continue on. Initially, I wanted to proceed, but the last call I'd gotten from the Australian High Commissioner, shortly, before I could get on the morning plane to go to Honiara, made it very clear that Fred Soaki did not want to carry out what his prime minister had ordered him to do. He had told the Australians however that he would carry out those orders, and he hoped that would dissuade me from coming and compelling him to act. I just couldn't see how the U.S. Chargé could be in effect arrested or thrown out of the country; there was no good to come from that. So the conclusion was that I

should return to Port Moresby, which I did, and we immediately began negotiating for a consular officer to go over there.

*Q: To check on the condition of the crew?*

DWORKEN: Ostensibly for the protection and welfare of the American citizens. No politics, no threats, no embargos looming, no explanations, nothing about international law and all of that, just simply to care for the Americans who were being held. Now they were all held in a luxury hotel, and they were all fine, as we eventually found out. There really wasn't any concern on that score, but I just wanted to get someone there who could begin the dialog that I had hoped to begin myself to resolve the situation. But we had no one there.

It was a major negotiation to get a vice consul there, but we eventually did, a fellow named Peter Kaestner who is still in the Foreign Service, a consular officer and a bird watcher of great note, world acclaim. I think he's one of the top ten bird watchers in the world in terms of birds sighted and places visited. In any event, Peter was young, our only consular officer, and he was perfect for the job. And we eventually got the prime minister and his people to calm down enough to allow Peter to come over and begin to set up what turned out to be an office in Honiara. I think it's been closed, opened, and maybe closed again since then, but in any event, we got the crew out. We eventually got the ship and the net returned; this was a multi-million dollar vessel and the net itself was worth over a million dollars. The catch was confiscated, needless to say. That part the Solomon Islands government insisted on. There never was an embargo instituted, because the helpful work of the Australians and New Zealanders around the margins of this dispute, along with the rest of the South Pacific nations, created a requirement for us all to get together and talk over the situation. In the aftermath of this incident and in the context of the South Pacific Forum, a negotiation was begun which resulted in a regional fisheries agreement. U.S. fishermen agreed to pay fees to a multinational organization named the Forum Fisheries Agency for permission to fish in multiple EEZs so long as they adhered to regulations about size of catch and so on.

*Q: Okay, I think we should stop there and when we continue, we can go on to your next assignment.*

**PAUL F. GARDNER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1984-1986)**

*Ambassador Paul F. Gardner was born in Texas in 1930. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Madagascar, Laos, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Turkey, and an ambassadorship to New Guinea. Ambassador Gardner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: Then we come to the time that you were appointed as Ambassador to Papua New Guinea where you served from 1984-86. How did this appointment come about?*



GARDNER: I don't know. I think, quite frankly, that Paul Wolfowitz was looking for something for me to do. I had served him for three years and I guess he felt that he should do something for me. He looked around and Papua New Guinea was coming vacant. This is the way things happened really. You become an ambassador because somebody owes you something. You like to feel they chose you because of your great attributes in dealing with lesser developed countries and your knowledge of the area, but that isn't it. It is because you have been dealing with somebody and helping them and they feel that they should do something for you and the best thing you can do for a Foreign Service officer is to get him an ambassadorial assignment. So he managed to get me to Papua New Guinea and I was delighted.

*Q: When you went out what were American interests there?*

GARDNER: We were saying that we didn't have much interest there and we should leave it all to Australia, which made Papua New Guinea furious. I found that I was going to a country that was very unhappy with the United States. You thought you were going to a friendly country where there are really no problems. The other problem is, of course, that in the Law of the Sea...one of the Reagan things was not to sign the Law of the Sea and the Law of the Sea meant a great deal to these people. One of their resources was tuna and our tuna fishermen had just recently moved out there with their huge vessels and were taking all the tuna in that area.

I was also Ambassador to the Solomon Islands, with responsibilities for Vanuatu. The Solomon Islands had caught one of our tuna fish boats in their waters and because of our legislation we had to cut off all assistance to them...not that we were giving them much, but we made an issue of it because of our legislation against interfering with what we considered to be lawful fishing.

This infuriated the Solomon Islands and they didn't accept my credentials until quite late. I had been there for some time before they accepted me. I am certain that I am the only person who has gone to present his credentials and received a lecture from the head of state, in this case the Governor General, on how awful the United States was. We were called the bully of the Pacific. It was really very embarrassing. But it gave me something to wire back to Washington...that the Governor General had called my country a bully when he accepted my credentials.

Most of my efforts were in trying to get Washington focused on our relationship. The Pacific islanders were flirting with the Russians. This I used to the hilt, I must say, to try to get a change in our policy because the Russians were offering fishery agreements. Vanuatu entered into one and the others were thinking of it too, although they couldn't stand the Communists. They refused to ever accept a Communist embassy in Papua New Guinea. But suddenly they became interested when they got so furious with us.

*Q: What was the issue at that time with the Law of the Sea?*

GARDNER: They, of course, are archipelagos and we were fishing in archipelagic waters. Under the Law of the Sea you have to have an agreement to do so. Actually the Solomon Islands claimed, and they may be right, that we were fishing in their territorial waters, within 17 miles of

the coast. Certainly we were fishing in the archipelagic waters. So we had some basic problems on that. We said that we could fish without an agreement throughout the archipelago.

What saved us, quite frankly, and helped put our relationship on an even keel, was the Russians. The Russians were coming and we made the most of it. Vanuatu had invited them in and the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea were talking about it. It was all because they were furious that we wouldn't sign a fishery agreement.

The tuna lobby at that time was a very powerful lobby on the Hill. They had not only all of the California delegation, but we are a big tuna eating country so they had all the area which had tuna industries. All of these constituencies very strongly wanted us to fish anywhere we wanted to fish. We had just recently moved into their waters because other waters had been fished out. We had gotten these huge vessels that could go that far. They took an enormous amount of fish. This was an important resource of the islands. On our side, everyone listened to the tuna lobby and nobody else. Who had ever heard of Papua New Guinea or Solomon Islands, until they started flirting with the Russians.

This would have been less of a lever in the days of Carter, but in the days of Reagan this was a nice geopolitical lever. The government stood up to a some degree to the tuna industry. In fact, I think that was really the tuna lobby's downfall. Their stance on this issue was so strong and so weakly justified that I think they antagonized a lot of people and they have never been as powerful since. But my problem was getting along with the tuna industry because they had a man on our negotiating delegation. The head of the delegation appointed by Reagan had originally worked for one of the tuna companies in the United States. We really had them represented there. Nevertheless, they recognized where we were going and Reagan, I think, was very embarrassed about what was happening over this sort of thing. They were a bit disturbed by the tuna lobby carrying this so far. The tuna lobby was used to imposing its will on these other countries, so to speak. But the Pacific islanders don't like imposition of somebody else's will. They know how to do some fighting.

We did get an agreement, finally, before I left. We negotiated a fishery agreement and this really helped a great deal with our relationship. But up until that time, I want to tell you I was not a very popular person in either Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands. We hadn't had any of their leaders over to the White House. We had just expected Australia to handle our relationship there. Well, you can't do that. Another country can't handle your relationships, you have to handle them yourself. I think the Pacific islanders taught us this by flirting with the Russians. I guess we were just lucky that the Communist regime hadn't collapsed at that stage so that they could use it as a lever to get something that they should have had all along, which was a very reasonable agreement. This has allowed the relationship to progress quite evenly since that time.

*Q: What about the Japanese? They have always been a fishing power.*

GARDNER: They had an agreement. Everyone else had agreements, except us.

*Q: So we were odd man out.*

GARDNER: Yes. And the Australians gave us a great deal of trouble. The Australian Ambassador here gave a speech here that didn't go over very well with Shultz, I think. He lambasted our policy in the Pacific Islands when he gave a speech to the Asian Society. Australia was defending their fuzzy-wuzzy brothers against these awful Americans.

This was the corner we found ourselves in. Everyone was hammering on us. We finally saw the light.

One of the basic problems is that as a big nation we aren't geared to deal with small nations like this. We are going to have to learn. Our AID program, for example. They didn't want to have an AID program in Papua New Guinea because there was no way they could have a program unless they had an environment officer, an agricultural officer, a health officer, etc. So you could only set up an AID program if you had an AID mission, 20-30 officers at a minimum. This is the way they approached things. I tried to get some AID people to just come out for a visit. The AID Assistant Administrator was angry. He thought I was circumventing their "no AID program." He actually ordered our would-be AID visitors off the plane when they were about to take off for a visit to Papua New Guinea. This is the sort of problem we had. We were not geared up to deal with small nations in handling state visits, or AID programs.

Partly because of what happened in the Pacific islands, we came to realize we had some serious problems. Ship visits, for example. New Zealand, of course, had this thing about nuclear weapons. New Zealand would not receive our vessels unless we told them whether we had nuclear weapons on board. Our policy is to neither confirm nor deny. There are military reasons for this and I certainly agree with them and disagree with the New Zealand position. But, nevertheless, New Zealand were allies and they lost a great deal by this policy. But Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were not allies and were even more concerned about nuclear matters because they had been educated by Australian and New Zealand leftists, who have had a great influence on the education of the Pacific islanders. A lot of the expatriate staff members in the universities out there in Fiji and Papua New Guinea are leftists. The Pacific islanders were also worried about nuclear weapons because of what happened in Bikini next door to them. They felt that the Pacific is used as a testing ground. The French were testing out there. This was a big issue. This was the second issue...nuclear weapons after tuna.

The islanders were talking about denying our ships access to the islands. Well there are not many islands in the Pacific and if you start denying access to Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu islands, all of Melanesia, you are denying access to a large part of the Pacific. So this was a concern of our military. They were not going to change their "neither confirm nor deny" policy but they did feel that the tuna policy should be changed. So we had a little support from the military on the tuna policy.

In the long run, this worked out to some degree as well, because we did solve the tuna problem. Then we found that our military relationship was easier to work with. The Solomon Islanders who were the strongest opponents of the US military presence had a very bad cyclone and we were able to get the SeaBees out to do some reconstruction. So for the first time they received the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific out of Hawaii. They didn't want a ship visit, but they

received a plane visit with the Commander. It was a great success. Considering this was where Guadalcanal was, it was a very important symbolic gesture.

I am not saying that I had anything to do it, but the course of events were such that by the time I left the relationship with all three of the countries was much better than it was before, simply because our problems came to a head while I was there and Washington was smart enough to change its policy, at least as far as tuna was concerned. Eventually we got an AID mission--one man. So we have made some moves. We started learning how to deal with small countries. We have a presence there and are not just saying, "Well, this country is small and we'll leave it to somebody else." Do that and you are going to be in trouble.

*Q: How did you deal with the various governments, you personally?*

GARDNER: Well, you know Melanesians have a payback thing. When they are angry with you they show it by not receiving you. They were angry with me quite a bit so the Foreign Minister used to make strong public statements against the United States and refused to see me. This was a bit embarrassing, to say the least. Happily the Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, whom I have admiration and affection for, did receive me. So I was able to tell him a few things. They are not ones for standing on diplomacy. They show their anger in strong ways...usually through a press statement.

It is a small society. Papua New Guinea only has three million people and the capital city only 75,000, so you got to know the people and politicians there fairly well. The Solomon Islands has a population of around 250,000 and the capital city only 20,000, so you got to know everybody there pretty well. They are nice people, I enjoyed them. They are sometimes quite difficult and have a justified chip on their shoulders about the United States. We bullied them. They don't like to be bullied. They show it in their own way. But, it was fun. I enjoyed it very much.

I found their culture to be completely the opposite of the Indonesian culture next door. The Indonesians avoid conflict and confrontation. That is the last thing they want. The Melanesians love a good fight. If there isn't a conflict they will create one quite often. That was fascinating. I enjoyed that.

*Q: Were there any problems with the Indonesians when you were there?*

GARDNER: There have been basic problems there for a long time. They share a border. There is a Free Papua movement on the Indonesian side and they sought sanctuary on the Papua New Guinea side. The Indonesians and Papua New Guineans handled it very well. At one time there were 10,000 refugees on the Papua New Guinea side of the border that had come over because of the fighting between the OPM, the Free Papua Movement and the Indonesian military on the Indonesian side. The OPM forced refugees across the border in order to gain publicity. I think the Papua New Guineans began to realize that the OPM was taking advantage of them by spreading rumors that the Indonesian military were coming and the people had better cross the border. They could get publicity from the Australian press in this manner. Papua New Guineans don't like to be used and they didn't want OPM using them, even though they were Melanesians brothers. When the threatened to blow up Papua New Guinea's largest gold mine at Oktedi at one

stage, it was the last straw. There were some OPM sympathizers in Papua New Guinea, and there was fear of Indonesia, a very strong fear of this huge country that had actually taken over Irian Jaya by force. But both countries were working things out.

The Indonesians took great efforts in this regard. They invited Papua New Guinean government representatives to see what things were like on the other side of the border. They made some good moves, a good effort. The Papua New Guineans on the other hand were anxious to have a direct relationship with Indonesia and not go through Australia. They wanted to cut their apron string to the Australians. The Australians had their own problems with the Indonesians. So Papua New Guinea and Indonesia started working things out.

*Q: Did they use you at all as an expert on the side?*

GARDNER: No, and I am glad they didn't. I certainly didn't volunteer. I told some of the people one time that I thought they were doing the right thing, but I didn't volunteer any advice to any side. I knew both sides, but I wasn't going to get into it. They didn't want me in. They didn't want anyone in the middle. I just absorbed it and was so pleased at the way they handled it. They were sitting on a powder keg, quite frankly. And they knew it. They handled it quite well, I thought, and I was quite pleased.

*Q: You then came back. What did you do?*

GARDNER: My health wasn't too good. So I came back to write a book at the National Defense University. I was thinking about retiring. So I wrote the book and then retired.

*Q: What was the book?*

GARDNER: I was comparing Papua New Guinea's and Indonesia's adaptation to a market economy. It was the cultural side that interested me because they approached it from completely different angles. They were culturally opposite when it comes to competition. Their attitude to competition and towards cooperation is just about as far apart as you can get. So I wanted to compare it. And yet they started off with economic endowments that were very similar. They both have a good deal of mineral wealth, their tropical sun, etc. The big variant was culture and I wanted to show how they approach these problems from completely different angles and what their successes and disappointments were. But mostly I was patting them on the back.

**ROBERT PRINGLE**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Port Moresby (1985-1987)**

*Ambassador Robert Pringle was born in New York City in 1936 and was raised in Washington, DC. He graduated from Harvard University and served in the U.S. Army before joining the Foreign Service in 1967. His overseas assignments*

*include the Philippines, Burkina Faso, Papua New Guinea and South Africa. Ambassador Pringles was interviewed by Kenneth L. Brown in 2015.*

*Q: You moved to Papua New Guinea as the deputy chief of mission in September, 1985. What was the situation there when you arrived?*

PRINGLE: Before I answer your question, let me observe that no one in diplomatic history has made a more bizarre transition than from Ouagadougou to Port Moresby.

The situation there was normal, but the post was not and never will be. Embassy Port Moresby is accredited to three countries, Papua New Guinea, or PNG, with six and one-half million people, plus the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, with fewer than a million people between them as of this interview. Together they comprise most of "Melanesia," a vague ethno-linguistic category most notable for its mega-diversity, with about one-third of the world's total stock of languages (not dialects). There are a few more Melanesians in Fiji and New Caledonia, still a French territory, and in the western half of New Guinea, once Dutch, now a province of Indonesia.

One reason I wanted to go there is that I thought it might get me closer to an eventual move back into South East Asia. Wrong. The Papua New Guineans, incidentally, consider themselves to be "Pacific Islanders," not "Asians." Also it sounded totally fascinating. I was right about that.

I think it's safe to say that almost nobody in the U.S. government cared a fig about Papua New Guinea except for CINCPAC, the Commander -in chief- Pacific. This was the US Navy's backyard and had been ever since World War II.

*Q: How big was the embassy?*

PRINGLE: Very small, smaller than anything where I served in Africa. We had only eight Americans to cover our three countries, which while small in size were huge in area (counting maritime economic zones) with big problems. We had no AID (Agency for International Development) mission there, which was tragic -- you can't be relevant in an acutely underdeveloped country without an aid program. But it was understandable given the size of the Australian aid program (larger per number of recipients than our aid to Israel).

A real USAID program was inaugurated after I left, but soon pulled back. We had some regional USAID projects administered from Fiji - but they were derisory, given our regional interests in the Pacific. We also had a tiny IMET ((International Military Education and Training) program, totally dwarfed by the Australian effort but better than nothing.

We depended heavily on US Embassy Canberra for administrative support. It was not a happy arrangement. All our paperwork took inordinate amounts of time to be processed. I decided, based on my African experience, that EAP - the Asia and Pacific Bureau -- had no idea how to manage small hardship posts

*Q: Did you have Peace Corps?*

PRINGLE: We did have Peace Corps and it had been very successful, but the director when I was there became so alarmed by the crime problem that he decided to terminate the PNG program. Part of his reasoning derived, I am sure, from the fact that he lived with his family in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Port Moresby. Most of the volunteers lived in much less dangerous rural areas.

Until the time that we departed there had been exactly one case of a Peace Corps volunteer suffering a criminal attack in more than three years. He was on a bus that got stopped and robbed. The thieves didn't hurt him. But the director just didn't like the whole scene, and you can't really blame him.

*Q: How was the arrangement between you and the ambassador? Were you his alter ego? Did he let you run manage the embassy? How did it work?*

PRINGLE: My ambassador, Paul Gardner, in addition to being a good personal friend, was a very experienced Foreign Service officer, a professional in every aspect of his job. So we could cut up the pie. The one thing I didn't like was administering the IMET program, which involved a huge amount of paperwork for a handful of trainees yearly. I didn't think it was appropriate for the DCM to be doing it. My predecessor had been a political-military specialist and he liked the IMET work, probably better than anything else. I found someone else to do it, and that freed me up for more important, policy-related issues, including PNG's relations with its neighbors, the very real challenges to good government, the extraordinary natural wealth of the country, and of course our other two countries.

The Australians saw PNG as one of the bigger headaches they had inherited from the British. New Guinea had initially been divided three ways: the western half, bordering the Dutch East Indies, going to the Dutch (it is now part of Indonesia); the south-eastern quarter, abutting Australia, to the British, and the north-eastern quarter to the Germans, who had missed out on the earlier phases of the western imperial scramble. Then, after World War I, the Germans lost their bit to the British, who gave it to the Australians to administer, leaving behind a scattering of German names like "Finschhaven" on the land.

At the time I arrived there was still a lot of buzz in the air about a separatist movement in the Indonesian part of New Guinea, which might or might not set off a pan-New Guinea rebellion. It was something that the Australian intellectual elite liked to fuss about. There was some localized trouble along the border, but it was minor.

I soon realized that the Papua New Guineans were simply not interested in making common cause with the Indonesian separatists. They were largely ignorant of it, and totally self-centered, due to a combination of *extreme* ethnic fragmentation and almost pure democracy. In some provinces there were hundreds of people on the ballot papers at election time. There was no doubt about the genuineness of their democracy, which had been carefully nurtured by the Australians, but it resulted in almost complete chaos politically, and that continues to this day.

*Q: The ballot was respected though?*

PRINGLE: On the whole the elections were free and fair and nobody claimed otherwise. The problem was that the country was verging on being ungovernable, especially with regard to more coherent utilization of their resources.

*Q: Mining?*

PRINGLE: It was important and growing, including gold, copper, and some oil development, both on and off shore. But logging was even more lucrative, and a greater environmental challenge.

*Q: Were there American companies that were interested in the mining?*

PRINGLE: Yes, but the Australians were well ahead of us in that department. There was only a very small resident American business community in PNG. They were far outnumbered by missionaries.

One astonishing US presence, and among the largest, was and still is the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), an offshoot the Wycliffe Bible Society established in the 1930s. They originally had summer programs in Mexico, hence the name. Their goal is to translate the Bible, at least part of it, into every language in the world, so for them PNG is big business. At the time we were there they had worked on 175 of PNG's roughly 700 languages, completed 45 Bible translations (some of them only the New Testament and Psalms), and were employing roughly 700 professional staff, half of them Americans, with translation teams at work in more than 100 locations.

We visited SIL's headquarters, at Ukarumpa, in the Eastern Highlands. It had primary and secondary schools for SIL dependents, a sophisticated computer capability (in 1985!) which had cut in half the time required to translate the Bible, a printing plant, and a fleet of four fixed-wing aircraft plus a helicopter used to transport translators to their field locations.

The Australians were convinced it was a CIA base -- What else could it possibly be? Indeed SIL probably had played that role for a while, in Vietnam, so there was some grounds for suspicion, but they certainly were not doing so in PNG. But I gave up trying to talk the Australians out of it. In a way it made us more important in their eyes.

*Q: So did we sort of look to the Australians to take the lead on issues that might affect us maybe marginally? Remember in Africa we used to say, "OK, well don't get out ahead of the French, don't get out ahead of the English, the former colonial powers." Is that the way we looked at the Australians in Papua New Guinea?*

PRINGLE: Indeed it was. There was a curious role reversal: they were the superpower, we were the peripheral ally -- although never, I should stress, forgotten for our role in World War II. Getting to an aspect of this that was really important, we had no PX or anything like it, but the Australians let us use their copious "liquor locker," no red tape involved.



We could have disappeared for a quite a while without our absence being noticed back home, except for CINCPAC, God bless him. He knew there had been a great war here once and that one might come again. (The way the Chinese have been behaving in the South China Sea lately this no longer seems fantastic.) CINCPAC did oceans first and foremost, but in his role as regional commander he also made sure we got, for example, overflight rights for B-52s flying between Australia and points north. A person, not just a title, he would arrive in his big four-engined plane, with a flag that popped up from its nose as it taxied up to the terminal, and a sailor with a satellite phone, then almost the stuff of science fiction, who followed him everywhere on his calls.

Early in our stay we were visited by a Seventh Fleet provisioning ship, making its rounds, with inter alia 70,000 dozen eggs destined for hungry sailors. "If we ever get hit by a torpedo, we'll be the world's biggest omelet," its captain joked.

Embassy staff were allowed to buy groceries from it but they had to be in lots of at least fifty pounds. I had trouble selecting things we could use, and finally opted for a case of canned whole chickens. US Navy chickens must be OK, I thought. But when Barbara arrived -- she joined me late due to our children's school commitments -- we rapidly discovered they were tough and stringy, almost to the point of inedibility.

Of course this kind of material affluence was, from a PNG perspective, the quintessential driver of "cargo cults," the idea that the incredible amounts of evanescent "cargo" that we had brought in during the war could be summoned back by religious means. There was a well-publicized Lyndon Johnson cargo cult on New Hanover Island that was still alive when we were there. Their idea was that if they could invoke this great Lord of Cargo by incantation, he could help them in ways that their own pitiful government clearly could not. Well, it was better than insurrection.

*Q: What about common crime? One hears a lot about, or used to hear a lot about common crime in Papua New Guinea.*

PRINGLE: As I mentioned earlier, crime was indeed a big issue. When I was about to leave for Port Moresby Ambassador Gardner called me and asked if I had any second thoughts about coming. His secretary had just gone home because of the crime problem. It turned that it was also because her husband, a retired Massachusetts State Trooper, couldn't find a job - which seemed weird on the face of it. Anyway, knowing that Paul was inclined to be a bit nervous about everything, we did not change our plans and are glad that we didn't.

Outside PNG it was widely assumed that the crime problem was caused by savages with bones in their noses, which was not true. In Port Moresby, where it was most acute, the criminals were mainly second-generation residents some of whom lived in low-income government housing. They specialized in break-ins, assaults and gang rapes. The latter especially made foreigners shudder. They were known as "rascals," a good pidgin English term adopted into Australian slang.

The crime problem had been studied to death, and I added another fat paper to the pile already on Embassy shelves. The causes were complex: a tradition of violence, rooted in tribal warfare, great sensitivity to "foreigners" intruding on your land, or water if you were coastal - most tribal wars began with land disputes -- and, no doubt the most virulent cause, detribalization and its ugly step-children, alcoholism and anomie. I knew a little about this kind of thing from my American Indian exposure. We had security guards, of course, but no one trusted them, with reason.

We lived on top of a big hill, Touaguba Hill. It had magnificent vistas, the best of any place we have ever lived-- out over the Coral Sea to the west, and the forested interior to the east. We could hear birds of paradise calling from the distant forest - admittedly a rather common species, Count Raggi's Bird of Paradise -- and beyond them, the "ranges" stretched into the roadless interior. You couldn't go anywhere important from Moresby by road. Back on earth, we were a five-minute drive from my office.

Peering over the northern edge of our swimming pool terrace we looked down on a large village on stilts, Hanuabada, which predated colonial rule. These people once lived by trading their pottery for sago, grown by different ethnic groups living in the Gulf of Papua. They sailed there in sail-powered outrigger canoes, modern versions of which they still race on holidays (each boat sponsored by a local car agency or bank). But the people were not always welcoming and we were advised not to enter Hanuabada without a resident escort -- and we never did, although we traveled widely elsewhere throughout the country.

The bottom line was that you had to know where you were going and what the local risk factor was. We went all over the place, much as we had done elsewhere. We discovered that Air Niugini carries scuba tanks for nothing and is very good at packaging souvenir shields and statuary.

We had a wonderful time visiting the great Sepik River, as did our kids, who went by themselves, although our son Jamie, by this time a student at Dartmouth, did catch malaria. It was not a bad case and the good doctors at the Dartmouth teaching hospital believed him, on his return in January, where he had been and what it probably was, and treated it correctly. However, a month or two later, our Public Affairs Officer, Mike Anderson, was robbed in the Sepik, and later in on the same trip, robbed again in the Highlands.

Port Moresby was very difficult for people with teenage children and we were very careful with ours when they came out on school vacations, a mere thirty hours of flying time via Sydney from the U.S. east coast, but paid for by Uncle Sam.

In Moresby, it mattered that right next to us was the house of Colonel John Robbins, head of the Australian military mission. We shared a common wall. I remember thinking, in my nervous first days before Barbara arrived, "Well, if the 'rascals' attack, it should help to have the head of PNG's military program next door, because CINCPAC isn't going to send the Seventh Fleet to rescue me, but I can always climb over that wall into John's garden." Needless to say we became good and lasting friends with John and his wife Jenny. She was a talented artist and one of our paintings, of the view from both our houses, hangs in our bedroom

*Q: What about in the hinterland? Was it much safer back there? What would be the consequences if you did go in without being invited?*

PRINGLE: Again, there was some risk, but less than in Moresby. We simply never traveled without guides or good information. Some places, especially away from the Highlands, you knew you were perfectly safe. The wonderful islands off the north coast, and southeastwards along the tail of New Guinea, were quite safe.

*Q: What about villages out in the hinterland? Did you go out and see a National Geographic special at large?*

PRINGLE: A lot of the tradition was alive and well, in many places, but especially in the Highlands. This elevated plateau which runs along the spine of New Guinea was not seen by the Australians until they -- gold prospectors in this case -- arrived by small plane in the 1930s and made "First Contact," as it is called. They recorded the event in a famous documentary film, in which an Australian, standing in front his airplane, shoots a pig to demonstrate his power. There turned out to be more than a million people living there (not counting the Dutch side), many more than anyone had imagined. Today the PNG Highlands have large-scale mining, a lot of coffee growing, all small holder, and several towns linked by a modern highway.

Two of the towns, Goroka and Mt. Hagen, alternate putting on the annual Highland Show. It was originated by government, then encouraged by missionaries who hoped that friendly competition by dancers would discourage more lethal activities. Today dozens of groups participate. The shows were (and hopefully still are) absolutely spectacular. One of our favorite events demonstrated how a tribal fight began in a quarrel over land. The actors end up banging each other with small logs with what certainly seemed like lethal force.

The shows have been good for tourism but have never eliminated real tribal fights. We once stayed in Southern Highlands Province at a fancy new hotel, the Ambua Lodge. We saw smoke going up in the valley below and asked what it was. "Oh," said the lodge manager, "just a tribal fight." Later, down in the valley, we saw enormous trenches being built by villagers for use in such fighting, whether for offense or defense or both we never figured out. If the fights got bad enough, the government would fly in the police field force, which would impartially burn down the houses of both sides.

There is a good story about this. After World War II, the Australians brought in skilled doctors, MDs who had been displaced from Europe but could not find jobs in Australia itself because they weren't credentialed there. They would go on patrol with the district officers, treating the villagers. One result was an amazingly high standard of health care for such remote areas. And since the warring parties in a tribal fight would often wag their posteriors at the enemy, to display derision and bravery, it resulted in the world's most authoritative medical literature on the treatment of arrow wounds in the buttocks.

But tribal fighting, despite its ritual, quasi-NFL aspects, was no laughing matter and hugely expensive to all concerned. It has become more lethal as people have started to use firearms,

whereas until recently only traditional arms were allowed. It has no doubt contributed to the more general pattern of violence. Regarding the NFL aspects: among the Dani people on the Indonesian side, a fight would end when someone was injured, maybe by an arrow in the posterior. Everyone would pick up their weapons and go home. How civilized, I always thought.

This heritage of violence was linked not only with crime but also with binge drinking, another big problem, not least for the diplomatic corps. We learned early on that when entertaining you had to be wary of your guests drinking too much and getting into fights with each other, either in your house or going home. In a party at the Japanese Residence early in our stay we were amazed at how quickly the bar just vanished. The Ambassador's wife, a very correct lady indeed, explained to Barbara in somewhat embarrassed tones that while such a thing was not a normal part of diplomatic etiquette, "in Papua New Guinea, you *have* to close the bar."

During my tour, a talented young Highlander was named PNG's Ambassador to the U.S. It was the first time that anyone from that long-isolated region had achieved such an important assignment. He was a charming person, and we were all happy for him, but it ended in tragedy when, coming back intoxicated from a Washington diplomatic event, he hit a car driven by a journalist and killed him. It resulted in lurid publicity and his recall in disgrace.

*Q: Was there still headhunting going on, or was that a thing of the past?*

PRINGLE: There was endless war but very little if any headhunting, unlike in Sarawak. There was also very little cannibalism, unlike in Vanuatu, one of our other Melanesian countries. One important exception was the existence of ritual cannibalism in an exceptionally remote area. It led to a disease of the brain, *kuru*, and was studied by an extraordinary character, Dr. Carleton Gajdusek, pronounced "guide a check." His research led to the discovery of the retrovirus, and won him a Nobel Prize.

I had first heard about Gajdusek while in Jakarta. Unlike almost anyone else, he worked on both sides of New Guinea, and loved coming in to chat with us, especially with our statuesque blonde consular officer, Harriet Isom, about his latest experiences there. He was, among other things, an expert on New Guinea languages, and had recommended locating the SIL headquarters, mentioned earlier, at Ukarumpa, because it was at the intersection of several important linguistic regions.

We all thought he was amazing but more than slightly nuts. With his Nobel Prize he certainly had the last laugh, although he was, years after that, disgracefully enough, jailed after pleading guilty to child molestation in the DC area in 1997. His is a long story. There is a good Wikipedia entry on him.

*Q: Was there any aftermath of the Rockefeller case that affected you when you were there?*

PRINGLE: No, although it affected me, in a minor way, in Indonesia in the early 1970's. His demise, whatever caused it, came on the West Irian - Indonesian side. People kept coming to our Jakarta Embassy offering to give us his remains if the Rockefellers paid enough. We were instructed to throw these people out, and we did. The people in the area where he vanished were

indeed headhunters, but I am fairly certain that no one knows what happened. The weight of informed opinion is that it was probably an accident at sea, traveling in a local canoe in stormy weather.

*Q: Did we have any other major interests or issues?*

PRINGLE: The big one was a dispute over tuna fishing. Our tuna boats had recently started fishing in the Western Pacific as areas closer to home were fished out or the tuna swam elsewhere. Many of our boats were ultra modern vessels with on-board helicopters owned by recent immigrants from Yugoslavia. The price of tuna had been declining, and the owners were having trouble paying off their boat loans. The U.S. had not (and never has) signed the international Convention on Law of the Sea, concluded in 1982.

With regard to tuna, we went our own way. Everyone else in the world agreed that countries could regulate fishing within their 200-mile Extended Economic Zones (EEZs), endorsed by the new Convention. Only the U.S. argued that since tuna were "highly migratory" fish, hence international by nature, they could be caught anywhere up to the old twelve-mile limit. This made huge a difference in the Pacific, where small archipelago countries with tiny populations had EEZs which, when you connected the island perimeters, covered vast areas.

Along comes the Magnuson (or Magnuson-Stevens) Act, I forget when. Senator Magnuson represented Washington State and was a determined advocate of US fishing rights. According to his law, we could fish within the EEZs, and anyone who tried to stop us by seizing a U.S. flagged boat could be slapped with trade sanctions, an act just short of war. Not only that, the U.S. Government had to compensate the boat owner thus mistreated by paying him for the loss of his very expensive vessel, for which he was often up to his neck in debt and maybe not entirely sad to be relieved of. In other words, some boat owners had an incentive to get in trouble.

No one else was on our side. The Australian and New Zealand press pounded us. We were becoming the Big Bad Bullies of the Western Pacific. And then a patrol boat of the Solomon Islands, one of our three countries, seized the *Jeannette Diana*, one of the ultra-modern, helicopter- equipped ones, and forced it into Honiara, hitherto better known as the site of the Battle of Guadalcanal in World War II.

That was where things stood when I arrived in Port Moresby in late 1984. Since we had no resident staff in Honiara, Ambassador Gardener sent our consular officer there to calm down the Solomon Island government and make sure nothing bad happened to *Jeannette Diana*. Eventually this turned into a more permanent presence.

The ruckus dragged on for weeks and months, but eventually the tuna canning magnates, from companies like StarKist and Bumble Bee, came to our rescue. They, unlike the boat owners, understood and cared that we might be shut out of tuna fishing in the Western Pacific. A dramatic change of policy ensued. The boat owners were no longer heard from. The canners agreed to respect the EEZs of small countries like Solomon Islands. The canners even lobbied for and got some international aid, including from us, to help start-up tuna fishing companies in such places.

A new treaty encompassing these changes was completed and signed with all due ceremony in Port Moresby. Bewigged highland warriors stood behind the delegates as they initialed it, and we all got Charlie Tuna watches from the canners' reps. The neatest part of it all was that since treaties trump domestic law -- this is in the US Constitution -- the offending portions of the Magnuson Act simply vanished.

*Q: What about Barbara?*

PRINGLE: After a few months she got a job teaching at Port Moresby International High School (PMIH). Although it followed a Queensland (Australian) curriculum the teachers were all recruited in the UK, because they were cheaper than Australians! If you concluded that the school had to be less than excellent, you would be correct, and we were glad that our kids were attending boarding schools in the US. They got to come out and see us at vacations, an adventure in itself.

The next weirdness about our experience with PMIH was that it hired Barbara to teach Papua New Guinea Prehistory, of all things. To do so, she had to take a course in that esoteric subject at the University of Papua New Guinea. The university was respectable academically, but the location was in a notoriously crime-prone neighborhood.

One of her professors was a world authority on this subject, a Britisher then living in New Zealand. At one point he invited her to come with him on a trip to look for prehistoric stone axes. Some of them were as much as 40,000 years old, and they were important because they were linked to one of the earliest examples of a kind of proto-agriculture. It consisted of cutting back the edge of the forest to allow more sun, which made it possible to cultivate edible crops.

The place to find them was the Huon Peninsula, on the north coast. It had been uplifted over the eons, exposing a series of fossil coral reefs, which looked terraces. What you did was to walk down a stream channel cutting through the terraces, and look for the trade-mark "waisted" shape, where a groove went around the oval stone to allow it to be hafted to its handle. And Barbara was to the one who saw one, not her professor. That was a kick, although she had to give it to the National Museum when we left, even though they had drawers full of them. We did get to take pictures of it first. Barbara got new insights into the complex local community, and a new subject to teach occasionally back home.

*Q: Were there other bilateral issues that you had to deal with, other than occasional support in the UN -- or other issues that preoccupied you?*

PRINGLE: Not really, I was on my way to a job with OES (the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs) and I was interested in environmental policy, so I followed the relevant issues like logging, fisheries management and the nascent oil industry.

*Q: There's an article in today's paper about the recovery of the remains of a B-24 bomber crew who took off from New Guinea, lost, and then finally located and recovered. Did you have any cases like that when you were there?*

PRINGLE: We did indeed. There were more missing aircraft from the Fifth Air Force alone in and around New Guinea, about 350 of them, than the total number of U.S. aircraft lost and missing, with far more publicity, during the Vietnam War.

*Q: Really?*

PRINGLE: The Defense Department was eager to go after missing aircraft in Indochina, and had trained teams waiting in Hawaii to do it, but for years the Vietnamese would not let them in. So they began to sharpen their expertise by working in PNG.

The key player at our end was an extraordinary Australian named Bruce Hoy, who presided over an informal World War II Museum in a big Quonset hut near the airport, appropriately enough. He was a living encyclopedia of the war in New Guinea. He had copies of all the unit histories, and a network of friends in villages throughout the country who knew what he looking for.

So when they spotted some wreckage they would come in and tell him, "Hey, we think we've got something interesting." And Bruce would look through his files and unit histories to see if the wreckage matched something already accounted for. If not, it might be one of the missing airplanes. The next step would be to take a look on the ground and get some I.D., a tail number or something. If it looked promising he would contact Hawaii to see if they were interested.

The one we got involved in was a B-17E, tail number 41-2505. It had taken off from Port Moresby on April 17, 1942, from the same airport that is still the international airport today, still surrounded some of the revetments that once sheltered our B17s.

On the fatal morning, this one was on its way to bomb Rabaul, the big Japanese base on New Britain, which we never captured. At this time the Japanese were still bombing the Moresby airport almost daily, so the runway lights were not working.

The plane took off before dawn, loaded with bombs, gas and twelve crew members and immediately had engine trouble. But it couldn't abort the mission and land until the sun came up, because of the runway lights being out. As it circled around in the dark it clipped the top of the Owen Stanley Range, about nine thousand feet in elevation. Everyone on board was killed.

The crash site was soon observed, but our military thought it was another plane, a DC-3 whose crew had bailed out, and nothing was more done for over forty years. It was thought that this B17 must have crashed at sea. But some villagers came across the wreckage and told Hoy about it. He had a sixth sense about missing aircraft and got a patrol to go up and look, and they immediately identified it.

Hoy then notified Hawaii, and they sent a team over. The first step was to build a crude helipad so they could fly in the team. I was able to visit them there. The mountain forest at that altitude is sparse and spindly, nothing like the classic tropical forest of the lowlands. Fragments of the plane had rolled down the slope and a large piece of the fuselage was intact, most of it still with the paint on.

The tail number was clearly visible, with a machine gun poking out of the waist, belts of ammunition scattered around, and one 500-lb bomb on the mountainside nearby. The team had formed a kind of skirmish line on the steep slope and were going through leaf litter looking for human remains, especially teeth essential for identification in pre-DNA days. Most of the crew members were eventually identified and remains sent to next of kin for burial.

Our new consular officer, a genuine risk-taker, was with me, and he broke off a clip of .50 caliber bullets for a souvenir. Last I knew he was still using it for a paperweight at his State Department office.

*Q: Were there other interesting consular cases that took place during your time?*

PRINGLE: Nothing nearly as spectacular. I wrote an account of it of for *State Magazine*.

*Q: You were there for how long?*

PRINGLE: A little shy of two years, because then I got the Mali appointment.

*Q: So you were off as ambassador to Mali in 1987.*

PRINGLE: Late in 1987. It took a while to get confirmed.

*Q: Is there anything you want to add about Papua New Guinea before we move on to Mali?*

PRINGLE: I don't think so. It was a wonderful experience. I still think of that house on Touaguba Hill, with its incredible vistas, and the superb experiences we had traveling in one of the world's last, mostly unspoiled places, and scuba diving in the St. Moritz of that sport.

But I should say a word or two more about our two other countries, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Population-wise, they are both tiny -- even now (2015) they have fewer than one million people between them. Insignificant, you might think, until you realize that the Pacific is full of such countries. It is easy, if expensive, to get to their capital cities, Honiara (Solomon Islands) and Port Vila (Vanuatu). It is another thing to get to their more distant islands, and in fact we never got beyond a very few. Pretty much the only foreigners who do are those who travel by yacht, which translates into lots of money and time.

Like the rest of Melanesia, these are countries etched in American memories by World War II. If you know anything about the war, you know something about Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands. To the south, Vanuatu, and more specifically its biggest island, Espiritu Santo, was the staging ground for the Guadalcanal campaign. That's where Ezio Pinza had his plantation.

Guadalcanal itself, Solomon Island's biggest island, is where Mary Martin washed her hair, and Bloody Mary sang of Bali Hai, that Special Island. In fact, James Michener, whose *Tales of the*



*South Pacific* were the basis of the musical, lifted the name "Bali" from Indonesia, far from the actual setting of his story. My guess is that these names, fictitious and otherwise, will still be resonating in our memories a century and more from now.

I've already mentioned Solomon Islands' role in our tuna problem. Vanuatu, another island chain, once known as the New Hebrides, was by my time important mainly for having the only left-wing chief of state in the island world. His name was Walter Lini and he was a sometime Episcopal Priest. Father Lini sympathized with anti-French rebels on nearby New Caledonia, still under French rule today, and tried to get the Libyans to support them. He also talked about something called Melanesian Socialism.

All this bothered us, and Ambassador Gardner would not let me visit Vanuatu, as an expression of neglect. I was only able to do so when he was about to leave, and I had to make arrangements for a new Ambassador, Everett Bierman, to present his credentials.

We were dubious about Bierman at first. He was a political appointee, formerly Chief of Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for many years, and this was his reward from the Congress. But he was a kind and generous man, and also a devout Christian, and his wife even more so. Because of that, he was extremely popular with the large and influential Port Moresby Christian community and made many friends among them, going to church with them on Sundays when we were out scuba diving.

Back to Vanuatu -- During the era of colonization it ended up on the border between British and French spheres of influence in the Southwest Pacific. To settle a dispute over whom this island chain belonged to, the powers that were cut the baby in half -- maybe the word "Solomon" in Solomon Islands inspired that -- resulting in a French-English condominium, something straight out of opera bouffe. The two great powers divided up the top jobs and made sure their respective flags were hoisted to equal heights every morning.

In 1986 it was a great place to visit. The country's capital, Efate, had a wonderful museum of Melanesian art, managed by an American. Efforts were underway to preserve the country's pristine coral reefs, and it was becoming *the* place to go to see an unspoiled example of the real South Pacific. Air connections were terrible but I understand that this has since been fixed.

Vanuatu also had its own cargo cult, named after a deified American named John Frum. Independence had started with the so-called "Coconut War," inspired by some American loonies who wanted to set up an independent tax haven on Espiritu Santo. The Papua New Guineans had to send in troops to get it straightened out!

One of the kookiest dive sites I've ever experienced is the USS *President Coolidge*, a big liner converted to a troop ship, which sank at the entrance to Espiritu Santo Harbor in 1942. (All the troops on board got off safely.) Today you can swim around in the mammoth enlisted men's "head," with hundreds of white toilets cheek by jowl, so to speak, stretching into the underwater gloom. One could only imagine what this place much have looked, smelled and sounded like on a normal day at sea after breakfast.

**EVERETT E. BIERMAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1986-1989)**

*Ambassador Bierman was born and raised in Nebraska and was educated at Purdue University and American University in Washington, DC. After an early career in corporate public relations, in 1967 he joined the House of Representative Foreign Affairs Committee as Professional Staff Member and Staff Director for the minority in the House of the Republican Party. In 1986 he was appointed US Ambassador to Papua, New Guinea, where he served until 1989. Ambassador Bierman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

*Q: No, I don't think so. A good number of people don't. I mean they've been picked for other purposes.*

BIERMAN: But I think there were two or three things: one, as a political appointee, I'd paid my dues. I'd worked in the trenches supporting the cause. There were some, I think, who said, "Hey, we shouldn't appoint him because we need him where he is." Others said, "He's paid his dues." Other said, "Hey, he's qualified, so State Department won't balk," and they didn't. And I'd made a lot of friends over the years, both on the Hill and in the administration, and some people thought, "Hey, he'll do a good job, and he's earned it." So I got a call from the White House one day from Presidential Personnel saying, "Would you take an appointment?" First they talked about my going to Mauritius. It turned out State Department had a person they wanted there for that. You know, State and the White House decides these things jointly. I guess it's a trade, Smith for Jones sort of thing. And I got a call, "Would you be willing to go to Papua New Guinea?" And I said, "How long do I have to decide?" And they said, "An hour." So I quickly called my friends at State Department, and one of my staff is a former State Department officer, and his wife was in the bureau, and I asked her about the country, and she told me about the crime situation, and some of the problems there. I talked to my Foreign Service friend, whom I might as well say who it is, Phil Habib. And Phil said, "Everett, take it. There's a lot that needs to be done there, there's a great opportunity, and while you're out there say hello to Mr. Somare," the founder of the country. I talked to my political supporters, talked to my wife, and we decided to go, and it was a great experience. It was an absolutely fantastic experience where I used everything I've ever done in my life.

*Q: You were ambassador from 1986 to '89. How were you both personally and, as the system goes, prepared to go out there?*

BIERMAN: The desk at State was extremely helpful, of course, and they arranged a lot of briefings for me which helped to deal with the political, the economic, and those kinds of issues, and that's a big help. I also talked to a couple former ambassadors to the country who were back in the United States, and that was helpful. But basically my wife and I took the attitude that it was a new adventure, and that we were going to like it, and be successful at it. My view is that if you're anticipating problems, you're looking for problems, you're going to find them. You're

going to find things you don't like, it's automatic, if that's the attitude you take with you. We didn't take that attitude with us, and we had a wonderful experience, and we've just revisited there three weeks ago, and were warmly received by everyone.

*Q: Before you went out there, did somebody sit down and say, "These are American interests with this new country."*

BIERMAN: Yes, of course. The desk was particularly helpful in that area, the country director, the Pacific Islands director. These people were all extremely helpful in that. The bottom line of what I was told was this: the attitude there is that we treat them with benign neglect, that we no longer care, and it's your job to change it, and you don't have any money to do it with.

*Q: How about commercial interests? Were there many commercial interests with the country?*

BIERMAN: There are commercial interests there, and we worked hard to expand those. You've got AMACO there in a joint venture in copper mining, you've got Chevron there in an oil exploration. They found oil, they'll start producing it in 1992. My last week I spent most of it helping Mobil get in, get over the bureaucratic hurdles.

*Q: To look for oil?*

BIERMAN: Phillips Petroleum is there. There's gold mining, gold has been found. There's a Canadian company, Placer involved, American manager. There's an American company, Battle Mountain Gold that's involved. It's an interesting country in that it's a rich but poor country in many respects. There are a lot of resources needing to be developed, but an awful lot of people don't have very much. A large part of the country is really not in the cash economy. They produce some of the best coffee in the world, and I'd like to help find a market for some of it. It's grown in the highlands, it's superb. It has a democratic government, a parliamentary system, which encourages investment, and you can take your profits out. But it's a country with a lot of problems too. You've got an insurrection in Bougainville where the copper mine there, Bougainville Copper, is closed down. It's a complicated matter but some of the people there want to secede, others don't.

*Q: Bougainville is part of Papua New Guinea?*

BIERMAN: Yes. It's a part of what they call the North Solomons. These people are very much related to those on the Solomon Islands, but somebody somewhere drew a line, and they are a province of Papua New Guinea and they have members in parliament, and so forth. But right now things are pretty much at a standstill. There aren't many government services there. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army, they call themselves, it's a potent force. They're trying to negotiate a settlement. All these things will, I think, take time.

*Q: Well, when you arrived--in the first place is it hard to get there?*

BIERMAN: It was hard to get there then because you had to fly to Australia, and then back from there to Papua New Guinea. One thing that I'm proud that we were able to do in my first year

was get an American airline in, and Continental Airlines flies in from its hub at Wong(?). So now you can fly from Port Moresby, the capital city, to Guam, to Hawaii.

*Q: I wonder if you could describe a bit the staff there, and what it did? Where were you actually located, and how was the embassy set up?*

BIERMAN: The chancery is a very decrepit building, referred to by one official of State Department as a dog. But, while I was there, we housed some very good American officers. It had a very small staff which I was able to strengthen with cooperation from the Department of State. When I arrived we did not have a political-military officer. One had been approved but there wasn't an officer. So I used my list of names and called Bill Swing, who is now ambassador in South Africa I think. Bill was in personnel then, and he found, looking at his computer, that it had been entered wrong. We had a man in Honiara, but he was attached to our embassy because he had to be attached to somebody. He was listed as a political officer so they thought we had one. We got that straightened out and got one, he performed the role of political- military officer really at that time. We had an econ-commercial officer, State, it was a tandem couple at that time, his wife was the GSO...

*Q: General Services Officer.*

BIERMAN: ...General Services Officer, and also handled visas, consular affairs, that sort of thing, a joint activity. I soon found that my econ-commercial officer, an extremely able man, was often times behind on his work and I found out the reason was that, since we didn't have an AID (Agency for International Development) mission there (the AID mission for the region was in Suva, a smaller location, but perhaps a nicer one to live), that we had no one working for AID and he did he did a lot of the advance--gofer type work--for them. So I notified AID that we really had to make a change in that approach because he wasn't able to get out his work. They sent out a team and looked at it, and they agreed that we definitely needed an office there. So we now have a branch office of AID in Port Moresby, with a superb officer and a small staff, which means, number one, we have a more effective AID program, and it's the biggest AID program in that region. So there should be an officer there. They are doing a lot of work in medical, maternal and child care, malaria testing, things like that, and private sector work. Also, our econ-commercial officer can now do a full-time job of encouraging investment and trade. We also have added a Defense Attaché. While I was there we started, at the request of the government there, a small military relationship in which we brought in a Special Forces sergeant to train their sergeants, and how to train recruits, and that type of thing. The principal military relationship there is with their former colonial power, Australia. But they wanted to diversify their relationship, so we brought in one young man. He's about to leave, I believe, but he's done a superb job and they like him, they trust him, and he's providing training that I think is appropriate to their size of a military, which is quite small. But we now have a Defense Attach out there which we were able to add. And we added some support personnel. We had a political-economic officer at one point, and tried to fix up the old building as best we could. They're getting ready to move to another building soon. I had hoped to build a new chancery. We had approval of it, but speaking of the role of Congress, there were some who felt that it was too much money to spend. So that project has been put aside for the present time.

*Q: What was the political situation that you were dealing with? Looking at it, it looks like a huge area actually, with almost impossible communications, at least by reputation, a lot of quite primitive tribes. I'm surprised that the place works at all.*

BIERMAN: Well, that's part of the fascination of the place. Part of the problems they encounter have come from going from primitive to modern in a very short period of time. I illustrate that by commenting that while I was waiting outside a grocery store for my wife one day, a young man drove up who was with one of the government agencies; one of the real comers; a college degree; a master's degree; had traveled around the world with a minister; he introduced me to his two little boys who were sitting in his car, and then he said, "Now I want you to meet auntie from the village." In the back seat sat this little old lady chewing betel nut. There is from the primitive to the modern encompassed in one family. I saw that individual when I was back there three weeks ago, and spent an hour with him. And now in Port Moresby there are people dressed in primitive fashion, and yet you've got well educated people also. So it's a major job, and education is a big job. They've got tremendous challenges. Vocational training is a big job, and we're putting a lot of money through our aid program for vocational training.

But my wife and I--our approach as fairly outgoing, down to earth people--is to get out and get to know people. She worked hard in her area, and I did in mine, and despite all its crime its a very religious, very Christian, country, with every denomination you can think of here in the United States there; with at least 3,000 missionaries over there; mostly out in the bush--not in Port Moresby, out in the bush. And a lot of them are working on language translation. More than 100 of their 800 languages have been translated. The New Testament has been translated into those languages and literacy courses taught by these missionaries. A tremendous dedication on their part.

We traveled all over the country; we went to every function imaginable to show the American flag. Remember, the job was to show we care without spending any money, to speak of. I got up early in the morning and went on walkathons for charity. Most ambassador would send some third secretary. But all you had to do was set your clock a little early, tell the driver to pick you up, and it was a chance to walk along, show American interest, talk with the prime minister who almost always went on these, and I had some of my best conversations ever with the prime minister at that time--at 6:30 in the morning, on a walkathon.

*Q: Could you explain what a walkathon is?*

BIERMAN: You have runs for charity here, and it's so hot there most of the time they don't have many runs, but they have walkathons. People come out, and you get people to pledge \$5.00, or 5 kina, or 10 kina for your walk, and then that money, when you collect it, goes to the charity, which was the Hospital Improvement Committee. I've served on the Hospital Improvement Committee, I've joined the Lions Club, I was on their council at St John's which runs the ambulance service--their board--all things because, number one, I'm interested in them anyway--I belong to the Lions Club at home; but number two, this is a way of showing that you care. One of the things that made me feel good once was the Foreign Minister was quoted as having cited two countries' ambassadors as really caring about the country, and an American was one.

*Q: Did you have any sticky issues to deal with, say with the Foreign Minister, or the Prime Minister?*

BIERMAN: Perhaps the stickiest issue that occurred which was shortly after I arrived there; their Papuanese then ambassador to the United States, a fellow named Abus Aneito, was reportedly driving while intoxicated one night in Georgetown, and had a bad accident in which a young man was severely injured. He was then recalled by their government, and that issue until it was resolved, was a sticky issue. But it was resolved a couple years down the road with a payment. Payment is not unknown there, payment for wrongs. That was resolved, and we had to keep that on the back burner without boiling over for quite a while. There was the matter of fisheries. We signed a fisheries agreement while I was out there--a regional fisheries treaty, and that was a real god-send because before that American fishing boats had been picked up by Solomon Islands and other countries. And then the Magnuson Act was applied against them.

*Q: Magnuson Act being...*

BIERMAN: Well, out of the Magnuson Act applied certain penalties to countries that might have picked up an American fishing boat. But the truth is, some of them were in their waters, and they were taking natural resources without compensation. But we have, and I think our government can be real proud of the regional fisheries treaty which is a model. Papua New Guinea and others have been trying to get the Japanese to follow it, they won't do it. They'd rather do it bilaterally, but we worked out a treaty with all the Pacific island states. We signed it while I was there. It worked very well; it's about to expire; the five years are coming up before long. So they are renegotiating it now. But that issue had been a very sticky issue. And there were two prime ministers while I was there. The first one didn't have much of an interest in foreign affairs, but then he developed it toward the latter part of his term. He was the one I used to deal with during the walkathons. In fact, he invited me once to bring in an American Army Engineering Unit to build a road. He said, "We'll call it the American Road." I said, "No, Prime Minister, I'd like to bring one in, but why don't we have our two units work together, and build one jointly and learn from one another." He said, "I like that." And that's what we did. We strengthened our ties, and I think we made a large step forward in overcoming the perception that Americans no longer cared.

*Q: What about places like Bougainville, and the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, were these places pretty much on the periphery, or how did we deal with them?*

BIERMAN: We have a small office in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and actually we raised it to embassy status so the officer there is the chargé when the ambassador is not there. Solomon Islands is one of those countries that had picked up a fishing boat, the Jeannette Diana, but that issue is pretty much behind us now. The Foreign Fisheries Agency, which administers this program, has an office there; is run out of Honiara. Our relationship is good. Our ships come in to port there. Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal, and there will be a lot of attention to it. Vanuatu is a different story. I was the first ambassador to Vanuatu, relations were open, shortly after I got to Port Moresby, so they simply added Vanuatu to my charter, and the Senate approved it. The first time I went to Vanuatu there were Russian fishing boats with antennae all over the place in the port, and Lebanese in the hotel. And they put a

guard outside my door all night long. Every time I'd look out there would be a policeman looking right at the door.

But I think relations with Vanuatu have warmed up considerably.

Q: *Vanuatu consists of what?*

BIERMAN: It used to be known as the New Hebrides in World War II. It was under what was called a French-British condominium, which is an unusual arrangement to say the least. The the prime minister is an Episcopalian priest, Anglican priest, named Father Walter Leany. He was considered at the time I went out there to be somewhat of a leftist priest, but I must say that during the time I served as ambassador--we didn't have an office there--but I or an officer would go over frequently; we developed a good relationship. The Russian fishing boats were no longer there. The Lebanese are no longer there. The American Peace Corps is in. One of the last things I did on a visit to Vanuatu was to sign a Peace Corps agreement. They wanted scientist teachers particularly at that time. I'm told the program is going very, very well, and I think our relationship today with Vanuatu is very good. I wish we had an office in Vanuatu, and I hope we do but it's a matter of money.

Q: *What was your impression of how the northern half of New Guinea is being administered under the Indonesians? I mean, is there much relationship between the two?*

BIERMAN: You're referring to Irian Jaya?

Q: *Yes.*

BIERMAN: Well, I didn't have any direct contact with Irian Jaya. The closest I came to it was when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees invited all the ambassadors and high commissioners to go with him on a trip to visit a refugee camp. Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, the governments, try very hard to manage that relationship carefully. Indonesia has opened a consulate across the border in Papua New Guinea, and Papua New Guinea has a consulate across the border in Irian Jaya. I haven't heard much about the OPM lately. Both countries are working very hard to maintain an harmonious relationship. I was out on a private trip-- I mean I retired from government, and I'm in the private sector now-- I was on a trip to the Pacific just a few weeks ago including a visit to Jakarta for a week. I'm on the board of a company that does joint ventures between Indonesia and the United States and other countries. And during the course of that visit Irian Jaya was mentioned as an area where they're putting a lot of emphasis in development, a lot of money into roads, and education development, but that was all of it that I heard about it. We also visited Papua New Guinea on a personal trip and stayed with friends that we made while we were there, and revisited a lot of our friends and contacts, both in government and out, and nothing much was said about Irian Jaya, everything seems to be very quiet.

Q: *Did you feel there were problems or something, that we made a certain amount of deference to the Australians by saying this is Australian's--there's always been a much closer relationship*

*as part of their colonial role, were we in competition with the Australians. How did you find your...*

BIERMAN: You know how to ask good questions, because that's a very sensitive issue. Papua New Guineans have with Australia, like most former colonies have with former colonial powers including some of our relationships, sort of a love-hate relationship. I suppose we have that with the Philippines.

*Q: With the Philippines, I'm sure we do. I know we do.*

BIERMAN: And also the Australian business people sort of look on Papua New Guinea as their turf. But at the same time most of the larger companies are in joint ventures together. It is a very touchy issue because it goes back to the historical colonial relationships, a lot of sensitivities involved. I tried not to get involved in how they felt about their relationships with Australia. Obviously they need Australia in many areas, and Australia is their largest aid donor. But they want very much to diversify relationships, as I mentioned earlier. And while I was there I indicated they wanted to start a military relationship, and we kept it very small. As I said, we had one sergeant training other sergeants, and training recruits. But we started by annual military talks in which we discussed our small programs, and how they could be made more effective because we don't have much money to put in there, and we're not competing with the Australians in any way. But they want their own relationship with us. I must say Americans are popular, basically popular, in Papua New Guinea.

*Q: During the Owen Stanley, I mean all that long very difficult campaign, where American and Australian troops were fighting the Japanese, did the Americans leave a good impression at the time?*

BIERMAN: The Americans left, apparently, a very good impression, and I quizzed them about that. I said, "You know our military units were segregated in those days," because from my residence you could see a causeway to a small island, built, I'm told--I can't prove it--by a black American engineering battalion. And the answer was, "Yes, but they wore the same uniforms, got the same pay, and used the same equipment." They didn't just carry ammunition. There is a film out called "Angels of War" which I have a copy of, its a video, which is the story of that campaign in which Papua New Guinean men carried wounded, and carried ammunition. They played a major, major role.

*Q: That terrible trail up and over the Owen Stanley mountains took tremendous endurance and courage for everybody who fought, including the Japanese.*

BIERMAN: And most people were sick with malaria during that time. No, evidence of the war is all around you. As you land at the airport at Port Moresby, if you look out one side of your airplane, you see revetments standing to this day and where the planes were parked. There are weeds and trees growing out of them, but they're there. While I was there we found a B-17 bomber on Mt. Over\_\_\_, about an hour from Port Moresby that flew into a mountain. It wasn't seen until the paint wore off a few years ago, and the sun began to reflect off of the aluminum. There are planes all over there. I think I can maybe illustrate it well also, not only the war, but by



the missionaries. One day four men came in to see me that I didn't know. They all worked in middle level jobs for different companies, Shell Oil and different places. They said, "We came to see you because we were all educated in mission schools, and the missionaries that educated us have all retired and gone back to New Jersey," that particular group was from New Jersey, "and if you don't mind, Ambassador, we'd like to start a PNG-U.S. Friendship Society." I said, "God bless you. Wonderful. What can I do to help?" And we formed one before I left. But you know, they said, "We miss our contact with these people, and we'd just like to have more contact with the Americans." And in that embassy which was supposed to have been built there was a separate meeting room for USIS where groups like that could have met. That's fairly typical. Americans, with all our problems of race relations, and so forth, most Americans are not seen as racist over there. Now they size you up quickly; they're very, very sensitive. They can sense very quickly if you act, or feel, or think you're superior. They can sense that in a minute. But if you're just yourself, and fairly down to earth and friendly, you make tremendous friendships. The church we attended, the women's groups that my wife participated in, had a potluck supper for us three weeks ago, just to welcome us back. In my opinion, a lot depends on the individual, and the personal relationships you develop.

*Q: Going back to dealing with the government, did you find on this Australian-American thing that there were any issues that you had to sort of dance around? How did you get along with the Australian representative?*

BIERMAN: I got along fine with the Australian representative. I did my job as I saw it, and he did his. I figured I was hired in part to help encourage U.S. trade and investment, and I figured he was hired to do the same. And he knew I was active, and I knew he was. Actually the high commissioner during part of the time I was there is now their number two in Washington. But there were three different ones during the period that I served, one finishing his tour, the one who is here now had a relatively short tour there, and then another one came in shortly before I left. They have a difficult job, of course, as representing the former colonial power. I did my job, and no, we didn't ask the Australians "do you mind if we do this, or do that?" They knew what we were doing basically, and we knew what they were doing, and we had good communication with them.

*Q: How about UN votes? Was this ever a problem? I mean, every ambassador gets a shopping list of UN votes, and sometimes these are just "get support from Israel," and if you're in Iraq you're supposed to get support for Israel. Did you have many problems with UN votes?*

BIERMAN: Not serious problems. They voted our way on a lot of issues. I didn't have to go in and twist any arms really sharply. There may be a vote coming up pretty soon for the president of the General Assembly, Mr. Somare, Michael Somare, the founder of the country, the first prime minister and now foreign minister, is a leading candidate for president of the General Assembly. And Wong(?), who entered the race fairly recently, was a representative from Saudi Arabia. Now the United States will have an interesting vote.

*Q: This is a good time to head for the hills. Is there any situations there, or problems, you think I may have missed?*

BIERMAN: One area that I haven't touched on is that Papua New Guinea is very, very interested in expanding their exports, and expanding investment in Papua New Guinea. Investment which is largely--I shouldn't say largely--but investment which is discouraged on the part of some people because of the crime situation.

*Q: What is the crime situation there?*

BIERMAN: This is a case of people who rob, steal, rape, breaking and entering, that sort of thing. We have it in a lot of our larger cities too, including certain parts of Washington, DC There was a curfew on while I was there, from 9:00 to 5:00 in the morning. It is a serious problem, but the point I want to make is that you have to look at that in perspective of the total picture. Countries all over the world have crime problems, including so-called western societies. But you've got a country with tremendous resources; a country as large or larger than New Zealand; a country with a democratic government where every change of government has to follow parliamentary and legal constitutional procedures; with a supreme court headed by justices that I know personally and admire and respect. A government that encourages the private sector, and an opposition that encourages the private sector, and says the government doesn't do enough, and each has said that about the other. Where do you find the kind of resources they've got? Where do you find a country that has all those things, which doesn't have some problems? So my answer to those who consider investment is, do it with your eyes open, recognize you've got some problems, but that you're going to have problems anywhere you go. Here you have resources, you've got a government that's friendly to the private sector, and so its worth taking a look at.

My wife and I have made a lot of good friends there. We dealt with a lot of issues while I represented the United States. We had difficult issues, but the fact that we had good personal relationships was a tremendous asset in terms of resolving issues.

*Q: I want to thank you very much. I think this has been the first interview I've done with anybody from that area, and it's very illuminating. I thank you.*

BIERMAN: There's one little story I should have told to you. I had the occasion to meet a member of parliament, who at that time was chairman of the foreign affairs in the defense committee. And when he found out my background that I was not a career officer, but rather had come from the legislative branch with a foreign affairs background. He said, "May I take you to lunch tomorrow? I need your advice on what I ought to be doing as chairman of the joint foreign affairs and defense committee." He's now the Minister of Defense. So it was interesting. There was another occasion which put me on a high one day. A minister whom I had never met before, reached out and shook my hand and said, "Congratulations." And I said, "Thank you, on what?" He said, "On an American embassy that gives a damn." I said, "Thank you."

**WILLIAM FARRAND**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1990-1993)**

*Ambassador Farrand was born in Watertown, New York in 1934 and graduated from Mount Saint Mary's College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. He served in numerous posts including Kuala Lumpur, Moscow and Prague and was named ambassador to Papua, New Guinea in 1990. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Today is the 29th of August, 2001. Bill you're off to Papa New Guinea. How about confirmation and all that sort of thing? Was there any political types who had raised noises or was this not exactly a political plum?*

FARRAND: Nobody cared I think about Papa New Guinea, but at that time the Department of State and the bureau of East Asian and Pacific affairs under Richard Solomon, Assistant Secretary was developing or deeply enmeshed in working out some sort of a peace arrangement in Cambodia and, which is thoroughly unrelated to the southwest Pacific, but the congress was not happy with Solomon's pushing for the inclusion of the

*Q: Oh, what's his name, he was the not a Khmer Rouge, but a Vietnamese communist sponsored*

FARRAND: Yes, and in addition the Khmer Rouge, the package that was put together and I wasn't a close student of it, but as I came to understand it, the package that was put together had the Khmer Rouge as part of the discussion. Now, those in the congress, the senate particularly, that felt that this was absolutely wrongheaded, decided to put a hold on my hearings and I sat for eight, count them, months in the Department to go out to this small embassy, tucked off in the corner of the world, where nobody is really popping up and down for anything. It was left in the hands of a charge and he did an excellent job, but I was

*Q: What did you do?*

FARRAND: I stayed in the Department. I scoured the town for anybody interested in Melanesia because I not only had Papa New Guinea, but also I was going to be named conterminously as ambassador to the Solomon Islands and the little island nation of Vanuatu, that up until the 1960s had been the New Heverdes, a joint condominium type arrangement between the British and the French. All part of Melanesia. So, I went around the town and scratched here and there, sat in the Department of State and cooled my heels, but I did an awful lot of advance work. Much, much more advanced on a small post like that that I think would be normal.

*Q: Read your Jack London and all that?*

FARRAND: I didn't read Jack London because I know he took his little boat out there, but I read significantly. There were other things to do, but I did not care for it.

*Q: You got out there when and you left when, just to get the dates?*

FARRAND: Yes, I arrived in Papa New Guinea, finally, in April of 1990 and I departed in September of 1993. I was there three and a half years because there was some difficulties getting

my successor out. I mean, you know, these unrelated things get caught up in the senate and, you know, here's the thing that I said to one of my friends at the time. When I finally learned why I was being held up, I finally heard and knew somebody, I got the name of a staffer up on the Hill and it worked out that he came to Papa, New Guinea. He was on the senate foreign relation's committee staff. I never learned anything about this before, but later he, along with Senator Claiborne Pell and Borum, from Oklahoma, a senator. Anyway, it starts with B, came out and sitting in my residence looking over the south of the Coral Sea, this young staffer said, "You know why they're really holding you up?" I said, "Yes, I know how you hold me up." He said, "Well, it had nothing to do with you." I said, "Well, I assumed it had nothing to do with me. You know in holding up Papa, New Guinea, do you think you are really bringing any leverage on the Department? The Department didn't care whether there was an ambassador there or not or ever." So, I mean, what kind of leverage do you have, you didn't have any leverage.

*Q: Well, anyway, you arrived in April 1989. Can you describe the situation? Let's take each separate place so let's take Papa, New Guinea first. What was the embassy like, what were our concerns, what was the government like, the economy and all?*

FARRAND: First, the first thing you have to deal with with Papa, New Guinea, is the reputation it has outside of its borders for being one of the most dangerous places in the world. Urban and rural crime are reputed to be out of control. The phrase that I had never heard before was gang rape, actually pack rape, they called it pack rape of women which is a very off-putting thing. I mean for thinking of taking my wife and daughter with me. Then robberies, being waylaid on the road if there aren't that many roads, but if you were waylaid, you were waylaid. That was the single biggest thing that one had to deal with, this perception. We arrived at the airport, which was built by the United States Army during the Second World War. MacArthur had his headquarters in Port Moresby. Port Moresby is the capital. The airport, as you come in, you can see these circular revetments that still exist where B-17s, the flying fortress were backed in and then covered with jungle canopy faults to throw off the Japanese. We got off the airplane, we were hit with a blast of hot air, it came through the door. It was very warm and taken into the town. I must say as we drove along on the way in, we were both struck, my wife and I and my daughter.

*Q: How old was your daughter?*

FARRAND: She was thirteen and she did not want to be there. I had to take her out of her school. Here, over in McLean, had to take her out of her school and all of her friends; you know a thirteen-year-old girl. She absolutely did not want to be there and was very, very unhappy and very unhappy with her parents for making this happen. But, you ask about the state of the government, the economy, the politics, etc. First, we were received most graciously, most graciously. We were given, it is part of the commonwealth, part of the British Commonwealth and we were given a proper reception, the Prime Minister received me, the president of the country received in a special place and then we had a little drum roll with some troops, a police force. It's a police constabulary; it's a defense force there that does most everything. The people in the city could not have been nicer. There was a sense, you got a sense because you saw high fences around villas and business establishments, you saw that sort of thing. So, you knew that there was crime, you knew that. Papa, New Guinea got its independence back in, I think, 1965. I

had that number right on my lips. It was under a mandate from the First World War, the Germans held the north coast, the Bismarck Sea and all across the north coast was called New Guinea and in the south was Papua. The country is as large as California in land surface and it has four million people. It has a thousand clans. According to the Whitewith out of Dallas, Texas, which is a Protestant missionary bible group, bible group and based on missionaries there to translate these languages into the bible, the New Testament into these languages. According to them, there are 832 separate and distinct languages spoken by four million people. Now, the world has six thousand languages, just a little bit more, they're declining, but they have about six thousand languages. Papua, New Guinea has 830 of them. There are reasons for this and I won't go into it now, but Margaret Mead did much of her work up in the north part of the country where the Germans had been, but when the First World War was over, of course, German possessions around the world were taken under and put under mandate in one sort or another, I'm not a historian. The British were given the mandate over Papua, New Guinea, but they devolved their mandate onto the Australians. They said to the Australians, will you be ours? So, the Australians went up and took over under the League of Nations a mandate to more or less run Papua, New Guinea. More or less run Papuata and New Guinea. New Guinea being the north down the spine. The spine of this island, which if you take into account Indonesia's part of it, Irian Jaya. Irian Jaya is on the, east you look at the map, it's to the east, no to the west, and Papua, New Guinea is to the east. The total island, it's the second largest island after Greenland in the world. It looks like a great pterodactyl hanging over Australia. It's just the way it looks. By the time we got there, they had a constitutional democracy. They have a parliament, they have elections. The elections are done under the parliamentary system, they're called. They have to have one in five years. They have very spirited debates in their parliaments. They have had instances where people in the parliament getting hot under the collar, would jump at one another, but I think you can find that in our own history.

*Q: We've had that during the just before the Civil War. Billy Preston beat Edmund Sumner with his cane, right on the floor of congress.*

FARRAND: There's much that can be said. I feel or thought at the time, and by the way, I guess by my nature I'm too active a person just to sit back and do nothing and twiddle my thumbs and go to diplomatic receptions in the evening. There were about twenty diplomatic missions there. Australia, of course, high commission; New Zealand, of course; Fiji, of course, but Japan was there, China was there.

*Q: Indonesia, of course.*

FARRAND: Indonesia, of course, absolutely. Ambassadors, full staffs, I mean, the French were there, the Brits were there, and the Germans were there. The European Commission was there. The Malays were there. Were the Thais there? The Thais were not, but the Malaysians were. Singapore. Absolutely everybody was there, why because this is a huge piece of real estate. It's one of the last frontiers, probably is the last frontier in the world. There's maybe one or two places they haven't pushed back into yet. But, you know, in the 1930s, in the 1930s, '33 and '34, there was a central part of north of Papua, south of New Guinea, right along the Owen Stanley Range of mountains. You're right near the equator, there three or four degrees south of the equator, but the Owen Stanley Range rises to 14,000 feet. Snow peaks on the equator. Now, it

doesn't happen all the time, but this was during the Second World War, a ferocious battlefield, ferocious.

*Q: That trail between the Owen Stanley was, the Japanese nearly made it and then they basically were killed and starved to death.*

FARRAND: Killed starved to death and our greatest ally was the mosquito. The other little ugly bugs that exist there. You can read about this in Mansfield's Heart of Darkness. I can only say that for going off to what I perceived at the time was a backwater, which I think probably is, it was fascinating to the core.

*Q: What were, okay, it's a big island, that has all these languages, but what interest is it to particularly the United States and all these other countries?*

FARRAND: The United States basically, the United States basically has, if it has a policy, the policy is one of what, was it Monahan who talked about benign neglect? It's basically let it off their run. We had commercial interests there. While I was there in 1992, Chevron brought in first oil. Now, in the industry that's something. First Oil, that's where you go into a community and you have sunk your, done your seismic, you've sunk your wells and you hit for the first time. So, in the first time in the history of Papua, New Guinea which became Papua, New Guinea in 1965, the long negotiation, of how they were going to do it. Was it going to be Papua and New Guinea, was it, anyway. The Chevron team had been working and looking. It's a very complicated geological structure, very complicated because it is built on limestone and there's coral, of course, down underneath. It's along the rim; you know that rim of fire that goes way out around the Aleutians? All the way down, actually to South American and across, all around. Japan is on the rim of fire, Papua; New Guinea is on the southern, southwestern rim of the rim of fire. Volcanic, earthquakes, tsunamis. After I left just about three years ago, they had a tsunami that hit the north coast. It was a wall of water thirty feet high, came out of nowhere and destroyed utterly a village, utterly. There was nothing left of the village after the water receded except and 3,000 people gone. I mean, you know, you talk about nature. Anyway, the seismic, the geology is so complicated that when you send your impulses down into the heart of the earth to find out what's there, they send back echoes, but the echoes are false echoes and they go in this direction and that because there's these open caverns and it distorts it very much, so it's very complex. Chevron was able to overcome and find oil and it was sweet oil and it was up in the highlands and they're still pumping. Now, Chevron is a California firm and so I gave Chevron all the support I could. They didn't, on the technical side, they needed nothing. Actually, because their financial investment there was so great, they didn't need much of anything, but I did have to keep certain doors open for them and I did have to run a little interference for them occasionally. Now, that was one thing. I had to sit down, Stuart and ask myself the question you had asked. What am I going to do? So, I got my staff around. I had a staff of twelve. I had a classic small embassy. I had one of everything, one consular officer, one administrative officer, had one general services officer, I had one political officer, I had one AID officer, one, one, one, one, one and I did have defense there. I did have the agency there because they were concerned at the time with the Chinese and the Russians were there. Oh, I didn't say that. The Russians had an embassy there. The Chinese and Russians were there.

*Q: Actually the Russians would have been Soviets at that point? Just before you left.*

FARRAND: Absolutely, it was that way. Well, they were in transition, I mean, you know the wall fell out in '89.

*Q: What about, what was your impression of dealing with the government there, the ministry of foreign affairs and other parts of the government? How did you find it?*

FARRAND: It was a revelation first, the government had in it a number of Australian expats. The Australians had during their time of mandate really entrenched themselves in Papua, New Guinea. They owned plantations, they pursued mining rights, they were in the bureaucracy and given the, okay, I'll use the word primitiveness. Primitiveness of the people, I hate to use that word because I have so many friends from Papua, New Guinea who are every bit and brighter than many people that I deal with here in this country or in other places. But, they were hampered because they weren't able to get off the island that much, although they do now. They were hampered because their perception of themselves was formed in part by the way that the Australians depicted them to themselves. Australians are goodhearted people, but I don't think they've been kind, necessarily to Papua, New Guinea. I don't think that it's necessarily the best recipe for bringing some of these countries out along on the path of development to, that's a touch area here, but to bring them under tutelage. That is really colonialism masked is another way. That wasn't well presented because I'm trying to be, I don't want to upset my Australian friends either.

*Q: Well, at the same time, I mean, the Australians, I mean things have changed, but they were coming out of very much sort of as often happens, it is a sort of semi-colonial country itself and is a little more colonialist than the original mother country. Also, in Australia at that time, they certainly had a white only policy and you know, I could see where it could be racist is a strong word, but I think it may be pertinent. I'm not trying to put words in your mouth.*

FARRAND: Australia, on the ground, I got to know Australia, because they were the watering hole next door. I got down there. Australia is about in my judgment internally the way it goes about its own affairs internally, it's while I was there I was thinking I was back in the 1930s. I don't know I was born in the '30s, I don't know the '30s, but it reminded me of that. Certainly the '50s. You go into a small town and you'd think you're in the 1950s in the United States. Now all this computer and that will all change immediately. But, the Australians were much of what you say. It wasn't always the most. I met excellent people, but they themselves, they themselves, see I was to work with Papua, New Guinea. That's how I viewed it. So, the Aussies wanted me to join their clubs, their billiard clubs, they wanted me to join their tennis clubs, they wanted me to join their this and that. I didn't. I stayed out of their clubs. I allowed myself under pressure to join the Lions Clubs. You know, it's one of those fraternal organizations and I found myself going once a month or twice a month to meeting nothing but Australian expats were sitting around talking and Brits and others. Of course, there might be one or two token Papua, New Guineans there. So, finally I dropped out of that, it was a mistake to get into it, they implored me and I did, but I just dropped out of that. I tried to do as much as I could with the Papua, New Guineans, but you know what, sometimes they wouldn't respond.

The foreign ministry had a minister and then they had as in the British system a secretary who was in the civil service. Now, if you watch any of those programs, Mr. Minister, well it was somewhat like that. The minister would be the political in the cabinet and the prime minister, but the secretary and his minions would be the ones with whom you dealt on a day by day basis. The secretary was a young, educated, reasonably educated young man. He'd been educated in Australia and he had a bias. He, I don't think, particularly liked the United States. You know, I think he just didn't like the United States, but maybe he had his own racial kickback. Actually it was fun on a general level working in Papua, New Guinea, because the whole country was black. There were so many clans and the clans looked different from one another and after you were there for a while; I was there for three and a half years, I could tell by looking at a person what clan roughly he was from. There was differentiation amongst between the blacks. The blacks of the coastal, the blacks of the midrange and the blacks of the higherants and the island blacks who lived out in the little dotted islands around. They had their own internal problems with each other. So, they were not united as one against the white man. In fact, it was just refreshing to be amongst them because they didn't have a chip on their shoulder and, as an American, as an American I did not get the backwash from the anti-Australian sentiment. Also, if something bad happened in the country, if there was an earthquake, if there was a volcanic eruption, if there was a fire in the town, and it was a big disaster, the United States wasn't blamed for it, Australia was. So, it was interesting to sit off to the side and see that happen. But, I tried to develop a positive agenda, I did and I sold the agenda to Washington and I went about trying to fulfill it. Did I make a big difference? I don't think so, but at one point some Australians complained that what are the Americans trying to do, take over here? I never carried that kickback because I tried to introduce American business out there. I knew something about American business because I am an economic officer; I've worked with commercial officers elsewhere in the world. I tried to bring in cultural groups; there are stories that I could tell.

*Q: Well, tell a few.*

FARRAND: I'll tell, against the backdrop, I don't want to use up too much of your tape. Against the backdrop of the crime and the violence that was endemic in the town of Port Moresby which had a population of just under a quarter of a million, but it was a separated city. It was down on the coast and you had to go up a hill and over the other side and on the other side there was another hill and that's where some of the settlements were. What happened? Because the mountains are oriented east west, with deep huge valleys in-between, the road system north-south was terrible. A young man from the highlands would find, by hook or by crook, a way of getting, maybe by an airplane, maybe going to the coast and around by boat to Port Moresby, they would get to Port Moresby, they would think they were going to, this was a Holy Grail, but, of course, its happening all over the world. There were no jobs. The economy was not. These young men did not come educated in many cases although the missionaries there and the Australians and others and the government itself has done a reasonably good job of trying to educate everybody up to the sixth grade level. There's a good bit of literacy, but these young men would come down and then they couldn't get back and then, of course, they would live at the edge of society and they would to a degree prey on society. There was a source of much of what was this crime problem was. Well, one day I had a young, well he wasn't young, I suppose he was in his late thirties, early forties, a fellow from Harvard University, who was our public affairs officers. I said to him, "Look, I would like to get a group out here." So, I came back to



Washington and I went up to the USIA and I spoke to a high level official at USIA. It was a friend of mine. I said to her, "Could you not, based on our own relationship, find me a group that would represent the best of the American music? I would like it to be a black group. Send it to me in Papua, New Guinea." She said, "I'll see what I can do." Voila. She contacts me, contacts through the USIA system and this young man comes to me and says, "We're going to receive a jazz group, called the Dirty Dozen from New Orleans. It's coming in two months." I said, "That is wonderful news." Now, the Dirty Dozen, there were eight or nine people in the entourage in the ensemble, that's a dirty dozen, not a dozen, the dirty dozen. They arrive, this young man who is very bright and very, oh, what's the word of it? Very precise in his work. He had everything lined up. He was a clipboard man. He was a clipboard man. He was very proper, almost all the time very proper. His wife, I didn't learn this until later, but his wife was living in their apartment. She would live in their apartment all week long until Friday night, he would go home Friday night and they would go together to a local restaurant and eat in a certain particular restaurant and they'd go back out and it would be her only outing, she was so fearful, she was so fearful. I wasn't learning this. So, this group comes. They arrive at the airport. I send this young man out to pick them up and bring them back and then we're going to meet them at a local hotel where they're going to stay overnight, they're going to get over their jet lag and then they're going to put on some shows. So, this young man goes to the airport. The fellows in the group, the tuba player, the bassoon player, the banjo, all this stuff, they all get off and they come walking down and they get on the bus. We hired a bus. They're all sitting there like this with their baseball caps on backwards, big tall guys, heavy guys, small guys, and he says to them as the bus starts rumbling away from the airport coming down the road toward Port Moresby, it's about an eight mile or ten mile ride, "I'd like to just brief you on a few," and he stands up in front with his clipboard and his little bow tie, I say bow tie because that's the type, he didn't wear a bow tie, but that's the type. He says to the, "Now you must understand, you'll be staying in the hotel and it's right on the hill looking over the water and it's right in the heart of town. But, I think it's very important that you understand that you should not stray out of the compound after 8:00 and you should be in two's and three's before 8:00 and you should." and this voice in the back says, or the guy raises his hand from the back and says, "Hey, man" and he finally gets his attention, and he says, "Yes, yes, do you have a question?" He says, "Yes, man is what you're saying big city rules apply?" Our hero says, "Well, I, yes, I guess I should." "Sit down man. You're telling us about crime in the cities in the downtown areas of cities where, you're telling us about crime? God." I missed a bet with these guys, the first night they came and put on a jam session at the hotel, which the whole diplomatic community came to, the whole professional, the professors from the university, the lawyers from downtown. I'm not trying to say to you this is hotsy, totsy in any way, but the people who kind of ran things came to that night. It was a mixed crowd, about 300. Tables everything. They put on a jam session that had the roof popping off. It was, people were dancing and the air conditioning couldn't hold up to the sweating. That wasn't why I brought them. I didn't bring them for that reason, I didn't bring them for that crowd, I wanted them to be in front of the people and this is where I made a crucial mistake. I allowed this guy, this young fellow, this public affairs officer to. I normally delegate and let them do it, but I allowed him to hold it in a hall inside a very secure area and the hall wasn't large enough and the price was too pricey. We should have put it out in the big stadium and we should have kept the price right down to the cost of half a can of soft drink so I could have gotten maybe a thousand or two thousand people. I would have beefed the police up, but I didn't and he held it and it was probably no more than 250, 300. It's painful for me even to think of it now because I permitted

this fellow's natural instincts to protect, protect, protect. You've got to take chances. But, that was one anecdote. There are many, many others, thousands of anecdotes. As regards to how one deals with a parliamentary democracy that still exists that has parts of its members that still exists in the Stone Age. I will say this; they had a, you know, we have a congressional record. What do the Brits have? What do they publish everyday? Henside. The Henside. Well, they had a similar that came out every day what Parliament had done. Who raised what position, what laws we passed and debated? In the Parliament and I've gone many times and looked down and watched the proceedings. The parties would be on either side, the government and the opposition. There would be question time, there would be question time just as in the British Parliament, but you could still have somebody. In fact, I have a picture at home, I'll bring it the next time to show you, you could still have somebody coming dressed in regale with a pig, nose plugs and he could be wearing some feathers and he could be sitting there like this. I mean, it was. Everybody accepted it because that was his tribal dress. His tribal ceremonial dress, but on a certain day if up in the highlands his tribe, his clan is having a day, it's incumbent upon him to reflect that in the capital.

I remember they were going to have a particular critical vote on a particularly critical bill that could topple the government. I had the office director from the Department of State out staying with me. The Department of State in general. There were three parts to the Pacific. The three parts to, no. Anyway, there's three parts to the islands in the Pacific. There is Micronesia which is north of the equator and west of the international date line, that's Micronesia, those are the islands, the Gilberts, the Mariannas, this is the old, old, now today they're the Quadulay, Bikini Atoll, Guam, places like that. They are run largely, partly by the, well the State Department has an interest in it, as the defense Department does, too, but the Interior Department, the Department of the Interior administers those on the ground. Then there is Polynesia, that's the part that we all think about when we think about the South Sea Islands and that is Hawaii, Fiji, Tahiti and west of Tahiti and halfway down to Tahiti, because Tahiti is half Polynesian and half Melanesian. Melanesia, south of the equator over, that's there I was. Melanesia falls off the charts when it comes to the United States and the Department of State is Fiji's center. They focus on Fiji, they focus on. They don't think about that because they have in fact devolved most of the responsibility over that onto Australia. I think that's a mistake. I think we have our own interests there and ours are separate and distinct from Australia, because Australia, frankly, resents our presence out there and resents, if we try to become a little, well if we come a little active.

*Q: What about the other embassies? Where they doing much?*

FARRAND: The European Union tried to be reasonably active with the idea that all of Europe had an interest in these countries. No, no I think not I think the American embassy was probably second after the Australians.

*Q: I would think that almost a prime concern of yours would be the morale, the protection of your staff. I mean, I can think of particularly a single woman or a married woman, but particularly a single woman with packs running around. I mean, this would be a horrible place to go.*

FARRAND: Well, first, the packs weren't running around. There was one case that was constantly played back to us time and time again. It was twelve years old. I ran into one woman, one Australian woman, actually she was British, but she was married to an Australian who had come upon somebody in her house who had raped her. But, the stories abounded, but nothing untoward occurred. My wife drove all over that town everyday doing things. In her car driving herself. She always stayed to the main roads, but there were, it was vastly overblown and not that there weren't troubles. Listen, now you can't say it to an American audience, but there are troubles right here. There are places you don't go.

*Q: Oh absolutely, here in the Washington area, yes. But anyway, so this was not, but the perception is that this is a place that you do not want to go to?*

FARRAND: Yes, that's a perception, but we had some good staff. I had one or two. I had a secretary who was very attractive and she lived by herself. She followed all the good procedures. I did two or three things. I asked the State Department to send out its team of specialists in self-defense. They did, they came out and they gave us a week of their time, training up the staff in elemental things of self-defense. Things that even somebody who is not a black belt can do that can help themselves. Number two, I made sure that in case of women in particular, that there were always vehicles available. I made it a liberal policy so that a vehicle can go and pick them up. The taxi service wasn't any good. The third thing I will say, I will say that this was a little bit odd. I remember asking about a team to get together and to sit down and to write up a protocol. I wanted it very precise, I wanted it very humane, action directed on what to do in case of rape. How should we all react in case of rape? This group sat, I had the head of the Peace Corps who was a wonderful woman who lived alone. Head of the Peace Corps lived alone. We had, I had 145 Peace Corps volunteers in the hills all over and I had all of them into my residence to talk to them before they went out and then in the middle and then at the end. I visited them when I was in the hills. I didn't go way back into the villages where they worked. What's there in the villages, what's there in the villages, nothing's going to happen. See the world is changing. The village is breaking down, in America, too. Once they were in the villages and once they had shown themselves to be working, hardworking, the village took care of them and nothing was going to happen. In the cities you had to be concerned. So, we sat down, we had this committee that came up with a, and I wanted it short, I didn't want it to go on and on. I think it was two pages, maybe it was three and it stated the first time when you would hear that something like this had occurred, here are the steps you would take and here is what you would do and what you would not do. One of the things that I remember that stood out in my mind is the very first thing you don't do is say, "Why were you wearing that dress?" You can't make the victim part of the crime and then we went through, here's who you call, here's the next thing you do. Get the person in this case to the embassy or something, then a whole series of things, here is the service to call, here is the doctor's number, here is, if we're going to have an evacuation, helicopter service if necessary. Here is where that is; where would they go? To Brisbane, do they go to Darwin, where do you go, what do you do, who do you notify. You know, what kind of message do we send out? Etc., etc. We had it all laid out very tight and we chewed it over so it wasn't full of superfluous words, but it had enough in there and I remember sending it in to CLO, FLO?

*Q: Yes, the Family Liaison Officer, FLO.*

FARRAND: They were very impressed. But I never had anything like that happen.

*Q: How did the Australian high commissioner treat you? Was there sort of a confrontational situation there would you say?*

FARRAND: Not between me and the Australian high commissioner. We became friends. He was clearly the most important man in town. We became friends, but there was midlevel skirmishing going on at lower levels between our embassy and his midlevel managers. He had a commission of 200 or 250; I had a little outfit of twelve. But we were probing, anyway of keeping ourselves active. We were earning our money; we were doing what we were supposed to do.

*Q: What was the Peace Corps doing?*

FARRAND: The Peace Corps was doing developmental work in the hills, would go into the villages, sanitation was a big thing, children's health, childbirth, USAID was there, too, and they worked and talked with the Peace Corps a lot. I encouraged that. They brought specialists in childbirth would be one, simple methods of childbirth. In some clans in the mountains, in the highlands, when the time came for parturition, the woman, she had been told by the old cronies in town what to do, in the village. The woman crawled back into the jungle by herself, crawled by herself into the jungle or walked and then when the time came, she administered unto herself. She dug a pit beneath her and she was over the pit so there would be a place for the baby to drop. She did it all herself. Now, of course, she lost a number of her children that way. So, you asked me about the Peace Corps and I'm talking a little bit about what AID brought in a program; simple, clean, sterile, birthing methods. That if it's going to be this way, well here's what we can do to enhance the chances that the child will be healthy and all of that. The Peace Corps had lots of, as you would imagine, young, idealistic people, a lot of them from the Midwest of the United States, very upright, going into some tough situations. They did a wide range of things and I wouldn't be able to pinpoint it. Did they teach? Yes, they taught, but you know in the deep village the language that they might be up against would not be English and it would not be pigeon. It would be something wholly unintelligible. So, it posed all sorts of, we had to be careful about where we sent everybody to make sure that they were going to be utilized.

*Q: What about relations, how about the Solomon Islands, for example?*

FARRAND: The Solomon Islands with a population of about 350,000 people. The capital is Honiara which they had had no capital, nothing like it up until the Second World War, but after the Second World War was over on the island of Guadalcanal which is where this capital was the capital became transformed, a supply depot in the 25th Infantry Division, the infantry division that came on after the Marines to drive the Japanese off of Guadalcanal and to drive them all the way up the slot. John F. Kennedy had his major, his big accident there.

*Q: He was run down by a Japanese destroyer.*

FARRAND: Run down by a Japanese destroyer in a thing called the slot which was just miles to the northwest of Guadalcanal, the island of Guadalcanal, which is the largest island on the

Solomon chain. The Solomon chain is nothing but the same chain that comes out of Papua, New Guinea, they just stopped it at Bougainville. You know Bougainville? That's where Richard Nixon fought or played poker. Then down the slot comes the Solomons and then way, way, way out into the ocean and down is the new Hydrides which is the end of the, tail end of the chain and it all starts up the Owen Stanley Range goes all the way down the spine of this chain. The Solomons are here again; you had a dozen embassies. You may say, why can that be, well, not all of them, I operated out of Port Moresby as did the Russians, as did a few others, the Chinese, they came down and they did their business. What is the interest of the Solomon Islands to the world? Tuna and hardwood, tropical hardwood. They had some of the most exotic stands, just as Papua, New Guinea does of exotic woods. This for the people that are after these hardwoods are the north Asians and they are exploiters par excellence. I'll just say it. The Japanese, the Koreans and the Taiwanese and they'd come down there and the same phenomenon linguistic and the clan phenomenon that existed in Papua, New Guinea that exists in Papua, New Guinea exists also on a smaller scale in the Solomons. The Solomons has about 160 languages, 160 clans. Now, because it's been difficult for them to pull everything together, they do have a pilot, we built them a beautiful pilot building under the impulse of Steve Solarz. Do you know Steve Solarz?

*Q: I've interviewed him, yes.*

FARRAND: He and I worked together to put up a very, it was his push, he wanted to give them a pilot building and he did, and its' there and they'd meet and they'd discuss and they'd debate and they'd elect and they had parties and they had electing campaigns. The islands are scattered about and there are differences between the islands, of course and old enmities and all that other stuff. The Second World War came and went. The Solomon Islanders could never understand why it was that when the Japanese came down and took Guadalcanal and built Henderson Field, then we came in and drove them off, and we got Henderson Field back. I don't know, we call it Henderson Field.

*Q: It was the Japanese were building an airfield and we came in and finished it off.*

FARRAND: Then finished it. It became, there is a thick book written on the Guadalcanal campaign and it became the, well the reason that Guadalcanal became so strategically important was that it served as a fixed aircraft carrier in the southwest Pacific and it was the very first time that we took on the Japanese offensively going back toward them, the very first time, August 7, 1942.

*Q: The Guadalcanal is fascinating, I've read several books on this, both naval and air and the ground.*

FARRAND: By the way, you say naval, air and ground. That was the other aspect of it, it was the first time that we blocked air, sea and land forces together in one concerted effort against the Japanese during the whole Second World War.

*Q: Well, these were you know you might say two mighty powers this was the one place where they really hit each other to begin with, they fought for about a year.*

FARRAND: Yes, they fought for about a year. But the Islanders who helped us out, they were very heroic in doing it; there's one or two of them that were incredibly courageous to assist us. The fuzzy wuzzies they were called. They were so devoted to because the Japanese treated them most cruelly. The Japanese did not have to do that, but they did it and they wanted them gone and we drove them away and then after we drove them away, we went away. Now, in their mentality, a victor stays back and runs the place. We simply left, we left the consulate, we left the airstrip, we left anything else we had built and destroyed, but built, we left and we went away and never came back. They said, oh, what's this all about? They left.

*Q: Was the cargo cult still growing there?*

FARRAND: Yes, but not as much as in Papua New Guinea.

*Q. Well, did you get many vets coming, I mean both the Solomons and in Papua New Guinea. I would think there would be great scuba diving in Iron Bottom Sound off Solomon Island and all that.*

FARRAND: Iron Bottom Sound had twenty-three capital ships at both sides at the bottom. The scuba diving on those wrecks, yes, is a major thing. The same guy that found the Titanic, Ballard, he came out there with his team and they did an underwater survey of those vessels and it's a documentary somewhere. One of the major things that I did and that really occupied my time was to get linked up back in Washington at the Pentagon with a two-star general who was put in charge, he was retired, of World War Two commemorations, fiftieth. Remember that was during the fiftieth? I was there in '91 and '92. In '92, the fiftieth anniversary we had on Guadalcanal we worked like beavers to make sure that the marines came, that the army came and that veterans came out of Chicago. They put up for the very first time a memorial. The Japanese went all over the island and put memorials everywhere for their battles. Maybe in the '70s and the 80's. We did very little; the Battle of Monuments Commission did very little. Now on Guadalcanal on top of the ridge where marines fought so long, there was a big ridge.

*Q: Bloody ridge I think it was called, chesty puller and all that?*

FARRAND: Yes. I mean, you know, there was a monument that is properly representative of what went on there. It was paid for by private money, mostly private money, a little bit of government money and was done by a doctor out of Chicago who pulled this thing together. So, I certainly invited him and had everybody there and we had a massive display and Japanese veterans came back to and they were caught sitting together, Japanese and the Americans in the bar of the big hotel down by the lagoon, talking to each other. Not many Japanese, but enough, tears coming down their face. That was a big thing.

*Q: Did the New Hebrides, what do they consist of?*

FARRAND: Eighty islands shaped like a wishbone, Bali Hai. Do you know Michener's Tales of the South Pacific? Bali Hai was the island of Ambae, which was just opposite the place where he and his people naval types and marines were training; George Shultz trained there as a young marine. He wrote South Pacific in the New Hebrides. He looked at this island across the way, it

was in the mist and he wrote all about it and he never went to visit it because he didn't want anything to destroy his dream. These are the people which, there's 160,000 of them, again another thirty languages, forty, incredibly beautiful spot, but it was up until the Second World War, run by the Brits and the French in condominium. So, if you go into a village and there would be a French school and a British school, English, French, all over. It didn't work very well. Now it's joined together, it's called Vanuatu. It has a parliament. It has its own political structure. Each of the islands, of course, have a different agenda. It's being exploited right now a little bit. These are weak governments and outsiders can come in. All over the Pacific, those little island chains, those little island countries they all own a slice of the bandwidth above them. I don't know how it works, but sharpies from outside have come in and persuaded the government to sell over some of these bands and then they auction them off.

*Q: You're talking about radio bands?*

FARRAND: I'm talking about radio bands, I'm talking about Internet bands.

*Q: Did we get much in the way of naval ship visits to your area?*

FARRAND: Yes, I had a good relationship with the CINCPAC and NAVPAK. I don't know if they call it NAVPAK, but anyway, I had at least four ship visits that came through and they were very successful. They would pull in. That was something the Australians never did. That's something any other government never did and it was very much, it was a real positive bonus when you could do that.

*Q: Were we concerned at that time about the influence of the Peoples Republic of China? You know, extending its influence in that area?*

FARRAND: Yes. I was concerned but it was premature at that time to be too concerned, but I have seen since articles appearing. I saw one in the Economist, not that I follow everything, I can't. I saw something in the Economist here that was sent to me by some friends of mine out there talking about how the Chinese are very definitely, I won't say very definitely, but the Chinese have shown interest in extending their influence into Oceania into Oceania. This would be the first place to start the Melanesian Archipelago.

*Q: Well, were we kind of watching that at the time?*

FARRAND: I was, I was, I don't think that Washington. Look, come on, you're talking for all of Oceania, for all of Oceania, I'm talking Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, there's only about six and a half to seven million people total. No, no, actually that's wrong. It's up in the eight to nine million, but four and a half million, four and a half million are in Melanesia. Maybe I'm right. Maybe it's only about six to seven million over all of Oceania, and that would include Tahiti, that would include Fiji, that would include Samoa, that would include Nauru, all of those, Guam, but Melanesia has the biggest concentration of people, roughly sixty-five percent of the population of Oceania is in Melanesia.

*Q: Any migration to the United States from your area?*

FARRAND: No, no. No desire.

*Q: How about the French? Where is New Caledonia?*

FARRAND: That's Melanesian, but it's outside. There's four Melanesian islands, Papua, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia, but New Caledonia is French. Well, it's the department of France.

*Q: Did you cover that, I mean, keep an eye on it?*

FARRAND: I went there twice, well, probably once. It's very much under French control. They have it as a, I went to Tahiti, too and I saw protesters. There was a big delegation coming all over the Pacific and the Department of State, Washington couldn't send anybody, so they asked me to cover it and I did. That was fascinating in Tahiti. The French influence there is at least, there is a significant portion of the population that do not like the French in Tahiti and the same is true in New Caledonia.

*Q: New Caledonia also doesn't have a people, what are they Tunkenese or something?*

FARRAND: Tunken, from Vietnam.

*Q: Yes, so I was thinking, I mean, I know the French have had riots in Caledonia all the time. Well, were you sort of the New Caledonia watcher where you were?*

FARRAND: That's it, that's it. I've sent in maybe one report on it. No, I would say it would probably fall to the American embassy of Canberra to watch that if anybody's watching at all. You know, in those days, the East Asian Bureau was focused virtually, focused on three major issues. Cambodia, China and Japan. I sometimes think and I'm no expert at all, but I sometimes think that we give. (End of tape)

I was just talking about Japan. I don't know, I don't know. It's above me, it's above me and it was with them, too. I thought that sometimes the quality of our diplomacy and focus on Japan was not what it was for, for example, for China or for Southeast Asia, Cambodia, Indonesia. We had a number of ambassadors who were not from the region.

*Q: Were we keeping an eye on Indonesia, which of course, was a West area.*

FARRAND: Irian Jaya connected the popular city.

*Q: Were you picking up anything about how things were going there?*

FARRAND: Yes, because there was an insurgency against the Indonesian government in the hills in the highlands and in the coastal regions, Papua Mondeka, wanted a free Papua, wanted a free island of New Guinea and still do and they are persistent and pesky. I went up one time to the, I went up way up to the border area and actually walked across the border into Indonesia.



There was nobody around. There was a rock and a helicopter let down here and it was a rock and it said Indonesia. So, took my camera and walked across into Indonesia, walked around a little bit into the jungle into the grassy area, then came right back out, had a picture taken. I went up on the coast, too, along the coast road and then the coast road just peters off. Angiapura is on the north coast of Irian Jaya and you could see it at night, the lights, but when I went from the last wewak, I think we walked as far as the road could go and it just petered out, became nothing so we just kept going with four wheel drive and then we got out at the water's edge. There's another little mark that says Indonesia walked across it again. It's a long thousand miles, thousand kilometers.

*Q: Well, you can't really do it here.*

FARRAND: Well, all I'm saying is that's a long way and there it is.

*Q: Well, yes, during the war, MacArthur had quite an extensive campaign. Wewak was one of the places we landed and I think that was probably towards the end of the campaign there. But, was the government of Papua, New Guinea doing anything to foster a greater Papua, New Guinea? This was sort of a local thing.*

FARRAND: No, no. Oh, yes, this impulse came from Irian Jayans. This came from Irian Jayans who were living under Indonesian rule, that did not want it. So, they gravitated toward the border area probably, or maybe they were there anyway, but they made their mischief up in the hills sloping across and into. They would use Papua, New Guinea as a refuge when the Indonesians were chasing them. Of course, the Indonesians because it was a porous border, they didn't always necessarily honor that either and that became a real friction between the government of Papua, New Guinea and Indonesia. When you are living, sleeping alongside an 800-pound gorilla, you don't poke him with a hard stick all the time, a pointed stick all the time. You'd be very careful. That's what Papua, New Guinea wants to have, what Papua, New Guinea does not want would be a surge by Indonesia so they do all they can. I mean, a westward, an eastward push by Indonesia into what is Papua, New Guinea, thus extending Indonesia's control over New Guinea, the big island, the big island, is called New Guinea extending its control is now fifty percent and if they pushed they would get more. So, Papua, New Guinea's foreign policy has to be deeply concerned with maintaining good and correct relations with Indonesia and they extend considerable efforts in this regard. While I was there, they invited defense minister. I met him from Indonesia. I don't think they had a head of state exchange, but they sent delegations to Jakarta and they do what they can to smooth over this border problem and not become too upset if occasionally an Indonesian patrol moves across the line. Then there's fighter jets that will come over the air space occasionally or aircraft chasing these people. I don't know where it sits today; I'm just reflecting where it was then.

*Q: Well, that's what our interest is at the time. Did you exchange information or was there any point in doing that with the embassy in Jakarta?*

FARRAND: Yes, the American Ambassador in Jakarta was Robert Barry. He was a good friend of mine from Soviet days and he asked if I would take the time to send him an assessment of what I saw, so I didn't do it immediately, I couldn't do it immediately because I couldn't get up

there, but I did after a while and I sent him off a message one time saying, “Here is how I see it from our side of it.” I never heard back from him and Washington never asked.

*Q: What about the missionaries, were they, I was thinking, I hear of people dedicating their lives by going up in rather difficult areas. Was sort of the care and feeding of the missionaries a major problem for you?*

FARRAND: Yes, it was. They did not come to the U.S. government for physical assistance, money or anything of that nature. Maybe they did, but they didn't do it out in the field. If they did, they did it through Washington, but there were any number of religious groups that were in Papua, New Guinea from the United States. Evangelical groups, probably as many, I'm going to say at one point, that I counted I'm going to do this this way. There is and I think this is in the vernacular of the literature of religious life in America today even. There are the mainstream churches. There are the mainline Protestant churches. There is the Roman Catholic Church; of course, there is the Jewish faith and the Muslim faith here. We don't have that; neither of the latter two do we have in Papua, New Guinea. It's all Christian and its Christian divided between Protestant and Catholic. As far as the Protestants are concerned there is the London Missionary Society, LMS, which is the Church of England. There are Presbyterians, there are Methodists, there are Baptists and Lutherans, very important. Lutherans on the north coast speak German, along the Bismarck Sea and places of that nature. Now, in addition to those that I just mentioned and most of those that I have just mentioned are what one would call church planting, church planting religions, faiths, faiths. They would build a church a physical church were they'd go. Now, they over the years, the LMS, the Lutherans and the Catholics, in particular, the LMS, the Lutherans and the Catholics, they had worked out a sort of working relationship. The LMS would take the south coast where Port Moresby was and along out in the Trobrian Islands. The Lutherans would take the north coast. The Catholics had a tendency to, they were not exclusive, but they had a tendency to be in the highlands. Up until 1933 everyone thought that the highlands were uninhabited, uninhabited. In fact, it was written on a map at the time, uninhabited, that was the word was written across the whole Stanley Range and for a whole area probably four hundred miles wide and five hundred miles in length, three hundred and fifty miles wide, thoroughly uninhabited. The Irish Australian named Mick Lahey and his two brothers, Dan Lahey and I forgot the other one. They decided they wanted to push back in there in the '30s to see if there was gold. They put together a land expedition and they had bearers, probably one hundred bearers or two hundred bearers to bring the stuff along. The best thing they ever brought along was a box camera. You've had one of these things? That was the best thing they brought along. Now, did they find gold? It works out they did find gold. The Lahey family is still, I can take you up, I don't think he's dead yet, I can take you up and introduce you. Mick is gone, but the others. They got up in there and they pushed up over the top of the one of the ridges and they looked down and they're astounded in 1933 as they look down on this valley to see little fires coming out of the canopy. There's a fire here, and a fire here, fires, wooden stoves, little campfires. As they walked further in people started emerging coming up to them with their mouths wide open. They had never ever seen each other before and this was called first contact. It is written up in a marvelous book with these photographs from this big black box where these cultures came together for the very first time. They found a million; no you can't say they found, there were a million people. I didn't find you, you existed, you're right to exist is greater than mine. I can't say that I discovered you, no, but they contacted for the first time. So, there's a

million people added right there to the rolls. Now, when news of all of this got out, there's all of these heathen souls, the missionaries got a savior of souls. So, this was a great impulse to push into the highlands. The war came, took time, it took them a long time to get a road built back up in there and that road is the subject of difficulties. So, what happened, it drew in a large number of missionaries. Today, I counted when I was there twenty-eight non-mainstream churches from the United States, mostly from the southwestern part of the United States, twenty-eight. One day there was a minister, they have a minister of culture and what not, but anyway, the minister who could have been the attorney general called me in. He said to me, "You know, we're having terrible difficulties with all of these churches and their countries, all of these missionaries. What can you do?" I said, "I can do nothing." He said, "It's confusing to our people because they're all Christian, but there are differences between them and they don't agree and the people are confused." Then, of course, the differences, there are really stiff rivalries between them.

*Q: Well, did you get involved in any of these or this is sort of an internecine battle that was going on up in the highlands and along the coast?*

FARRAND: When I would visit the highlands or when I would visit other places, missionary groups would often ask if I would, in particularly the highlands where you were really isolated and where the families were living in the bush and they would come together periodically in the city like, for example, a large settlement called the Skoroka. They would ask me to speak and I would speak in front of them and I would talk in front of them and I would give them a briefing about U.S. relations with Papua, New Guinea and I would talk about what we were trying to do, what we supported. After all, it was a democracy. After all, it was in fact a functioning democracy. This was something that I always wanted to bring more to Washington's attention that we ought to, when something is working and working reasonably well, we ought to put together a strategic, it doesn't have to cost a lot of money, but a strategic plan and then work on that plan. That's what I tried to do while I was there, bring all these strands and elements of what we were doing on that island, as small as it was and make sure that it was fitting in with a strategy to buttress democracy. So, I sent people, for example, back to, anything having to do, I'm not a lawyer, but anything having to do with strengthening the law, strengthening the legal profession, strengthening the courts, the prosecutors, justices, anything, I tried. I had some moderate success in that.

*Q: How about medical, did you or the embassy get involved in medical evacuations with people up in the hills and all that?*

FARRAND: No, too costly, well I mean, no. It was all pretty much handled by the groups themselves. These churches, many of them, the missionaries themselves have to raise their own money, they come back after five years and they go on the speaking circuit and then after six months of that, the money they've piled up, they can then take back. They share some of it with their church out wherever it may be, Dallas, Houston or wherever and then they go back to with the remainder and they live on that for the next five years.

*Q: Is there anything else we could cover before we move on?*

FARRAND: Let's see if I can just say two things quickly. Number one, I suppose there'll never be another war like World War Two, there'll never be anything like that again, but I believe that small nations like the three to which I was ambassador, all of them democracies struggling, weak, but struggling democracies, need support. Shortsighted or decisions made, actually there's no decisions made. The non-decisions that are made over little governments like that, that is, simply they can be ignored, we can have representation there, but we don't want to put very much behind it beyond that and when we're in a budget cutting mode, the first candidates to go would be for example, our one person embassy on Honiara. I have a chargé d'affaires there in the Solomon Islands. The total cost per year was \$387,000. I figured it out that under Baker, Secretary Baker, there was an undersecretary for management named Rogers, to show the White House that we were being very frugal, cut three embassies in the world and one of them was this one. I did everything I could to keep that open because our tuna industry depends very much on having access to and good relations with these governments and Guadalcanal means a lot to our history. I'm going to go back at this, I'm going to get some allies from the U.S. Marine retired community and I'm going to try to get that embassy opened again, but I can't. It would be difficult now, everybody will be crying the woes about no money, but the Japanese are there, the Chinese are there, the Europeans, the Australians, the New Zealanders and others because they are looking after their interests there, but the United States cannot spend half a million dollars keeping a small one person embassy alive in an island that it freed from the Japanese. That would be one thing I would say and I would say that should apply.

The other thing I would say was all of these islands, a study was done confidential back in 1980 by a guy named Jim Kelly who was going on as ambassador, but he was waiting so they sent him out on a, he was waiting and waiting for this. They sent him out on this mission. He didn't know anything about the South Pacific. He went through all the various countries and he came back and wrote a confidential report which stated that the best investment we have for the smallest amount of money within those countries because it was about fifteen nations out there across the Pacific. They all vote with us. They vote with us in the UN. All they need is a little respect. It wouldn't cost very much. Very inexpensive, but we can't bring ourselves up to keep a small little embassy going here and a little embassy going there. We're shortsighted.

*Q: Well, then Bill you left in 1993? Where did you go?*

FARRAND: I came back to, I left in late '93 and I came back to become the, they said at the time the deputy commandant of the industrial college of the armed forces, ICAP, over at the National Defense University? Yes, deputy commandant, I was really the international affairs advisor to the commandant.

**RICHARD W. TEARE**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1993-1996)**

*Richard W. Teare was born in Ohio in 1937. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1948. His career includes positions in Barbados,*

*Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, New Zealand, and Australia. Mr. Teare was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July 1998.*

*Q: Dick, how did you get to Papua-New Guinea?*

TEARE: You mean by what route?

*Q: Yes.*

TEARE: You don't mean how I maneuvered to get the nomination?

*Q: No.*

TEARE: Well we traveled from Washington to Honolulu for consultations at CINCPAC and then on to Australia for consultations in Canberra which is the parent post for Moresby in most respects. After a couple of days in Canberra we got back on the plane and flew to Sydney, Brisbane, and on to Port Moresby.

*Q: Let's pick it up sort of there. In the first place in the Department and then we'll pick CINCPAC and then we'll pick Canberra. What were you getting from anybody you had known who had served there before? What were you getting about Papua-New Guinea and service there and our interests and all?*

TEARE: I got quite a bit. First of all the United States interests are distinctly limited. Australia is the dominant outside influence there and the principle source of money and so forth. United States interests at that time were essentially in the mining and minerals area. The biggest single American investment and presence was CHEVRON which was the managing partner in the development of the country's first oil field, and it is not a large one. In fact production has probably peaked in the last year or two and is now headed down although further discoveries are possible. The geology is probably promising.

So CHEVRON was there in a big way. AMOCO was invested in the Portero mining project, an oil company with a mining investment although it sold out its interest while I was there. And then Kennicott Copper had interests in other mines but Kennicott was acquired by Rio Tinto Zinc of the UK while I was there also. So in fact U.S. investment which had been going up during the '80s, beginning of the '90s, declined during my time.

*Q: So you'd obviously done something!*

TEARE: I don't think I've done anything at all but it happened that way.

Now there were some other American interests. For example the Parker Drilling Company, I forget where its U.S. headquarters is, maintained some rigs and staff in Papua-New Guinea and did drilling for CHEVRON and for others as indicated. But it was not a big presence. There was a helicopter firm with American content. Then there were a couple of refinery groups that tried to come in, that competed to come in, during my time and two of them had American

participation. In one case an American company in the lead. It was relatively small time compared with the Australian investment, Australian business, and the Australian presence generally.

We sold things like occasionally aircraft, small ones, or computer software or telecommunications equipment. We did alright in that respect but the market in Papua-New Guinea and in the other island states is so small that in general U.S. firms don't spend a lot of time and money chasing contracts for sales in those parts.

I stopped in San Francisco and saw CHEVRON on the way out which was very much worth doing.

Here in Washington, though, before I set out I talked to people all over State and a little bit of Defense and then CIA and at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Wildlife Fund which was involved with CHEVRON. The contribution to the well-being of the people of New Guinea and the Government of Papua-New Guinea that CHEVRON made as part of its arrangement involved a three million dollar grant over three years to the World Wildlife Fund. The World Wildlife Fund was working on the ground there to establish sustainable forestry in the same general area where CHEVRON was lifting oil.

I tried to cover as many Washington area outfits as I could. There weren't a lot. But I think I had a pretty good understanding of things. Plus my predecessor got back just as I was heading out.

*Q: Who was that?*

TEARE: That was Bill Farrand. Robert W. Farrand known as Bill, who is now in Brčko working for the OSCE I think it is, working for the Supreme Representative, Westendorf, in Bosnia. I saw him last week. He was back turning in his badge just as I was.

*Q: At CINCPAC were there any strategic interests with Papua-New Guinea or the Solomons?*

TEARE: They were rather slight. Such interest as there was was mainly in Papua-New Guinea. We had had in the late '80s, early '90s, a non-commissioned officer Special Forces stationed in PNG. The first guy went out on a two-year tour and lasted it out, in fact became a very prominent figure even once supposedly got into a demonstration by unpaid troops and got his photo in the local newspaper. A second guy was sent out and he had his family with him also but his family couldn't take the living conditions and so he was pulled out after a few months. So that idea had dropped off.

But we did have a resident Defense Attaché Office. It opened in 1990 but by the time I was headed out in late '93 it had already been determined that office would close in mid '94. We would once again cover Papua-New Guinea for Defense Attaché purposes out of the embassy in Canberra with the Army Attaché there accredited as Defense Attaché to Papua-New Guinea. In Australia the Air Attaché is always the Defense Attaché.

*Q: It's a little bit ironic to think that where you were sitting was the focus of intense interest for three or four years during World War II.*

TEARE: It was indeed!

*Q: It was a major commitment there. The battle where sort of the Japanese empire and the United States and Australian forces collided and fought over! Obviously this is long gone!*

TEARE: Yes it had indeed. In fact they celebrated in 1992 the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal over in Solomons. That is an interesting story, too, at least to me. One member of the entire Congress asked to see me during my consultations and I guess particularly at the Senate names are circulated around. The person of interest was Senator John Chaffee of Rhode Island. So I went up to his office accompanied by someone from 'H' without any real indication of what his interests were. I had met him, although he didn't remember it, years and years earlier in 1965 when he had come to Saigon with a group of Governors. I was escort officer not for him but for George Romney. I don't know if I've told you that story.

*Q: I hope you did because that's where he got brainwashed wasn't it?*

TEARE: Yes, except that he was late for Lodge's briefing and didn't pay attention while he was there!

*Q: We'll go back because I don't think we've covered that.*

TEARE: If need be we can.

*Q: But go ahead.*

TEARE: Anyway it turned out that Senator Chaffee had fought in the Battle of Guadalcanal. He celebrated his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in fact on the island in 1942 as a guy literally passing the ammunition for an artillery battery. I think it was the 11<sup>th</sup> Marine Artillery Regiment. He had missed the 1992 50th Anniversary when a lot of his old mates had gone back and he wanted to get back to Guadalcanal himself. I said I thought that was terrific and asked when he could come. He said he was thinking of the break after Thanksgiving. I said that was better still. Shortly after I got out there the United States was going to hand over to the Solomon Islands a new Parliament House built at the expense of the United States by a Japanese contractor under the supervision of a Navy Lieutenant from the Civil Engineering Corps. Maybe he could be the official U.S. representative at the ceremony. So I passed that up the line and it turned out that was indeed what happened!

The five million dollars for the Parliament House came about as the result of a visit through the region by three Congressmen, Solarz, Dornan and the delegate from American Samoa, Faleomavaega, in 1989. They said they thought we ought to do something for this country where Americans shed so much blood. So they put a line item in the Budget, five million for a new Parliament House. That was completed. The money did not cover an auxiliary generator or landscaping of the grounds or even paving the parking lot. I think Solomons are still trying to get

additional contributions out of us for those purposes. I don't think they will succeed. But the building itself is very nice, far and away better than any other building I know of on the whole island of Guadalcanal.

So the way it all worked out was that I got to Port Moresby on a Sunday. Presented my credentials there on Tuesday. Left on Wednesday and presented credentials in the Solomons on Thursday and was thus duly accredited and able to greet Senator Chaffee on his arrival on Saturday. Also Delegate Faleomavaega came for the occasion and we had a U.S. Navy ship in port. One of those that carry the landing craft air cushioned. Hovercraft with helicopter engines mounted sideways.

So we had a fine time. The ceremonies were impressive. Senator Chaffee delivered an excellent speech inside the Parliament House once it was dedicated in which he talked about ethics in government. Something the Solomons certainly needed to hear. It was terrific. We spent a day chasing around battlefield sites. Senator Chaffee brought along a couple of books about the battle of Guadalcanal and he read relevant paragraphs from those books as we viewed the very places.

We went over across Iron Bottom Sound to the other side where he had never been during his time.

*Q: Savo Island?*

TEARE: Yes. We didn't go to Savo ourselves; we circled it in an LCAC. It was a fascinating experience. Furthermore on his plane up from Australia to Solomons the Senator had encountered another marine veteran back from Pittsburgh who was somewhat older than the Senator. He sort of took this guy under his wing and brought him along on everything. This guy was rather bewildered. He didn't know what had happened to him. He wore hearing aids in both ears and was ready to start drinking beer by 3 p.m. But he was interested in what was going on and we found his bivouac position. Although we never found the place where the Senator's artillery piece had been stationed, at least not any place he recognized. But it was quite an experience.

As to the warfare and history and so forth in Solomons, one factor that I had not anticipated was the very low level of interest in World War II history by any of the indigenous Melanesians. This was true in all three of the countries to which I was accredited.

First of all, of course, the vast majority of people there was born only after World War II and has no direct memory. Second those who were around generally fled the scene. Went up into the hills and stayed out of the way while the Japanese on the one side and the U.S., Australians, New Zealanders and others fought it out on the ground. They only came back down after it was all over.

They think of it really for the most part as not being their quarrel. So they aren't much interested except for a few who have become guides and not very good ones at that. Or the few who live near some of the sites and try to sell you old coins and shell-casings and so forth. There is not a lot of interest.



The person who took Chaffee and me and our party on tour was an Australian named John Ennis who had come only four or five years earlier. He was in the business of selling computer services, data processing to various parts of the Solomons Government. But he had picked up on World War II history as an avocation and become very intense about it. He was the most knowledgeable person I found in any of the three countries on World War II history.

A lot of Japanese tourists came, not just casual tourists either, relatives of survivors. I'm sure you've seen this in various places, too. They liked to comb the battlefield themselves. There are several more Japanese shrines than there are American ones. There is one American memorial in Solomons only recently built and under the jurisdiction of the Battle Monuments Commission. But the Japanese have smaller unit or even personal shrines at several of the major sites. A few thousand a year come to the Solomons. There is at least one hotel, Japanese-owned, that caters to them. They have their own buses, their own native Japanese tour guides and so forth. It is a much more polished arrangement than anything that we have. There is a higher level of interest.

The Solomons Government hoped that the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary would bring a lot of Americans out in '92 and subsequently. Well it brought some but not too many more. And then in 1995 they staged a re-dedication of Henderson Field, the international airport there that is named for a Marine flyer. They brought out his brother, a younger brother who went on to become a brigadier general in the Marines and was of course by then in his 80s, and three of his nephews and a couple of their spouses. I came over from Port Moresby for that occasion. The Marine Corps sent its Director of Aviation, a three-star from Washington, and the Marine Forces Brass Quintet out from Honolulu. It was a very nice ceremony and I read a message from Senator Chafe on that occasion but it was essentially a tourism promotion. I don't think they got many more then or since.

*Q: When you got to Papua-New Guinea can you describe sort of the setting of Port Moresby and life there? And then we'll move to the government.*

TEARE: Right. Port Moresby is a totally unprepossessing town. I'm talking about the works of man. There are nice hills although they have been pretty well denuded, and there is splendid blue-green water, pretty good reefs off shore. But don't look too closely because there is a lot of trash floating in the water. At low tide you can see all kinds of junk particularly plastic bags on the foreshore. It is in a rain shadow; so, whereas much of the country gets a lot of rain, Port Moresby gets relatively little, usually less than 40 inches a year. So it is dry and dusty much of the time. It's hot and quite humid.

In general, in the years since independence in 1975, the independent Government of Papua-New Guinea has invested far too little in maintenance, repair and infrastructure. Everything seems to be in decline except for a few new buildings and most of those are outside the capital. For example, there are a couple of buildings that house all the law firms in town. They seem to have enough money to pay the rent to keep up the buildings. It would not be any exaggeration to call the place overall a dump.

Furthermore it has a serious crime problem and a crime pattern that seems to know no geographic boundaries. That is, it's everywhere. There is no nice part of town. All parts of town seem to be subject to violent crime. This is not new, but it has been getting worse over the years since independence. One of my predecessors, Paul Gardner, was mugged there while jogging in the mid '80s. The stories are dramatic and so far as I know almost all of them are true. One of our previous Peace Corps Directors, for example, was stabbed in the parking lot of the airport in a robbery attempt. There were serious incidents throughout my time there. In no place that I have ever lived have I known so many people who were themselves the victims of violent crime.

*Q: What was the reason for this?*

TEARE: I think it has to do mainly with a pattern of population movement in which young males leave their villages and the social control of their home tribes and clans. They come into Port Moresby or Lay or the other towns. First of all there are very few jobs that pay much of anything and even if there are jobs these guys don't have the education to fill those jobs. They tend to sponge off relatives. In fact there is a strong tradition of taking care of your own clansmen. The term in Melanesian pidgin is "wan talk", one talk, the same language in other words. If you and I speak the same language, if we are of the same tribe, which is essentially the same thing, than I am obligated to help you out. Even if I'm earning ten dollars a week and you come to Port Moresby to live with me, I've got to take you in and help feed you out of my ten dollars a week. That imposes a great strain on the people who have to provide and the newcomers to the town who, although they take it as their due, I think must be uncomfortable about.

Anyway, they see the small minority riding around in cars with air-conditioning, darkened glass windows and living in nice houses on Toagooba Hill where I lived, or elsewhere, and with television sets and buying liquor by the case and so forth and they think they are entitled to it. And so they take it. This extends to banks. Bank robberies were common while I was there. On my last business day in Port Moresby, in July '96, the bank right next door to the chancery was robbed. One of our FSNs was in there trying to cash a couple of checks payable to me. All of the customers were held inside for an hour or two after the robbery but he finally came back with my money.

It is hard to describe and after awhile you get to the point where you are perhaps outraged but no longer astonished or shocked by these crimes.

*Q: Running an embassy and having Americans there, there must have been real problems because of this crime business.*

TEARE: There were. And some of the victims were Americans, including long-term residents. In fact they seemed to fare worse in my time than tourists. Mainly, I guess, because tourists tended not to be there very long or didn't have established patterns of movement and so forth. But nobody was really safe. Some of the crime victims were actually taken care of by their own organizations.

CHEVRON, for example, had six people, no Americans, I think they were all British and Australian. There were four men and two women and they were hiking in the national park, or

the only one accessible to Port Moresby. They went down a trail and were suddenly set upon by three or four armed men who tied them up, robbed them, raped one of the women and threatened to roll the men off a cliff. This was late in 1994. A group had passed down the same trail moments before and another group came along and found the victims and untied them and gave them help. But by the time I learned of the incident, I think it happened on a Sunday and I heard on Monday, CHEVRON had already flown those who needed medical treatment or psychological counseling out to Australia. So it helped, in other words, to be able to take care of one's own as CHEVRON did and some of the other companies.

*Q: What about staffing? I would think it would be very difficult to get anybody with a family, or a single woman, secretary, officer, to come out there.*

TEARE: It was difficult. We had sometimes no bidders at all, sometimes no more than one or two bidders on any of the jobs. Almost all of our people were accompanied. For example our economic officer was a woman. She had her husband along. He was retired from private industry. The Peace Corps co-Directors were a couple. Most of the volunteers assigned to Papua-New Guinea are indeed married couples.

The experience there is that once they get out and established in their localities they are pretty safe because the local people tend to adopt them more or less and look after them. But some Peace Corps volunteers had to be moved because they were not safe in their first locations. I think there was one or two instances where a couple of unmarried women were assigned together and likewise a few instances of two men assigned to the same site, usually the school. But in general the Peace Corps aimed at getting married couples for Papua-New Guinea.

*Q: Did the crime problem affect the operation of the embassy?*

TEARE: Well in a sense in that we were always concerned about security. You were always looking over your shoulder. We encouraged everyone to carry a radio at all times and almost everyone did. We had our own radio link and then we had another channel that linked us in with the Australians. And yet a third one I guess it was that linked us to our security company. The local agent for Warmold. But none of this gave us great confidence. If you could use your radio it meant you could probably get help in anywhere from ten minutes to half an hour, depending on where you were. But it was not automatic or immediate.

There were guards from the Warmold Company at the Chancery and at my residence, the DCM's residence and our staff-housing compound where almost everybody else lived. These guards were unarmed. They were paid something less than one kina per hour which was a little more than a dollar when I got there but well under that when I left. They worked twelve-hour shifts and they were not going to stop bullets for us. We were well aware of that. So we were simply very careful. There were some places we didn't go. We stuck to the main roads after dark and so forth. But as I say over time you develop a certain, or I did anyway, tolerance or indifference. Not that you are relaxed about things, quite the opposite, but it was hey, I'm here, I'm going to make a go of it and try to live as normal as I can.

*Q: That brings us to what is the Government like? Public security is part of the obligation of a government. But beyond that what type of government was it? What was your impression of it?*

TEARE: The Government of Papua-New Guinea is a unicameral parliamentary system with 109 members elected for five-year terms. So there was an election in '92 before I got there and another one in '97 and so on. It descends from the system that the Australians set up during the short period of internal self-government before independence. It is not very effective at all.

The members of Parliament are elected from relatively small constituencies and the number of candidates is huge. I think they averaged 15 in each of the last couple of elections. That means that people would often get into Parliament with 14, 12 or even 9 or 8 percent of the vote. Once in, the custom is to use your office to reward the people who elected you, typically your own clan mates and neighbors, through patronage, public spending and so forth. And then you probably won't get a second term. The turnover rate is usually more than 50 percent. Incumbents are defeated because they haven't done anything for the vast majority of their voters and so the next time somebody else comes along, again with perhaps a very small percentage of the vote.

Now there are of course numerous exceptions to that. At the time I arrived the Prime Minister was Paias Wingti. He had been Prime Minister once before and he and three others had passed the Prime Ministership around among themselves ever since independence. In other words 18 years at that point. The first Prime Minister was Sir Michael Somare. Then there came Julius Chan, half Chinese and half Melanesian, who was knighted also by the time I got there, Sir Julius. And then there was Rabbie Namaliu and finally Wingti himself. I think Somare, Chan and Wingti had all been Prime Minister twice by that point, Namaliu only once.

It was again a pattern. Not only were the MPs uncertain of having more than one term but most of them essentially were for sale. There was no strong sense of Party identity, much less loyalty. Maybe not in the first instance with Somare in '75, but thereafter in subsequent Parliaments essentially it was putting together your own majority with money as the glue. A promise of actual cash or a promise of money in pork barrel things later on. So, as you can imagine, these governments were not particularly stable and the minute somebody got into office other people began aspiring to take away members of his majority. At the same time he would concentrate on building his majority. So he might have only 57 or 60 seats when he started out but by a year or so into his term he might have 80 or 85 people voting with him, depending on how assiduous he had been in building his strength.

The parliamentary system allows for votes of confidence. This could have led to revolving door government. So they amended the Constitution a couple of times to provide for no vote of confidence within the first 18 months after an election. I think it was originally 12 and then they were going to extend it to 24. They compromised on 18. And that any vote of no confidence in the last 12 months of a parliamentary term would lead to a new election. So this had the effect of deterring and giving the Prime Minister a breathing space.

Well Wingti had been elected in 1992 and after he had spent 13 or 14 months in office, in other words his clock was ticking down towards the 18 month honeymoon, the end of the honeymoon, he abruptly resigned and had himself re-elected the next day. This gave him in theory another 18

months, starting the clock again. This was seen as a pretty clever maneuver. Too clever by half, in fact, and the opposition took him to court. Almost a year later, in about August of 1994, the High Court ruled that while the resignation had been legal the re-election the next day was not. It had something to do with the parliamentary calendar. I've forgotten the details.

So abruptly Wingti was gone from office. Julius Chan came, who I believe, had been his Deputy Prime Minister as well as Minister of Finance. He came forward and formed a majority, again in the traditional way. Chan remained Prime Minister through the rest of my time and on into the spring of '97. He got into a scandal of his own about employing essentially African mercenaries through their London headquarters to come in and settle very quickly the insurgency on Bougainville which Chan himself had ignored for a year and a half. The idea being to pacify that island and the insurgency by the June '97 election. All of this was exposed. The mercenaries were deported; they never got into action. Chan had to step aside as Prime Minister while the investigation went forward and a couple of months later in the June election he lost his own seat. I don't know what he is up to now. I think there are allegations that he is trying to operate from behind the scenes. So by June '97, a year after I left, they had a new Prime Minister, Bill Skate.

*Q: When you were there, starting in '93, the Soviet Union no longer existed, the Cold War was essentially over. What were we watching? Was Indonesia, for example, fishing in these troubled waters?*

TEARE: Not very much. Indonesia had done so in the '80s when Benni Mardoni was Minister of Defense in Indonesia and was bribing people in Papua-New Guinea, a couple of whom went to prison for awhile. One of them got out and was back and active in politics again by the time I was there. But basically Indonesia had bigger things to worry about such as Timor and the indigenous insurgency in Irian Jaya. The western half of the island had continued to decline in numbers and effectiveness. The most organized and active element of that movement, which is called Organisasi Papua-merika, or the Organization for a Free Papua, was located in an UNHCR-funded and sponsored refugee camp about 35 miles away from the border. There were other people down by the border but they got no benefits except an occasional visit from a Catholic nun out of the province capital who would go down and hold sick call a couple of times a year.

So there was not much going on for Indonesia to worry about. The most dramatic event I guess in my time was that some OPM people attacked the Indonesian consulate general.

*Q: OPM means?*

TEARE: That Organisasi Papua-merika. They attacked the Indonesian consulate in Bonimo on the North coast of Papua-New Guinea. I think the consul and vice consul were both over in Indonesia shopping that day but there were a couple of other employees who barricaded themselves inside the building. Some minor damage was done and the OPM people left. The PNG police were as ineffective in capturing them as they were in keeping down crime in Port Moresby or anywhere else.

Our interests essentially were to keep Papua-New Guinea on our side in United Nations votes and other international arenas and to look after the interests of the American citizens resident in that country. We didn't have a very good count because registration is not all that accurate. The estimate commonly used when I was going out there was 4,000 but I think it was probably down closer to 2,000 by culling our registration records.

A lot of these people are missionaries, linguistic missionaries in particular. The biggest organizations are the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the New Tribes Mission. Those organizations and others go into the bush, establish themselves with local people, typically again this is a married couple or a family. They spend years learning the local language, figuring out its grammar, and compiling vocabularies, with the eventual object of translating the Bible into the local language. Usually this represents the first time that the local language has ever been reduced to writing. So it is an important literacy mechanism also.

The Summer Institute has an arrangement with the Government of Papua-New Guinea in which its work is made available to the Government and Summer Institute says it will not proselytize, although it has a strong religious bent. New Tribes Mission came along later and is essentially a split off of SIL. It does not have any such contractual provisions so it does a bit more in the way of proselytizing and it takes a less scholarly approach to languages. SIL wanted its people to have doctorates and to know Greek and maybe even Aramaic in order to do the Bible, or Hebrew, whatever. New Tribes doesn't go that high in terms of scholarship but the object is the same.

I think the Summer Institute says it has by now transcribed something like 275 of the 800 plus languages of New Guinea. Again the multiplicity of languages comes essentially from the rough terrain, the fragmentation of the people, their long years of isolation one from another. Even people in the next valley may not know there are people in the next valley! That was certainly the case up until the 1930s when the Australians started exploring the Highlands and found that there were hundreds of thousands of people living up there whose existence even had not been known to the outside world.

*Q: How did you find these religious linguistic organizations? Did they pretty well take care of their people?*

TEARE: They did. They were very good about that and both SIL and New Tribes had their own aircraft. They used a common airfield up at Ghoroko which was also a Peace Corps training area. There was at least one other missionary aviation outfit. So they generally handled their own medical evacuations, but we were always prepared to help. We also talked to them about warning networks, warden sort of things. We had pretty good cooperation with them.

The SIL in Ghoroko came under pressure from some of its neighbors in land disputes and we got involved in that a bit. I think we managed to help a little. I was also involved in the case of an American researcher at the Malaria Institute who came under pressure from the government. We managed to dispel the cloud over her head.

*Q: What was the problem?*

TEARE: Well it's long and involved, but essentially I think it is fair to say that the Department of Foreign Affairs came to believe erroneously that she was involved in taking blood samples outside of Papua-New Guinea for some sort of commercial exploitation by pharmaceutical companies. In fact that was not the case, but scientific researchers are very interested in the whole history and evolution of these very isolated peoples. If you can get in and take samples of blood, of DNA, of people who have not been exposed to infectious diseases, who have a relatively limited breeding circle, you can learn a lot, including immunity to disease and how you develop it and so forth. And that was a large part of her interest. She was part of a respected institution, one of the leading malaria research enterprises in the world. But through misunderstandings, to put it charitably, her work came under some suspicion. She was able to stay on for some time after that although I understand she has now left and gone elsewhere.

We were trying to promote trade in a way but we didn't have any great success in that. I've already mentioned the indifference of most American companies to the small local market. But again things do happen slowly. In my time there were rumors that the Bank of Hawaii was interested in acquiring the local Indo-Suisse Bank, French, which was getting out of retail banking in Asia anyway and since I left that has happened. I expect that the Bank of Hawaii will give the Australian Bank that dominated Papua-New Guinea a run for their money as Bank of Hawaii had already done in Solomons and Vanuatu where it had acquired part or entire interest in local banks.

*Q: Did you find working on commercial interests that there was sort of an old boys Australian network that didn't take too kindly to these upstart Americans coming in?*

TEARE: Very much so. Yes, that's absolutely correct. It was also true in the military training field. I should perhaps get back to that briefly because the Defense Attaché Office did close in 1994 as was known before I went out. We continued on a small scale a series of exercises by U.S. Special Forces that had only started in '93. They would come in once or twice a year. The series is called Balanced Passion – 'P' for Papua-New Guinea. 'Balance Solo' was the code for Solomons, and 'Balance' I've forgotten, for Vanuatu, but we did one or two there also during my time. But with Papua-New Guinea it became rather well established. An American Special Forces Mission would come in March, April and train with one or other of the two Papua-New Guinea infantry battalions. The way it worked out was that the battalion we trained with would go on its year-long deployment to Bougainville the following month. We took Admiral Mackey out to the PNG Defense Force Training Center and he was impressed with the potential, I guess you could say, but also depressed by the physical arrangements and the curriculum and so forth. So he decided to authorize the deployment of a Special Forces soldier. This time not for a two-year tour, rather a 179-day maximum temporary duty to be replaced if circumstances warranted...I mean to be continued. So that guy came in January 1996 and he turned out to be excellent. He established a rapport with the Papua-New Guineans that the Australians with their 150 or 200 man military training mission were never able to do.

Things were going quite well until the Papua-New Guineans juggled their training system. They sent all the trainees up to Lei and didn't make any provision for sending Sgt. Michael Wayne along with the trainees. So Wayne was left in the Port Moresby area with very little to do so we

terminated him after four months. I thought it was very shortsighted on the part of the PNG Defense Force and I think they lived to regret it.

But that was essentially our military contribution: the annual training exercises, a few training courses for Defense Force soldiers...officers, usually, in the United States, and then Sgt. Wayne for the four months that he was there.

AID had announced in mid '93 that it was closing its regional office for the Pacific that was based in Suva, Fiji. It had a branch with one American and five national employees in Port Moresby. So that phase-out occurred during my first few months there. It was a modest program. We had one project to train people in fisheries. I never got to visit that one. It was essentially gone by the time I could have visited.

I did visit another project that was being done under contract by World Vision. It involved the training of village birth attendants. Those are not as qualified as midwives, but women who could give very basic instruction in sanitation and safe home delivery techniques and in theory could recognize the cases that were likely to present complications and send the mothers off to a higher level of medical care.

But these were very modest and we simply had no money after AID closed for anything else really. So the tools I was left with were this very modest military program and Peace Corps. Peace Corps operated also in Solomons and Vanuatu and I made it a point to visit them each time I went to those countries.

*Q: What was your impression of the relations of the former colonial power of Australia in Papua-New Guinea?*

TEARE: A very difficult relation for both sides. The Australians tended to be paternalistic, sometimes even racist. Yet they had Papua-New Guinea's best interests at heart and put in a lot of money. I think particularly among a generation of politicians now of mature years, typified by Andrew Peacock who is currently the Ambassador to Washington, were very protective of Papua-New Guinea. I think that has died off or is no longer visible in younger generations of Australians who have experienced or at least read about the resentment of Australia on the part of Papua-New Guinea. They have been brought up on the stories of crime and Aussie-bashing in Papua-New Guinea today.

The Papua-New Guineas for their part I think are, at bottom, grateful for the help they have received from Australia over the years. But they don't like to be dependent, no one does. There is a lot of resentment of what they see as domineering by the Australians and attempts to make aid conditional. Sir Julius Chan was vitriolic in his condemnation of Australia after Australia blew the whistle on his mercenary operation in '97. After my time. But the resentment of Australia was palpable throughout the time I was there.

Yet what the Australians were doing was essentially right in almost every instance. In one case, and this was a fairly long running one, there was strong reason to believe that the Chan Government was trying to eliminate in third countries, representatives of the Bougainville period.



The Australians, seconded by us, told Chan to knock it off. I think that had some effect. It was certainly the right thing for the Australians to have done.

So it was a constantly prickly relationship. The High Commissioner twice removed before my time had taken a very hectoring attitude toward the Papua-New Guineas and wound up getting himself withdrawn. The next one, Alan Taylor, who was there from '89 through the end of '92, was someone I had known in Canberra. He told me on one of his visits back, first visit back I guess after a few months in PNG, that he was "cautiously pessimistic" about the prospects of the country.

The guy who was there during most of my time, Bill Farmer, was a marvelous guy who soldiered on through all of this. He took a lot of abuse but also did the right thing. He gave often the heavy message to Julius Chan.

The last one I knew, David Irvin, came out the beginning of '96. He was still in place in '97 and was in effect telling Chan either he got the mercenaries out of there or he would lose Australian aid.

*Q: I would think that this situation where the Australians were doing what we considered to be the right thing but having a legacy and maybe an attitude that didn't really help in a way wasn't our attitude or legacy. But at the same time we would in general want to support them. But again there would be quite a bit of difficulty for you in determining what role to play. Whether to be sort of the supporter of the Australians or coming at it from a different angle of trying to play that we were Americans and not tainted with this other problem. Did this present a problem to you?*

TEARE: It turned out to be less of a problem than you suggest although you presented it very well, I think. There was certainly during my time that danger, pitfall really. But in practice it did not seem to pose that much of a difficulty because in every instance I can think of the Australians were right in their objectives, even if they were not necessarily as smooth as they might have been in their approach.

For example, the environment. Papua-New Guinea was quite content to hand out vast logging concessions to Malaysian companies in particular which caused great problems of conscience for my friend, the Malaysian High Commissioner. Whereas Australia was trying to get Papua-New Guinea and Solomons interested in responsible logging. Solomons was even worse because they are a smaller place with fewer forests and much nearer depletion.

In the case of the mercenaries, for example, in '97 Australia was clearly in the right. In getting Chan to knock off his plots against the Bougainville insurgent leadership, again Australia was correct. I could not fault them and in general I was coming in behind them and reinforcing where I could, even though I didn't have tools. This was clearly Washington's view also. I can't say Washington was terribly interested but no objection was raised. New Zealand was in there too, and often the British, although they had smaller missions than ours. Australia's of course was much bigger. We were sort of tied for second, about the size of the Japanese who had a lot of

money to spend, and did, and weren't quite so conditional about it. The Japanese were a good influence, too.

So it was really the western world and Japan trying to influence Papua-New Guinea toward better behavior, and I think we were unanimous in that and it didn't present much of a problem for me in the end. In some ways in fact it was a relief to have somebody else out there on the point in the case of the Australians. In so many other countries where I had served including Vietnam and Mexico and Australia itself, relations with the United States were a big problem, also in Laos after the Communist takeover. We were usually the big villains.

*Q: I wonder if you could talk a bit about the Bougainville situation? You might explain what Bougainville was because I assume there are a lot of people now, as we move farther and farther away from World War II, who don't understand how this was one of the key islands. Could you explain?*

TEARE: Well in World War II it was an important place. The Japanese were there and had to be dislodged. It was a staging area for movement of U.S. Forces up along the northern coast of the island of New Guinea toward Wewak and Jayapura.

It was also the locale of a major copper mine. Copper was discovered I think in the 1960s. Mining began in the '70s. There was an Australian company doing it. Arrangements with the first generation of local landowners were seen by the 1980s to be unfairly small, that is, compensation to the landowners. A new and more militant generation of landowners came forward and tried to get a bigger shake from the Australians. When negotiations broke down the landowners took to menacing and eventually interfering with the operations of the mine. It didn't take much to do this because there was a single road leading from the coast up to the mine at Pangoona. It was no great problem to cut off the power supply that ran up on one line with poles, and then to interdict the road itself.

The real dispute started in 1988. By 1989 the landowners and their followers were shooting at people. The mine was closed down by about May of '89 and a small scale insurgency by that time had taken root and continued thereafter into...well, if it is stopped now and I'm not certain that it is, that it has, until '97 or early '98. During that time, successive governments of Papua-New Guinea tried different methods of dealing with it...military and police suppression, then backing away and blockading, then going back in with the military. No method was really successful.

Meanwhile a lot of people left Bougainville for other parts of Papua-new Guinea. Some fled over to the Solomon Islands, probably only a couple of thousand. Others simply stayed there and suffered. Virtually all of the schools were closed down. The provincial capital itself at Arlus was burned out. The hospital, which was probably the best in all of Papua-New Guinea according to the people who were there in the '80s, was destroyed. Local transport broke down. People couldn't get their goods to market. There are kids who missed seven or eight years of school and maybe aren't back in school yet. So it was a real breakdown.

Furthermore I should talk about the ethnic part of it. The people of Bougainville are related ethnically to Solomon Islands and not to the rest of Papua-New Guinea itself. This is not to say that there is one Bougainvillean identity. There are, I think, 23 different tribes on the island, a point that Sir Julius Chan used to make in claiming that this was not a serious problem. Only a couple of tribes are involved in the leadership of the insurgency but there is a lot of disaffection all over Bougainville I believe against the central government.

It is an accident of history that Bougainville today is part of Papua-New Guinea rather than part of Solomon Islands and it has to do with the drawing of boundaries and sales and exchanges of islands between the British and the Germans back in the late nineteenth century. Essentially the Germans turned over Solomons to the British but not quite enough; the British should have taken Bougainville along as part of the Solomon Islands but they didn't. It remained part of German New Guinea and then became part of the combined Papua and New Guinea territories at the outbreak of World War I when the Australians seized the German northeast quadrant of the island of Papua-New Guinea, plus the offshore islands, such as Bougainville.

Anyway there was a definite ethnic difference. You can tell a Bougainvillean usually by the extremely dark skin, ebony, and they look very much like the people of the western Solomon Islands. They look not very much like the mainland Papua-New Guineans. Partly because the Bougainvilleans didn't want to work at the mine, the mine Pangoona on Bougainville, the Australian operators brought in people from Papua-New Guinea itself, from the Island of New Guinea who were called by the Bougainvilleans 'redskins' because they were not so black as the Bougainvilleans themselves.

So there was race, there was history; there was culture involved and a strong separatist sense on the part of Bougainville.

*Q: Was this insurgency pointed toward Bougainville independence?*

TEARE: At its most adamant, yes, independence was the stated goal. For Papua-New Guinea there was also the fear that if Bougainville split off, some of the other islands such as Manus and New Britain and New Ireland might seek to do the same and that would be dangerous for the nation. It is the same sort of fear on a much smaller scale that you see in Indonesia where separatism, irredentism, secessionism are considered very serious threats.

So, partly as a result of the collapse of the mercenary scheme in '97, peace talks with respect to Bougainville advanced rather dramatically later in '97. I think now there is a cease-fire in effect and there is a modest UN presence on the island. I think some restoration is underway but I am not up to date on the details.

*Q: What about some of the other places, like New Britain? Rabaul was a major Japanese strongpoint. It was never actually taken. Bypassed. Are these areas of interest to anyone anymore?*

TEARE: In the sense of military installations?

*Q: Say New Britain. Is this a viable area?*

TEARE: Probably not in the ultimate economic sense but the people of the islands, and Manus most notably, the smallest, tend to be better educated than the average Papua-New Guinean. They are maybe a little bit more prosperous. They have been exposed to the outside world longer and they see themselves as generally superior, particularly to the Highlanders. In fact, apart from all the other divisions, maybe the biggest one is between Highlanders and Lowlanders, both of the South Coast Papuans and of the North Coast on the New Guinea Islands as they are called.

Highlanders are seen as tough, grasping, crude, under-educated. Highlanders, I think, in turn, see Lowlanders as lazy, less than enterprising, sort of if they can't get their act together then they ought to get out of the way. Highlanders have migrated to the coastal towns in considerable numbers and in Port Moresby, for example, they totally control the local transport industry which is mainly buses, known as PMVs, Public Motor Vehicles. They roar around town belching exhaust fumes and driving insanely. But it's a Highland monopoly. Once, when a Highlander was killed by a Lowlander, the Transport Industry declared a strike. A lot of people could not get to work for a couple of days. It was essentially a one-day thing. The Minister for Transport threatened to move in and pull their licenses and that was effective in that instance. Buses went back on the streets and that was it.

*Q: I would have thought that it would have been very difficult to try to do anything with the people tripping out of the Highlands. They were broken up in these small valleys and tribal groups with no written language and all that. I would have thought this would be a hard group to both absorb and to use within the government.*

TEARE: Well I guess that is true although the Highlands have produced some upstanding figures. One guy I came to know rather well, for example, is the Minister of Mining and Petroleum in Chan's Government and then Acting Prime Minister briefly after '97 in the mercenary scandal, John Giatno. You can't generalize, I guess. But the question of integration generally, not just of Highlanders with Lowlanders, but of trying to get people from all parts of the country to pull together as one nation is a continuing problem. For the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the Chan Government had a slogan of 'One Nation, One Country, One People' which sounds redundant but indicates the problems that I think any national leadership there sees in trying to integrate the place.

*Q: We'll talk about your other two responsibilities, but when you left Papua-New Guinea whither the PNG in your feeling as far as a viable country?*

TEARE: I was and I still am discouraged. I don't think the trajectory has been upward, in fact I am sure it has not since independence. I think a lot of things have declined. I would like to think that the scandals of '97, the mercenary business and Chan's defeat, mark a sort of a low point but I'm not sure they are in upturn even now. Then in '97 they were hit by further problems. Frost in the highlands and drought attributed to *El Nino* and then this year, although in an isolated area, that tsunami on the North Coast of Ikapi which killed several thousand people. So natural disasters on top of bad politics, poor leadership, rampant crime, economic stagnation...it is not a good picture.

Papua-New Guinea ought to be, could be, a prosperous place I think. It has got oil, at least in limited quantities. It has quite a bit of natural gas. It has got copper, gold, silver and other minerals, metals. Somebody described it as a rich country full of poor people, and I think that is the tragedy of it to date. Maybe something can be made of it. But in general the declines in education, health care and public morality have been the story of the country up through my time at least.

*Q: You served in a number of countries in the area. What was your impression of the public servants including up through the Foreign Ministry?*

TEARE: Most of them were not very competent, not necessarily very honest, difficult to pin down, and ill-informed. They were just not very impressive at all.

*Q: Well let's go over to the Solomons. What was the situation there and what was our interest there?*

TEARE: One more thing on Papua-New Guinea. That was the question of getting attention and outside visitors and so forth.

Sir Julius Chan had come to the United States in the autumn of '93 in his capacity as Finance Minister, but he was also Deputy Prime Minister for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings. He thought that by virtue of his rank and positions he should have been able to see the Vice President and the Secretary of the Treasury. I think we couldn't get the desk. I couldn't get those appointments for him. I think he was offered a lower ranking official at Treasury and he turned up his nose at that. So he was already ill disposed, if not earlier, certainly by that experience. I think quite unjustly.

His attitude was that senior officials of Papua-New Guinea, Ministers, were going to the United States all the time, but no one from the United States of any rank ever came to Papua-New Guinea. Well when Admiral Mackey came in '95 he was treated well by the Defense Force but we could not get him in to see the Minister for Defense.

Winston Lord came to Papua-New Guinea as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs twice. In 1994 just for a couple of days bilateral visit. We could not get him in to see the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister. I guess it was one and the same by that time, Chan.

Lord came again in '95 for the post Forum dialogue with the Pacific Forum nations. They had met in Papua-New Guinea because it was the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence. He came also as the official U.S. delegate to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and again we couldn't get him in to see Chan.

So here we are. When we finally get somebody from Washington, even if not of Cabinet rank, Papua-New Guineans did not accord them sufficient respect I would say. Now you can say that an Assistant Secretary shouldn't necessarily be able to call on a Prime Minister; there is a disparity of rank, but from our standpoint an Assistant Secretary was pretty good. We thought that Papua-New Guinea should have received him at higher levels. Other countries experienced somewhat the same. The Australians generally got to see Ministers, although sometimes that was

in doubt. But they were Ministers themselves coming up. In fact they met at ministerial level all the time. So this was another frustration.

*Q: In a way by taking this attitude they were really sort of cutting their nose off to spite their face.*

TEARE: Exactly. That was my judgment, too.

*Q: It helps in a way to isolate and to marginalize the country.*

TEARE: Okay, Solomons. At the time I went over and presented credentials the Government had just emerged from elections earlier that year. The Prime Minister was Francis Billy Hilly. That was his name. And I think Hilly was the surname but it was rather difficult to alphabetize. He was a nice man, not very strong and he had a coalition that only lasted a year or so.

The leader of the opposition was a guy named Solomon Mamaloni who had been Prime Minister for several years up until that election. The opposition started picking off members of Hilly's coalition one by one until by sometime in late '94 it got down to the point where Hilly no longer had a majority. Mamaloni declared himself Prime Minister but he wasn't legally yet. The country seemed to have two Prime Ministers for a month or so.

We reported all of this to Washington. I don't think Washington much cared but eventually Mamaloni got back in office. He was maybe a bigger crook than anyone was in Papua-New Guinea. He dominated the political life of Solomon Islands through fear I would say. He was very sly. He reportedly had enough information on virtually everyone else in Parliament to blackmail him or her. He was reputedly very corrupt himself. He allowed a certain amount of corruption on the part of those in his cabinets. I came to think of him as kind of an evil genius sitting at the center of a spider web. Sort of like Dr. Moriarty in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Not out and out crime but certainly corruption and concentration of power.

The name of the game in Solomon Islands was logging. What was happening was that the native hardwood forests were being stripped away literally before our eyes by foreign concessionaires who paid off people, Mamaloni first and foremost, to get their concessions. It was very discouraging.

The Australians tried both carrot and stick to get some sort of rational logging policies in Solomons and Mamaloni brushed them off. By this time he was back in as Prime Minister. The country was in serious decline economically. It was just a sad, sad story. Population growth was about the highest of any place in the Pacific, I think, close to four percent, three point seven something. So it was very discouraging because the Solomon Islanders one on one are very nice people. They are more relaxed than the Papua-New Guineans. They can be charming but they seemed to be saddled with this unfortunate government.

I came to see governance in Solomon Islands as sort of a battle between Mamaloni and the good guys. In 1994 the leading good guy I thought was the Commissioner of Police who refused Mamaloni's order to arrest Hilly. This was during the period of the two competing Prime Ministers. My man of the year in 1995 was the Governor of the Central Bank of Solomons who

refused to let Mamaloni borrow more money than the statutory debt ceiling. Mamaloni, I believe, was finally ousted from the Prime Ministership in '97, but again I haven't kept track. But the country seemed to be sliding down a steep hill economically.

*Q: How about copra? At one point before World War II this was the main thing they did.*

TEARE: They still do some of that and the Commonwealth Development Corporation had a copra processing plant and in Papua-New Guinea also, palm oil, but not a very well developed industry. Again the work was mainly done by outsiders, outside countries let's say. We visited a palm oil plantation in Papua-New Guinea where the ownership was Malaysian. After a first run at refining in Papua-New Guinea the product was then shipped to Malaysia for further refining.

Solomons...about the only thing they had going for them was timber and they were depleting their forests at an alarming rate.

*Q: What about Vanuatu?*

TEARE: That was the former New Hebrides, a British and French condominium or as local wags called it, pandemonium, before independence which came only in I think 1980. I'll have to check that. Again it was a country with a surprising number of tribes and linguistic groups. A lot of highlands of equal size, of relative equal size, not dominated by one big island as in Papua-New Guinea or three or four fairly sizeable ones as in Solomons. Again a pattern of shifting coalitions, revolving door governments. Not so much during the time I was there but until my final months, after elections people unable to sustain the majorities they would put together hastily. There was no sense of party. There was a lot of personal, factional government within the Parliament.

I had wanted to go there early on to present my credentials and I had this remarkable cooperation from Solomons enabling me to do it in time for the ceremony as I described. But in Vanuatu they were replacing the President in early 1994 and they received foreign diplomats at the rate of only one or two per month. So I was unable to get myself scheduled in for credentials until July. So I finally got there, presented credentials and was back again five times after that over the next two years. But I didn't get to know Vanuatu so well as I did Solomons even. The Prime Minister in my time was Maxine Carlot Korman. I think Carlot was his father's name and Korman was a tribal title that he received later on. Names are enormously complicated there in Vanuatu.

I generally tried to deal with him in French although I think his English was better than my French was. But again in Vanuatu you are identified as either Anglophone or Francophone and it matters, believe me, which linguistic tradition you come from.

The politics of Vanuatu in the 1980s were dominated by an Anglican priest, Fr. Walter Lini who suffered a stroke while visiting the United States I believe in the late 1980s. He never fully recovered but was still in Parliament and was all the time scheming to get back in, get his party back into power. I called on him on one of my visits and found him less wild and far less anti American than he had been earlier on. In the 1980s he wanted nothing to do with the United States or with the Soviet Union for that matter. I think it was not until they had been independent

for five years that he consented to receive an American Ambassador from Port Moresby to present credentials although by the '90s we had a Peace Corps program going.

At one point Lini had bodyguards who we were quite certain were being trained in Libya and I think passed through Malaysia in order to get there. This was worrisome. There was also a strong anti independence movement in the late '70s, early '80s, of Francophones aided and abetted from New Caledonia. There was interest by American criminals, essentially gamblers I think from Nevada. They wanted to go in and establish a hospitable governmental arrangement. And Vanuatu was trying to get into the flags of convenience business and was already pretty well established in offshore banking. There was sort of a vague belief that it was a center of criminal activity. That was never very clearly established but we did on one occasion persuade the authorities of Vanuatu to arrest an American fugitive there, a guy who had escaped from a minimum security prison in the United States and was sailing around on a yacht. So we could get a little cooperation from them from time to time.

*Q: You mention yachts. Were people, Americans, messing around with boats a problem?*

TEARE: Yes in short, but not too numerous and not terribly serious. First of all, sailing around those waters can be hazardous. I remember back in my New Zealand days a visit from the parents of an American who had disappeared while crossing the Tasma. There were occasional problems in my Papua-New Guinea tour, including at least one or two search and rescue searches.

This fugitive however didn't have any problems himself with the yacht. In fact that was how he was living with his wife and children, trying to stay out of reach of the law. But we were able to get him arrested.

*Q: How did you cover these areas? Not just you but your embassy. You say you had an Economic and also a political officer?*

TEARE: We did. We didn't have a lot of money for travel. In fact that was one of the few semi discretionary parts of our budget. But we tried to get somebody to each country, each of the other two countries, roughly quarterly. Airfares are high, both internally in Papua-New Guinea and throughout the region. Relatively speaking we could do it economically by using the carriers, Air New Guinea or Solomon Islands Airlines from Port Moresby to Honiara you'd stay three days, you could go on to Vanuatu and stay another three days and come back the same way. If you went by way of Australia which was sometimes faster it was nevertheless a good deal more expensive so my policy was that people should not travel by way of Australia except in highly unusual circumstances which had to be justified. We planned our travel carefully and I rotated it. Often two officers would go together. For example when I got a new political officer in '95, I took him along on a trip to both countries. That way we developed some continuity also...overlap.

The DCM traveled, the economic officer would travel, the public affairs officer and the consular officer. So one way or another we had somebody over to Solomons and Vanuatu I would say five or six times a year. Which was not so much as they would have liked. In fact in Honiara we had a resident, one officer post that closed before I got there.



*Q: Honiara being?*

TEARE: The capital of the Solomon Islands. We had a one officer post there for several years. We closed that in '93, shortly before I arrived. So when I presented credentials to the Governor General of the Solomon Islands I had to listen to him say how much they regretted the closure of that embassy.

The street address was Mud Alley, which was apropos. The building was quite a nice one. The Peace Corps moved into it when we left. The house where the Charge had lived and which the United States owned we eventually sold to Papua-New Guinea which wanted it for the residence of its High Commissioner who was living in a hotel almost the whole time I was there. The problem was that Papua-New Guinea couldn't come up with the money to pay for the house and we finally offered them an installment plan and then late in my tenure they surprised us by buying it all at once.

I should add that just last month, September 1998, at Pacific Night at the New Zealand embassy here in Washington Assistant Secretary Stanley Roth said that it is his intention to re-open our post in Honiara which, again, probably will be with one officer. We similarly had a one Officer post in Apia, capital of Western Samoa now known simply as Samoa. That also was threatened with closure in 1993 but the congressional delegate from American Samoa, Eni Faleomavaega, whom I mentioned earlier- (end of tape)

*Q: This is Tape Eight, Side One with Richard Teare.*

TEARE: Just to finish that sentence if it didn't catch on the last tape.... The one officer embassy in Honiara is now perhaps going to be reopened.

*Q: You mention the Peace Corps in all these places. What was your impression of the value of the Peace Corps in your time on these places?*

TEARE: I think it was first of all one of the few manifestations of our presence. So in that sense it was a good thing. For the individual volunteers I think it was for the most part a valuable experience although some of them suffered health problems and I would say adverse living and working conditions. How much they contributed to the development of their respective countries I think is very hard to say. Most of them in all three countries were at schools. They were teaching English and math and science, which no doubt benefited their students. Few of them had much experience at teaching. I don't know whether they were better than the native Solomon Islanders, Vanuatu or the Papua-New Guinea teachers whom they supplemented or perhaps supplanted in a few cases.

Others were involved in trying to get local handicraft industries going, something we tried to help with by sending samples of work back to the states. I am not aware of any very significant handicraft or other sort of business that developed. Still others were utilized for example in establishing data processing for provincial governments. I remember that happening in Banemo.

I don't know that there was much of a lasting contribution or influence or anything you could measure tangibly but in general the host governments liked the work of the Peace Corps volunteers and of simple groups from Japan and Canada and elsewhere. They wanted it to continue and to expand for that matter. Although in the Solomons under Mamaloni there was a certain amount of suspicion that somehow we were taking jobs away from Solomon Islanders. Peace Corps had to thread its way a little bit there. But again this was obscurantism or jealousy or local ignorance that we were running into from some not very upstanding politicians.

*Q: Did you find that when Winston Lord would come, the Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific, and others would come through, did you find much interest in what was going there or were you kind of on your own as far as American policy?*

TEARE: Well first of all there weren't many others! Apart from Winston Lord and the occasional visit by a country director or a desk officer, and then Admiral Mackey whom I mentioned, plus our DATT, the Army Attaché to Australia coming up two or three times a year, there was not a lot of outside interest. I think the Pacific Islands themselves don't loom large in our thinking. The one time when Papua-New Guinea has come to serious attention, and I saw this from my next job at CINCPAC, was in 1997 during the mercenary crisis when there was serious discussion of possible evacuation of Americans and by the Australians of their nationals and New Zealanders too. There was quite a flurry of planning.

*Q: Was this limited just to Bougainville or the area?*

TEARE: No this was throughout the country although I did not regard it as a realistic prospect. I didn't think that foreigners would be in danger. But there was enough maneuvering and a lot of anti Australian feeling. For example PNG Defense Force soldiers went around and surrounded the Parliament building and Prime Minister Chan allegedly sneaked out in disguise, things like that. We weren't worried about things on Bougainville per se; it was rather the consequences back in the capital of the proposal to bring in mercenaries to put an end to the insurgency in Bougainville once and for all.

*Q: You left PNG in 1996?*

TEARE: In July '96 before all the drama of the mercenaries.

*Q: And then you went where?*

TEARE: I went straight to Honolulu to become Foreign Policy Advisor to the Commander in Chief of the U.S.-Pacific Command.

**JOHN ALLEN CUSHING**  
**Consular/Political Officer**  
**Port Moresby (1997-1998)**

*Mr. Cushing was born in New York City and raised in New York and Hawaii. He graduated from Reed College and continued studies at a variety of institutions in the US and abroad. After service in the Peace Corps, he held a number of positions as English language instructor before joining the Foreign Service in 1988. Mr. Cushing served abroad, variously as Consular, Political, Economic or Public Affairs Officer, in the Dominican Republic, Korea, Benin, Papua New Guinea, and Trinidad & Tobago. In Washington, Mr. Cushing served as Korean Desk Officer. Mr. Cushing was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.*

CUSHING: In '97 we went off to Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby. That was a very tough post.

*Q: I have heard that.*

CUSHING: The thing about Port Moresby is everywhere there was critical threat crime. There were no safe parts of town. The Japanese ambassador was carjacked in the driveway of his own residence. The wife of the New Zealand high commissioner was driving and someone dropped a chunk of concrete off an overpass, shattered the windshield so she got an eyeful of broken glass. There was a fellow about to go into the Australian high commission and they had this little keypad that you had to punch the code for the gate to open so he rolled down his window and was punching in the code and somebody jumped out of a bush with a machete and chopped his arm off and then hauled him out of the car and drove away in the car. Gang rape was a big problem.

At any rate, we did not do well there at all. My wife had problems with herniated discs and so we went down to Brisbane for consultations. She decided not to have surgery and she came back and eventually it got so bad she couldn't walk so we went back and had surgery for the herniated discs.

The one good thing about the time in Papua New Guinea was that we did have one trip to Guadalcanal and Vanuatu so I was able to visit the battlefields of Guadalcanal and also drive around in Vanuatu. That was very nice.

We got there in August of '97. In June of '98 my wife was attacked by a gang of bandits. I never sufficiently impressed on her the need to have the windows rolled up and the air conditioner on. She hated air conditioning so she would drive with the windows down and no air conditioning. She was coming back from dropping off a Japanese friend at her (the friend's) apartment. She was coming back to our compound which was on top of a hill. Every time I took the turn off the main road to the road leading to our compound, I would take the turn very fast and drive very fast and I never apparently impressed on her the necessity of driving fast.

She came upon a roadblock and they had these gangs of what they called 'rascals' who are people who make their living by crime. They have no skills and there's no work so they make their living by robbing people. Often they are sent from villages in the mountains. If there is a young man in the village that is creating problems, they will take up a collection and buy him a one way plane ticket; an airplane was the only way out, a one way plane ticket to Port Moresby and say, "Don't come back." So you get the dregs of the whole island ending up in Port Moresby.

They find people who speak their same language which is called “wontok”, one talk. They will live in a group house and they will all pay part of the rent but they are responsible for getting their own food so they live by crime.

They had put up a roadblock and my wife saw this roadblock and a fellow standing in the middle of the road and didn’t know quite what to do so she slowed down and then she thought well, I might get abducted and raped so then she thought she would try to drive through the roadblock and had the windows down and so this fellow smashed her on the head with a big rock, fractured her skull so she was driving the car while unconscious. She rolled it up the side of the hill and then it rolled. So after the car stopped rolling they reached in and took her purse and radio and so forth.

She was able to climb out of the demolished car and start staggering up the hill. There was another housing compound where there were people who worked for a bank. There was a young man there who worked for the bank so he and his wife took her into their apartment and got her cleaned up a little bit and then took her to a clinic and then our deputy chief of mission decided that she should be medically evacuated to Brisbane. She was put on an air ambulance to Brisbane that same day. Her blood pressure when they put her on the plane was 82 over 50 because she had lost so much blood.

They put her on this air ambulance. There was someone else who had been injured in an automobile accident so he was on the same flight. She was in the hospital in Brisbane for about two weeks. Her face got all swollen up and she had internal bleeding in the brain and she had a fractured skull and as a result of the brain injury caused by the rock, she lost a significant part of her hearing. She had 10% hearing in one ear and maybe 40% hearing in the other because of brain damage from the rock. I concluded we were not going to serve out our tour in Port Moresby. She needed specialized attention so I told the ambassador we were going to curtail and we did.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

CUSHING: Arma Jane Karaer, a very nice woman.

Another thing that happened in Port Moresby was the consular officer got sick, so he was down in Australia for several months. So in addition to doing the political stuff, I also was doing consular. I’d do consular half day and then do political.

One extremely interesting experience I had in Papua New Guinea was when I accompanied a U.S. army team, CILHI. They are based in Hawaii and their mission is to recover the remains of war dead. They concentrated on Vietnam but if they had a little extra time, they’d try to get remains out of Korea, North Korea and if they still had a little extra time and money, they would look for World War II remains. The pressure from families was all from the Vietnam people, the missing from Vietnam but occasionally they’d do World War II so they came down.

I went with them to some very remote crash sites. We had records of a bomber that had crashed on top of a mountain; a B-24 bomber so we hiked to that. We hiked about waist deep in a stream

for about two hours and then we climbed up a cliff for two hours and the natives in the area had all decided to serve as guides so everybody in the village turned out because they all wanted to get their \$20 a day for being a guide and so they said, "When we get to the crash site, we will bang on something so you can hear the noise and you will know which part of the cliff to climb." Of course, they were much faster than we were. So we are climbing the cliff and we hear bang, bang, bang, bang. We get there and this guy has got a metal rod and he's banging on a live 500 pound bomb with this piece of metal. So we said, "OK, you can stop banging."

So we went through there and there were also a couple of fighter planes that had gone down in different areas. There was a P-38 and a P-47 that had gone down. This fellow took a nurse for a ride in his P-47 but he forgot to check the fuel tank so they got up to about 10,000 feet, ran out of fuel and went straight in. We were able to get their remains out. They were both buried in Arlington Cemetery, one grave for him, one for her, one co-mingled.

There was a Corsair that had crashed and gone into a hill so we were able find the engine and part of the tail assembly and wheel. We got a serial number and called Michael Claringbould, an Australian with detailed knowledge of the Fifth Air Force, and he identified the aircraft for us.

In several cases the villagers had sold the wreckage of the aircraft for scrap metal and had simply kept the remains off to the side. One person did very good job. He got a box and lined it with fabric and dusted it with insecticide and put all the bones in there. So he wanted \$500 for that so I think they paid him.

There was another case where they had all the remains somewhere and so there was a Papua New Guinea policeman along and said, "Look, you can be prosecuted for pulling these remains out and selling the plane but we don't want to take the whole village to jail so what would you like?" So they worked out a deal if they could spend an afternoon at a hotel in the city of Lae with all the beer they could drink and all the French fries they could eat, they would give us the bones of this pilot.

So they got a van and took everybody into town and got several cases of beer. All the men in the village drank enormous quantities of beer and ate enormous quantities of French fries and then they got in the van and were driven back to the village.

There was another related case where a wealthy fellow from the U.S. decided to do everything by himself. He did not consult with the U.S. government or the government of Papua New Guinea. He was looking for his uncle's B-24. He just contracted a private helicopter and native guides and what he found instead was a B-25 which had gone into a cliff and then had kind of slid down the cliff and so he thought he would pick up whatever remains were there. It started to rain and so all the villagers said, "Well, we're going home now" and they each had a collection of bones that they had picked up so they were going off in all different directions with all the bones. He said, "Hold it, hold it. Give me all the bones." So they ripped fabric from the interior of the wreckage and wrapped up the bones in that. So they had all these packets of bones wrapped up in canvas so he put them all in an enormous knapsack. On a Sunday morning his flight out of there back to Australia was at noon so he knocked on the ambassador's door and

said, "Here" and gave her this knapsack with co-mingled skeletal remains of different crew members.

She came to me later and said, "John, I've got these bones. I don't want them at my house. Will you take them?" I said, "Oh, sure" so I went over and got this knapsack full of bones and they sat in my house but then when the CILHI team came over, they had a forensic pathologist and so we took this knapsack full of human skeletal remains to the embassy and we went into the meeting room, got this big conference room table and spread out some newspaper and he had somebody taking notes and he'd say, "Right femur" and then he'd put it there. Then he'd say, "Left tibia, no, not the same guy. Put that over there." We were reassembling these sets of skeletal remains from this jumble that we got. He put together as much as he could and then contacted the government of Papua New Guinea and got permission to export human remains and so they were able to export them to Hawaii. I think they were continuing to work with the dental work from the teeth that they had. That was probably one of the best ways. This fellow was very good. To me they were all just a bunch of bones. He was able to get at least three sets of distinct remains. He'd say, "Look, this is a femur and this is one, but they are not from the same man. This one goes over here. These are different people." He was extremely good at that.

One other thing that happened was the building that housed the Papua New Guinea ministry of foreign affairs burned down and they did not bother to inform us so I went out to the ministry of foreign affairs to deliver a demarche and found this charred shell of a building with a fence around it. I asked the watchman, "Where have they gone?" He said, "Dunno."

Three weeks went by and we got a fax from one of the business centers of one of the hotels in Port Moresby. It said, 'The ministry of foreign affairs presents its compliments and has the honor to inform the embassy of the United States of America that we are temporarily operating out of the business center of the Hilton Hotel.'

*Q: Could you talk a bit about the political situation there and what was our interest?*

CUSHING: The prime minister was Bill Skate, who was essentially a gang leader who had worked his way up. There was a connection between the gangs of Rascals and the government. They would hire these Rascals on make-work contracts and pay them government money. For example, they had a lawn care contract but there wasn't a blade of grass in the whole city. Maybe some of the ambassadorial residences would have a small lawn, but that was about it. They would get these lawn care contracts for government buildings where there was nothing but bare dirt around the building.

Another thing that happened was when the Australians turned Papua New Guinea over and it became an independent country, a lot of Australians stayed around. They were hired by the government, but there were a lot of natives who thought they should get those jobs so they contracted with these gangs of Rascals to harass, abduct and rape the Australian wives of these civil servants who were still there so that they would leave. Or an Australian civil servant contracted to the government of Papua New Guinea would come home and find 20 Rascals sitting in his front yard with cutlasses and revolvers and what have you. He would conclude that

it was time for him to go back to Australia. They were used for intimidation; they were used to harass political enemies and so forth.

Bill Skate was essentially a gangster who had worked his way up to be prime minister. He was suspected of several murders but never charged. His father was an unknown Australian and his mother was from Papua New Guinea. I went to a few sittings of parliament.

There were some government officials playing golf on a golf course once and they were held up by a gang of Rascals. One of the guys told the Rascals, "You can't hold me up. I am a high government official. I'm the minister of finance." Not only did they hold him up, they took his pants and shoes.

The national interest we had there was oil and gold, so Chevron had a big outfit there and there was a huge missionary community, the New Tribes missionaries because their mission was to translate the Bible into every known language so they would send out researchers. If they found a tribe that still had enough people speaking the language so they were convinced that the language would not die out, they would live with those people and study the language and figure out a way to transcribe the language, teach the people to read their own language and then print the Bible in that language because it was their mission to make sure that every person on earth had the ability to read the Bible in his or her own language. Since Papua New Guinea has 2,000 languages, they were a busy group.

Our main missions were providing consular support to Chevron and its employees and doing the same for this very large group of American missionaries there.

*Q: How did they, given the crime, was crime pretty well confined to Port Moresby so that the missionaries and Chevron were off somewhere else?*

CUSHING: Chevron had its headquarters there, but they had a pretty well guarded compound, and the missionaries were off in a compound all by itself, kind of off away from the towns. The bigger towns like... OK, Moresby was bad, Lae had a lot of crime, and Mount Hagen had crime, a gold mining town. Regarding some of the oil operations, I talked to various people who worked there and they were off in remote locations. They didn't have too much trouble with crime at all.

The main thing was, we had a Peace Corps program there also and they were out in the small villages but the people of Papua New Guinea had developed sort of an entitlement mentality. They got a lot of money from the Australians and we had very little money to give them so we were not taken seriously. It was not uncommon for the prime minister to make an appointment to see the ambassador and then stand her up at the last minute. The ambassador would arrive at the prime minister's office and the secretary would say, "He went somewhere else." We were not taken seriously because we did not have these hundreds of thousands of dollars to shovel at them the way the Australians did.

There was a lot of illegal logging by Indonesian timber companies and once again, an Australian aid organization would come in and say, "We are going to build a clinic and a school. We are going to use this land." "Well, OK, it's all very well you are going to build a free school and a

free clinic, but you have to compensate us for the land on which you are going to build it.” So not only are they getting a free school and a clinic, they are getting extra money for the land.

The Indonesian loggers (Indonesia is not too far from there), they would come in and some local guy would say, “I’m the chief, I own the forest and I am in charge of it so just pay me X amount of dollars and you can log this land.” So they’d start logging and some other guy would say, “No, I am the chief. This guy is an imposter. You’ve got to pay me Y amount of dollars.” And so there were a lot of fights there.

There were wars between the tribes up in the mountains. They’d fight each other with spears and slingshots. There was one case where there was a van of workers from one village and a fellow in a car from a different village hit this van and killed three of the workers. Now this one village owed the other village the lives of three people so what they did was one night they got this old woman who had tuberculosis who was about to die and the town drunk and this mentally retarded guy and they tied them all up and left them in the middle of the village and then everybody else took off for the jungle. So the other tribe came in and killed the old woman who was about to die and the mentally retarded guy and the town drunk so that that was cleared because they had killed three people from that village. Then everybody else came back into the village.

*Q: Were the Japanese active there? Because the Japanese lost maybe 100,000 people at New Guinea but also they were left to starve. An awful lot were by passed during the war. I am just wondering about trying to recover the remains.*

CUSHING: I don’t recall. There was a Japanese embassy there but I don’t recall that they were actively involved in remains recovery.

There was also Irian Jaya, which is the western half of the island, which is part of Indonesia. There was a small guerrilla movement there because the people there, the natives, were treated very badly by the Freeport Mining Company. They were chased out of their mountain area and sent down to the swamps where they got malaria and died and so forth. So there was some violence at the border area also.

*Q: How did you work as sort of a political officer? Was there any politics going on?*

CUSHING: All we ever got were these instructions for demarches, “Ask Papua New Guinea to vote with us on some resolution in the UN” and we never got a response. We’d go over and make the demarche and so forth.

The other thing I had to do was send faxes to the Solomon Islands government in Honiara in Guadalcanal and the government of Vanuatu in Port Vila. Their ministry of foreign affairs in Vanuatu was one room in a shopping center in the town that sold souvenirs. They had one little room in the back of a shop that sold souvenirs with a telephone and a fax and that was their ministry of foreign affairs.



They surely lost money on us there because not only was my wife medically evacuated to Brisbane for surgery on herniated discs, but then she was evacuated again for a fractured skull and head injuries. That wasn't a good post.

**ARMA JANE KARAER**  
**Ambassador**  
**Papua New Guinea (1997-2000)**

*Arma Jane Karaer was born in Minnesota in 1941. She received her bachelor's degree from University of Minnesota and during this time also attended Osmania University in India. During her career she had positions in Australia, Zaire, Turkey, Pakistan, Swaziland, Finland, and ambassadorships to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Ambassador Karaer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.*

*Q: Then where did you go afterwards? In '96 you left there.*

KARAER: One of the visitors that we had in connection with the celebration of the Helsinki Accords was former President Ford. At the same time, Strobe Talbott came to visit us. Strobe Talbott is Derek Shearer's brother-in-law and at that time he also was the Deputy Secretary of State. Right around the time of that visit, the ambassador asked me to do a bullet summary of my career. This was around the time that we were writing EERs, and I tried to get him to postpone this little task. He said, "I guarantee you won't be sorry, just do it." Okay, okay. I wrote this thing up and I gave it to him. He had recommended me to be considered for appointment as an ambassador. I didn't know about this until I got word from the Department that I had been selected by the Ambassadors' Committee of which Talbott was the chairman, that I had been nominated as an ambassador. Of course, since I was so famous and so capable, I had my choice of two places, Mali or Papua New Guinea. Before I committed, I wanted to check the post reports. The thing I had to be most concerned about was the education for my daughter.

*Q: How old was she at this time?*

KARAER: She was finishing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Helsinki had a very good international school, with a combination American and British teaching staff. I found that in Mali you did home schooling. In Papua New Guinea there was an international high school. Also, I did lean towards Papua New Guinea, because years before when I'd served in Australia, Papua New Guinea had become independent and there'd been a lot of stuff about it in the paper. At the time I thought, this place sounds really Foreign Service-ish. This is the kind of place that I wanted to see when I joined the Foreign Service. I told the Department that I would prefer Papua New Guinea because of the availability of a school. They said, "Well, you know, you can home school your children." I said, "I really don't think I can be my daughter's high school teacher and the ambassador at the same time." I left Helsinki on midsummer 1996 and went back to start my training to become an ambassador.

*Q: That's a good place to stop I think and we'll pick this up in '96 you're coming back and you're getting trained to become an ambassador. We'll talk about the training and what you thought about the program.*

KARAER: Okay.

*Q: Today is the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 2004. Arma Jane, do you want to talk about how one was trained to be an ambassador back in that period?*

KARAER: I suppose they still do it pretty much the same way. Ambassador Teresita Schaffer and Ambassador Tony Motley were the leaders of the seminar and there were ten of us in this group, including Wendy Chamberlain, who was getting ready to go to Laos, Genta Hawkins Holmes, who was getting ready to go to Australia. She had been in Namibia before that. Others in this group were Congressman Pete Peterson, who was getting prepared to go to Vietnam, and other distinguished people, but I don't want to make a whole list here.

*Q: How was the mix between political and FSOs?*

KARAER: I think there were just two political appointees in this group. One was Vernon Weaver, who was going to be the U.S. representative to the EU, and Pete Peterson.

*Q: Yes. How long was the training?*

KARAER: It was two weeks. Two intensive weeks. We were briefed on all of the major parts of the Department and the intelligence agencies and so on, things that I already knew and I'd dealt with before. Of course part of the training was preparing us for our hearing with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. At the same time we were in that training, we were also being briefed by our own country desks and practicing for our interviews with the Senate. Now, we had a huge letdown in this process, although our hearings were held in September, 1996 as scheduled, the day the Senate was supposed to vote on our nominations, we were told that the Senate had decided to stop all of its considerations of all presidential appointees. It wasn't just ambassadors. It included judges, and judges were the main problem.

*Q: Well, this is election, or just before an election?*

KARAER: Yes. Congress was getting ready to close down and go off to campaign. We would have to wait for a new congress to be elected and vote on us. We would probably hear from the new congress sometime in late January 1997. So, here were all of us ready to go overseas, no place to live, no other job, and told that we had to stick around for four months or so. That was quite an exercise in being flexible, to say the least. Some of the people in my group, who had been assigned to Washington, still had their own homes to live in. Others, like me, had come to Washington from overseas. My house was rented and there were tenants in it. We were living in those furnished apartments you can rent around here, but my lease had run out on the one I was in, so we had to scramble around. We lived in four different places during that time we were here for training. I began to feel like I truly knew what it was like to be semi-homeless.

*Q: The training, did you get the feeling, I mean if you were going to a place that was not in the public eye all the time which Papua New Guinea would obviously not be, but in many other places, too that sort of do your own thing and you're not going to be closely watched or was it almost sort of or like a bookkeeping lawyer type of thing, you've got all these responsibilities and we're going to be watching every expenditure or every move you make? How did you feel about it?*

KARAER: Policy is the focus of the desks and the bureau. What the seminar covered was not policy, it was management. How you spend the government's money, whether you're in Moscow or in Port Moresby, is covered by the same rules and regulations. Your main problem in a place like Port Moresby is that it is extraordinarily hard for the Department to get people to agree to go to work there. So, if you get people with good skills, you're very lucky. In many cases you get people that don't have such good skills.

I think that for ambassadors going to small embassies which have spotty staffs, in many cases, the management responsibility of the ambassador and the DCM are even more important than it is for someone who is being sent to Paris, who should expect that he or she has got top notch administrative officers and experienced people who can do their jobs without a lot of oversight by the ambassador. Also, the Department doesn't always treat Ambassadors who have no personal political clout, with much respect. When I was in Papua New Guinea, the Undersecretary for Management was looking for places to close or downsize. We had "visitors" and out-of-schedule "inspectors" who would write reports that had absolutely nothing to do with what we had told them or shown them, and everything to do with fulfilling the Under Secretary's agenda.

One thing that I would want the trainers in the Department to know, although I don't know how this will ever be fixed, is that you get a lot of gospel statements from the Bureaus who are briefing the ambassadors, like Diplomatic Security [DS], for example. They will say, these are the services we can provide you, but the way we do things at your post is up to the ambassador to decide. Not so. I had made it a policy that personal guns were not to be brought to Port Moresby. There was no hunting there, but there were dangerous people. We provided security for our people, but I wasn't going to have every staff home become a personal Fort Apache. However, when a security officer was assigned to the post, I learned that she had brought in her official weapon, without telling anyone. I told her that we had to get the permission of the Government of Papua New Guinea, which I believed we would receive. However, when I talked with her supervisor in Washington, he said that DS never asked the permission of other governments to bring in official weapons. I was stunned. They had never told us that in Washington, and I couldn't believe that we had an arsenal of Marine weapons in Helsinki that the Government of Finland had not approved. The DS supervisor told me that my options were either she had the gun without GPNG's permission, or she had no weapon, and would have to go out of the country periodically to practice shooting. I told him that our biggest crime problem in Port Moresby was car jackings. If she was car jacked on her way to the shooting range (by the way, DS said she had to practice shooting with her own weapon, not one rented at the shooting range), and her gun was stolen, how would I explain that to the GPNG? It wasn't as though we needed a gun-toting security officer. Any big-wig that visited Port Moresby brought along their own security or we got security from the local police.

Personnel also said one thing and did another. Every year ambassadors get a telegram from Personnel telling them what procedures to follow if they have to send somebody away from post. I did have a situation like that, unfortunately. The geographic bureau was calling me and telling to get that person out of there. She was new, and causing a lot of other personnel problems at the post, but I had told her that we'd give her three months to get her act together, and the three months aren't over. I wanted to be fair to her. When the three months were up, and she had not seen the error of her ways, I sent in the telegram asking for her removal which we were told we could submit if both the employee and the ambassador agreed that the person would leave the post. That kind of telegram didn't give all of the nasty details, details that the employee wouldn't want on their record. After I sent this thing in, I got a telephone call from PER saying, "Well, because this person hasn't been at post very long, we need to have the specifics of why this person is going." You know, none of this is unreasonable in my opinion, it's just that the stuff they put on paper is very different from the way it actually works. I resented that. I resented that for myself and on behalf of the employees that were being affected by it.

*Q: I've heard people come back and talking about this was not a nice place to live and all. What were you getting on that?*

KARAER: What I was told right from the beginning was that this was a really dangerous place. There was a lot of crime, and that it was a very difficult place to live in. Now, I had spent a good chunk of my Foreign Service career working in developing countries. In Pakistan there were people out on the street who would just as soon kill you as look at you. In Port Moresby I found that this wasn't the case. Yes, there was a lot of street crime, but nobody was going to attack us because we were Americans. They might try to attack us because they wanted to hijack our car, for example, but they would have done that to anybody who gave them the opportunity.

As far as the living conditions were concerned, they were not bad at all, really, for a developing country. We were so close to Australia. The supermarkets and drug stores had all the stuff in them all the time that anybody would want. The basic things that you need to live a healthy, comfortable life were there. Our houses were nice, air-conditioned. We had good maintenance services. All of these things that had been big problems in other places that I had worked and lived in was not the problem in Papua New Guinea. There it was just a question of being alert street to crime. In the three years that I was there we had five hijackings. Two of them targeted American members of the mission, only one was injured, and that was the wife of my political officer. She was car hijacked in the middle of the day. She said that thugs had set up a roadblock and she overturned her car as she was trying to avoid them. She did injured her ear and her hearing was permanently affected. Because of this she and her husband left the post right afterward. The other hijackings were of embassy drivers in places where they were waiting and were open to be hit. Other than that, we didn't have any thefts. We had guards on the houses. Lots of razor wire on the walls, that kind of stuff. My point is that while yes, there was crime and you did have to be alert and you did have to have a good security system, that compared to many of our other posts in the developing world, this was not anything unusual. In fact because there was no terrorist problem, it was a lot more secure than a lot of our posts might be.

I remember once coming back here for annual briefings at the Department. My husband and I were checked into a hotel in Crystal City. The morning before I went over to the Department, my eldest daughter called and asked, "Mom, are you guys okay?" I said, "Sure we're okay. Why shouldn't we be okay?" She said, "Because on the news this morning, it said that a man was shot in that hotel." Oh really? This hotel is right next to one of the flyovers of the highway that goes right up around Pentagon City. Apparently some idiot had driven along the highway and fired a gun just randomly toward the hotel the night before. Some poor guy on the fifth floor was bending over unpacking his suitcase and got hit, fortunately in a part of his body where it didn't do too much damage. The police said it was a random shooting. It wasn't inside the hotel. That morning, one of my meetings was with the deputy secretary for diplomatic security. He and I had worked together before. He said, "Arma Jane. Glad to see you. You know, we really worry about you out there." I said, "Well, I've got something to tell you. I worry about you people here." The reputation of Port Moresby had a bad spin-off, because first of all it wasn't an important place as far as policy was concerned, so all the ambitious young things in the Department who were looking for jobs that would make their name were not looking for a place like Port Moresby. You couldn't get many eager beaver types for the most part to agree to come down.

The other thing was this reputation of insecurity, which was a good excuse to refuse an assignment there, saying I can't bring my kids, I can't bring my spouse. We really had a hard time filling our positions. I had to actually go out and recruit people to come to post and that meant anyone who was willing to take the job. I also found when I got there that there had been a serious case of overkill as far as the security situation reporting that was coming from the post. I stopped that.

*Q: You know there's a usual post report which is designed to justify danger pay or the equivalent?*

KARAER: Well, we were getting danger pay and that kind of stuff. Yes, that thing had to be rewritten. I rewrote it myself. The old report said stuff like, "There are rats in the gutters." At that point I'd lived there for over a year, and I hadn't seen any rats in the gutters. I'm sure that there were rats, I mean after all we were in a developing country, but it wasn't as though we were living with open sewers and stuff like that. I toned that down. The DCM and I talked this over, and I said, "Look, I do not think this is going to affect the premium pay that people are getting here, but if it does, so be it, because this exaggeration is not right." What I was primarily concerned about was the effect that this kind of stuff had on our ability to recruit people to work there.

The Australian Embassy in Port Moresby is enormous. It is their biggest embassy in the world. Their security people put out a regular report of security incidents affecting Australians all over the country. They had lots of people out in the hinterlands, mining people, you name it, working out in places where the local folks were still just barely out of the Stone Age. There were folks with bows and arrows who didn't like strangers and that kind of stuff. I told the people on my staff who were preparing our security report, and who had been quoting liberally from the Australian report, that we were only going to use security incidents that had affected Americans, our government staff, our missionaries, or our business people. All of a sudden PNG didn't sound so wild and woolly in Washington anymore.

The embassy is in a building that had been the old central bank building in Port Moresby. The new central bank is built right next door. We had leased the old building and then refurbished it. I must say that that building was the nicest office situation that I worked in in my entire career in the Foreign Service. It was so nicely done. We sort of rattled around in the place, because when they started that project they had a military attaché's office there. They had a USIS office there and they even had an AID rep there. By the time they finished the project, AID was gone, the military attaches had left and the USIS closed its office about three months after I got there. We had a really nice office building, but we had lots of empty rooms in it and that caught Washington's eye. Too big for your operation. We eventually were able to make the argument that you're right, too many rooms here. We don't need them all. On the other hand, given what we've already invested in refurbishing this building, it's cheaper for us to stay here than to go to a far less secure, far less satisfactory place that we have to rent somewhere else in town. They finally left us alone in that regard.

One of the results of our personnel problems, was that the Bureau had decided that they were going to make Port Moresby an experimental project for a communications system that they said we could run on our own, that would work just like e-mail. Of course I was deeply suspicious, because computers are never as easy to use as the geeks say they are. However, I couldn't prove that the system wouldn't work and everyone in the Department said it would be a cinch. It was clear that we didn't have any way to argue against this plan, and the Department had already decided that it was not going to recruit another communicator for Port Moresby. The guy who was there at the time had one more year to go, and by the time he left, they were going to install this new system that we were supposed to be able to run ourselves. "Just put the diskette in the machine and press the button and away it goes," they said. Oh my God. Now, me, I couldn't have even tried, because I am so clueless when it comes to anything beyond turning on the machine and starting to type. My poor DCM was good with computers and when this thing started to not work, like right away, he would spend far into the night and the whole weekend wrestling with it. It would work for a couple of messages, and then it would start sending, or receiving, gibberish. In the meantime, of course, on a world-wide basis, the Department was telling posts that they had to be in touch with Washington all the time for our own security. Unspoken was the understanding that ambassadors who let themselves be out of touch with Washington would be blamed if anything bad happened at their posts. We had to depend on the telephone. Technicians came over from Australia on a regular basis and they fiddled with our commo gear, tell us that it should work and leave. It would work for a couple of hours and then fall apart again.

Finally I sent a telegram addressed to everyone in the Department who had any responsibility for PNG, saying, "I know that you're tired of posts whining. We're not whining, we're screaming. This is absolutely not acceptable." Then I got flurries of e-mail saying, oh, we're sending some more people out there. It ought to work. The guy who had assured me that this system was going to work so well was the executive director of the bureau. He'd say, "You know, it will be just like e-mail, Arma Jane. It will be real easy." I mentioned this to one of his staff who came out on an official visit while this was going on. She started to laugh and said, "Do you know, the only person in the entire office who doesn't use e-mail is him?" Anyway, finally, a technician figured out what was wrong. When they installed this system, they installed the wires that connected it to the electric supply too close to the telephone wires. Even I know that basic physics tells you that

there is going to be interference in a case like that, and that's all it was. Their hopes of talking the other ambassadors in the small embassies in the region into accepting this system failed, because I'd put all of those embassies as addressees on my messages, so they all knew what was going on and could protect themselves.

*Q: Well, we're picking up some of the things here. We'll come back to sort of the main training theme.*

KARAER: Yes, right. It seemed like a small thing at the time, but Ambassador Motley had passed out early on in the course a two page computer printout. In big letters, the first page said, "WHO'S IN CHARGE?" On the other side, It said, "YOU ARE AND DON'T YOU EVER FORGET IT." I kept that paper in the drawer of my desk, and I can't tell you how many times I took that out and looked at it. When there were times when my staff didn't want to do something, or Washington was pressing us to do something that I thought was truly stupid, I just needed to look at it to regain my courage. If in the end what I decide to do turns out to be stupid or wrong, then I take the responsibility, but I am not going to sit and whine, and say, "they said that we should do it that way," because that's not what ambassadors do. Ambassadors take the final responsibility.

*Q: Let's move back and then we'll talk about some of these cases, but first let's sort of set the stage. Tell me about Papua New Guinea when you went out there in '97 would it be?*

KARAER: Yes. I arrived there in March '97.

*Q: Tell me about the sort of country and the government and economy and all and then we'll talk about what we were doing there.*

KARAER: Of course, well, first of all, our embassy in Port Moresby is accredited to three countries, to the governments of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Vanuatu used to be called the New Hebrides before it became an independent country. I was really thrilled to go there, because one of the main reasons I joined the Foreign Service was to see the exotic part of the world. I'd spent a certain amount of time in Helsinki worrying that I didn't have the proper table manners to go to work in a European country that had so much silverware. I had spent most of my career in countries where you ate with your fingers. Frankly I was far more comfortable in that sort of a place. I loved learning about these cultures.

These three countries were among the last places on earth colonized by Europeans. European colonizers had stayed away from these places for a long time because they had a very scary reputation. That was because the indigenous folks were cannibals for the most part. If you got shipwrecked or you were a missionary who wandered too far from a European base, you ended up in a cooking pot. When I was a kid I saw cartoons about cannibals and I thought that this was supposed to represent somewhere in Africa. Well, I don't think there were many cannibals in Africa, but there definitely were cannibals in the South Pacific. Of course by the time I got there, everybody had been converted to one form of Christianity or another, and nobody was eating anybody anymore, but a lot of these communities in the interior really hadn't been in touch with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for very long at all. In fact one of the biggest concentrations of population on

the island of New Guinea is in the mountains. These people did not come into contact with Westerners until the late 1930s, when some young Australian gold prospectors sort of stumbled across them. The first wheels those people ever saw were on airplanes. They helped the prospectors build the runways for those airplanes to land in their area.

All the troubles that we saw there as far as governance was concerned are typical of tribal cultures. I always had to remind myself and my staff and the people that came to visit us that these problems weren't a sign of failure. In fact, what they had accomplished was a remarkable success. If your grandfather had never seen an outsider before, had never seen a wheel before, and now you have gotten at least a partial college education and you are doing your best to run a government agency, then good for you. It's just amazing. I talked about this with the man who was the director of the PNG central bank. He said, "My grandparents did not know what money was, and here I am running the central bank" and he was doing a pretty darn good job, too. We had to keep that in mind. The governments of all three of these countries were democratically elected. They had parliaments. The parliaments were run in the Westminster fashion and parliamentary procedures were, in my opinion, often grossly abused. They hardly did anything in parliament except have votes of no confidence against the government. Too many of the politicians had joined the side that they thought would get elected, so they could get elected. Once they were in government, however, they were constantly plotting and planning to join others and destabilize the government. That was terribly frustrating, mostly for the Papua New Guineans and also for those of us who were trying to deal with them. I found the people, the ministers, the prime ministers, the other officials, head of the military and so on, quite interesting and cordial to deal with. I can't say that we were able to get lots of work done. On the other hand, we, the Americans, did not have much to offer either. These governments see foreign relations as a conduit for foreign aid, and we didn't have much to offer. We had removed all of our development aid from the Pacific countries. The only thing that I had to offer there, weirdly enough, was a sizable Peace Corps contingent and some military assistance, not equipment, but training. Also, the military have civil affairs projects through which we could provide some material goods. Once I got a ton of treated mosquito nets that I could send out to a group in very mosquitoey part of the country to try to protect their people from malaria, for example. I had no military attaché, but the attaché in Canberra was also accredited to us and he came there frequently and his office worked very well with us on these things.

I got myself slightly off on the wrong foot with the man who was the prime minister at the time that I had my confirmation hearings. One of the things we were taught in our training was how to deal with the press, how important it was to come up with good sound bites. I found I had a certain talent for that, but pithy statements, I learned, don't make you popular with everyone. When I was being interviewed by the senators, one of the senators asked me why there was so much crime in Port Moresby. I said something to the effect that, "Papua, New Guinea, like most other developing countries, has the problem of too many young men, too few jobs, too many guns and too much beer." I heard this guffaw in the audience behind me. I knew there were no Papua, New Guineans at the hearing, but the hearing also included Genta Hawkins Holmes, who was going out to be ambassador to Australia. Of course there were Australian press there because of Genta. Guess what? An Australian reporter thought that my line was great, up and put it into an article. He said that Genta was really happy to go to Australia and that Ms. Karaer was happy to go to New Guinea, but doesn't have any illusions about what she's getting into, and then he



quoted my sound bite. The poor DCM e-mailed me to report that he had heard that the prime minister was upset about what I said. I said, "Did I say something that wasn't true?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, we'll just have to take it like it is." Nothing came of it.

In fact, it turns out that the Prime Minister had much worse problems than young men with beer. Three days after I arrived in Papua New Guinea, the head of the Papua New Guinean military, which we had been helping to train, by the way, led a coup against the government. Now, he didn't want to become the head of government, he just wanted the prime minister of the moment to resign and for the parliament to choose a new prime minister. He was upset because the Prime Minister had hired a private British Security firm called Sandline International to deal with a long term rebellion on the island of Bougainville. Bougainville is part of PNG and the military was really being beaten up there. The Prime Minister claimed that Sandline had been employed only as advisers and trainers, but they were equipped with attack helicopters. The Australians and our military people agreed that it looked like they were planning to use this much heavier fire power against the Bougainvillians. Even worse, from the PNG general's point of view, the PM had used money in the government budget that was intended to support the PNG military to pay these mercenaries, who were Brits and South Africans. Both his authority to control the military and the money to equip his troops was being turned over to these foreigners. The PNG army wasn't the greatest military force in the world, but the government hadn't supported them properly either. The soldiers weren't paid regularly, nor were the troops on Bougainville fed regularly. Most of them had to depend on local people for their food.

The prime minister did resign in the end. He tried to get the Australians to bring in Australian military to put down the mutiny, but they refused. We were concerned that the mutiny might foment general public unrest, but, aside from some looting right around the military base and hoodlums showing off for the TV cameras, that didn't occur. Crowds did gather around the parliament building, which scared the lawmakers, but everyone went home quietly after the prime minister agreed to resign.

*Q: You had just arrived there?*

KARAER: Yes, three days before. One thing I learned from that is that in situations like this, it is necessary for Embassy management to strike a balance between keeping its personnel safe and finding out what is really going on. The advice we were giving the rest of the American community was to stay in their houses or offices, not to travel around town. The political officer had attended a briefing by the PNG general the day after the coup started, but the instinct of the rest of the staff was to stay hunkered down in the Embassy. We kept being told that gangs were gathering here and there and could be ready to start mob action. Well, after a day or so on television we kept seeing footage of people jumping up and down and trashing small trading shops, but it was always in the same part of town.

Also, you could see that while there were some soldiers with guns, they were sort of running down through their base towards the street, not out on the street. The police had stayed faithful to the government, and they were doing what they could to control the crowd in the street, but the real worry was that the military would get the police to join them and then there would be even a greater problem. You could see on these television pictures that while some soldiers were trying

to threaten the police with guns, their officers had their pistols out and were making the soldiers go back and stay well within the boundaries of the base. I thought, "Now wait a minute, this is not a South American military coup here, this is something different." Of course we had already protested very strongly to the government of Papua, New Guinea for bringing in the mercenaries, and the general had arrested the mercenaries and their leader. They had shipped the mercenaries out of the country right away. The Brit who was in charge was still being held in jail. They finally agreed to release him to the custody of the British High Commissioner who just lived down the street from me. I went to make my courtesy call on him in the middle of all this, and he said, "Would you like to come to dinner at my house and meet this guy?" I said, "Sure, but don't expect me to be nice to him."

I discussed my impressions with the DCM. True, we had to keep our people secure, but we, me, the DCM, the political officer had to do what we could to get information that's not just second hand from the Australian Embassy, or the TV, so that we could make a real judgment for ourselves whether or not our citizens were insecure. I pointed out that while the Australians were saying, stay where you are, nobody is telling their people to leave town. They haven't sent any transport planes to take their citizens out of here. After having collected any information we could, we decided that it was okay to just warn our people to try to stay off the streets and wait this thing out. We would let them know if we thought that it was necessary to leave the country. The coup presented no problem in the interior at all. This had nothing to do with those places, and that's where most of our citizens were.

In the middle of all this, I was told that a courier was arriving at the airport in the middle of all this with a classified pouch. The GSO said, "But we can't go and meet the plane. The roads to the airport are blocked and dangerous." I said, "There must be more than one way to get to the airport, isn't there?" I didn't know. I first saw the map of this place when I got there. "Well, there is a back road, but we don't know it very well." "Well, don't our drivers know it?" "Well, yes." "The communicator and you go with the driver and meet the plane." I was pretty sure that the rioting was confined to the main road, but was sitting there thinking I hope I don't end up having them knocked over the head or something. They went and got the pouch, and I praised them for being such great heroes and everything. Nothing happened to them at all. It also showed that we weren't cut off from the outside world at all.

In the end we ended up with a new prime minister. I argued very strongly that we continue our very small military assistance program with the military commander. Even though what he had done was not totally according to Hoyle, what he had done was very understandable. What the prime minister had done, import mercenaries, was even less democratic than what the commander had done.

*Q: Just to get an idea how this works, did you get your political officer and others out sort of in the street to find out what was happening? How did you go about that?*

KARAER: We stayed away from the areas where we knew rioting was going on. It would have been stupid and unnecessary to go into the middle of a crowd. We didn't need to see those people. They were dancing up and down for the television cameras and were burning Chinese shops. What we needed to do was probe the other areas of town and see whether other areas were

also being attacked. It turned out no. Nobody was doing anything bad there. It was just the area near the military base where there was any violence. We had the political officer go to the meeting of parliament where the prime minister finally stood up and said, "Okay, I'll resign." We got the reporting from that.

Our relationship with the Australian embassy was a very good one. I really respected the high commissioner, and he was very generous with his time and his opinions. Other people on my staff cultivated acquaintances with their people. However, I found I had to warn my staff to remember that we have to have our opinions, too. Probably it's true that 90% of the time we're going to be absolutely in agreement with the Australians, but our interests here are not exactly the same as theirs. While we certainly don't want to get in their way, we want to also get information from the New Guineans about what's going on, as well as from the Australians, and there was a problem there. It was really comfortable to have a beer with an Australian and hear all about what they believed was going on in town. It was not quite as easy to get an appointment with and get the information out of a Papua New Guinean and figure out what side of the political equation he was on at that particular moment. But that, of course, was more interesting, too.

*Q: What was the parliamentary structure? You're saying that once they got elected on a slate, they immediately became their own creature more or less.*

KARAER: The constituencies were ethnic, language groups. So if you belonged to a group that was the biggest or one of the biggest ones in the area, then you could expect to get the votes of those people. But you had to give lots of presents as part of your election campaign. That's the way tribal leadership works.

*Q: You were saying, once elected....*

KARAER: Once elected these guys did not want to have another election until it was required by the constitution, because getting elected was an expensive undertaking. But because they were operating within a Westminster parliamentary system, there could be any number of votes of no confidence and, therefore, changes in who was the prime minister. The Prime Minister chose the ministers in the government, and a ministerial position is what everybody wanted. They wanted to have a ministership because ministers got lots of perks, and also, most ministries had chances at kickbacks as well. That was the game that was being played.

In these island countries there are many small political parties, so they almost always have a coalition government, and then the parliament chooses who will be the prime minister. Whoever garners enough votes in the parliament, regardless of party, gets to be prime minister, but then he proceeds to spend his entire incumbency fighting off no confidence votes. It was sort of a game.

PNG has important mineral deposits. Chevron was there exploring for and extracting oil. They also were trying to do a big gas contract. There was plenty of natural gas. There was an attempt to build a pipeline that would take this gas to markets in northern Australia for sale there because there just wasn't enough industry in Papua New Guinea to use that amount of natural gas. There are gold mines there, and there's some copper also. Then there were certain much smaller, but

still important, agro-industrial things like coffee. Even cattle was being raised in the northern part of New Guinea. That was a big business for some people. The infrastructure in the country was not good. There were fairly good roads in the northern part of the country, main highways to connect the major towns, but there was no highway connecting the very important highland areas in the center of the country with Port Moresby and its sea port. The failure to build a connecting highway had been a deliberate decision on the part of the government. Building such a highway would have been difficult and expensive, because the center of the island consists of razorback mountains. But the principal reason for not building the highway was because the people on the coast, who are ethnically different from the highlands people, didn't want all these highlanders to find it easy to come down there. The highlanders are a very aggressive people, and very self-confident. They have a real entrepreneurial streak in them, despite the fact that they hadn't been engaged in modern commerce for more than two or three generations. The coastal people just wanted to keep their area as highlander-free as possible. The policy also meant that the lowlands were fresh-vegetable-free to a great extent. The highlands are a perfect place to grow garden produce, but because there was only air transport from the highlands to Port Moresby, it was not competitive to bring things like tomatoes and lettuce from the highlands. Instead fresh produce came from Australia. An awful lot of stuff that really should have been produced in Papua New Guinea, for their own markets, was imported from Australia.

*Q: How did some of the Port Moresby officials dictate the policy of the government? In other words, this supposedly was an election throughout Papua, New Guinea including the highlands, but did the Port Moresby people more or less run things?*

KARAER: No. Prime Ministers have been elected from all over the country. Although, the man who was prime minister most of the time I was there actually was a mixed race man who was born and grew up in Port Moresby. He couldn't control politics unless he made common cause with leaders from other areas, otherwise they were going to form coalitions inside the parliament to get him out of there. In fact, they eventually did do that.

*Q: I remember as a kid I learned an awful lot about that because I lived in Annapolis and I followed all the battles. Was there a road up and over the Owen Stanleys, there was lots of fighting. The Japanese almost got down there.*

KARAER: There was a path you could walk. Hardy tourists from Australia, and occasionally the U.S. trek it with guides. That was the path that the soldiers took to get up over into the north country.

*Q: Both sides were fighting up and down on that.*

KARAER: Yes. During the War, we brought U.S. forces by sea and by air into the northern part of New Guinea, but before we could get there, the Australians had started up the trail to meet the Japanese who were coming from the north down toward Port Moresby. The Japanese goal was to capture the capital and its airfields. The Australians met them kind of halfway up. That was a horrible thing to have to fight at a 90 degree angle. One of the great bonuses of being assigned to Port Moresby was that you could revisit the World War II sites in this whole area.

*Q: There were a couple of major battles fought on the other side of the Owen Stanleys and MacArthur took over.*

KARAER: That's right. The house where the Governor General of Papua New Guinea now lives is the house that was MacArthur's headquarters while he was in New Guinea. I had a chance to visit a number of places throughout the country. I arranged my own trips. I would just get on the telephone and start calling governors' offices, businesses and missionary societies. The Catholic Church is very well established in the northern part of the country. For example, when I visited Aitape, where the Tsunami hit in 1998, I stayed with the Franciscan sisters there. On these trips I was able to not only meet some of the provincial politicians and administrators, but I could talk to the missionaries, many of whom were American citizens, about how they saw what was going on there.

One of the places I visited was the province of Manus, two relatively small islands north of the main island of New Guinea. It had the absolutely best governor in the whole country. A really smart man with a genuine concern for his people. He was an inspiration to work with, I might add. Talking with the people on Manus was fun. Although most of them were my age or younger, so they would have been very small children, at most, during the Second World War, but it was if the War had happened yesterday as far as they were concerned. They would say, "My father told me that there were so many American ships in the harbor, that you could just walk from one to the other without getting your feet wet." We had three airfields, building an airfield in these islands is a trick, because there's almost no flat land. One of the places where we had a runway, not an airfield, but a runway, was on a tiny island just off the Manus main island. That was one of the places that they took me to visit. When we built this place, we removed the villagers that lived there onto the mainland, and then pretty much paved over the whole thing. The island is long and skinny, so it was just right for a landing strip.

Well, after the war, most of these folks came back and the village was rebuilt. When they met me there and showed me around they asked, "Ambassador, do you suppose that you could help us because you see it's very hard to grow anything except coconut trees here." Yes, if your whole place has been paved over, it sure is. When I got back from my trip, I talked it over with the military people, and they eventually sent a team up there to take a look. I said I know you can't remove the runway, but maybe you could do a water system or something that would help the place become a little more livable.

Another place they showed me was an even tinier island which had been used as a dump by the U.S. Navy. Even all those years later, you could find vintage Coke and beer bottles and stuff like silverware from the mess halls. Plates and things like that were there. One of the villagers gave me a navy Corning ware coffee cup. He said that that was one of the souvenirs he'd picked up, but he wanted me to have it. They had an American flag that had apparently flown over the place at the time that it was a base. It was all in tatters, but they had neatly tacked it to a plywood board and kept it. That was part of their heritage. After I got back to Port Moresby, I looked at the coffee cup, and I thought, "This is neat, but what on earth am I going to do with it?" We had a little display case in the embassy of various bits and pieces of things that ambassadors had picked up here and there, where it could have gone, but shortly afterward, a member of Congress come through on a visit. I think he was from New Jersey. He is an African-American and was

enchanted with the place. He said what a lot of Africa-Americans said when they first came there, "Where did all these black people come from? I never knew there were black people somewhere other than Africa." Anyway, he had a great time visiting with the Papua New Guineans. He then mentioned that he was going on to a conference in Australia and that one of the people he was meeting there was another member of Congress who was from the family who established Corning Glass. I said, "Take him this cup. Take him this, and tell him the story about the people on Manus. Maybe he can think of a way to help these people". I never heard anything more about it, but he happily took the cup and away he went.

*Q: Was the cargo cult still going anywhere?*

KARAER: Oh, yes.

*Q: You might explain what that was.*

KARAER: The cargo cults actually started with the first contact with Westerners in the islands, not just in New Guinea, but elsewhere. When the local folks saw white people coming with all this great stuff, the iron knives and the vehicles and the stuff they didn't have and had never seen before. They wondered why they didn't have it, too. Some of the smarter guys sat down and philosophically worked it out. The gods, they said, had intended for all mankind to have these wonderful things, but somehow the white man had got it all for himself and kept it. This had something to do with the religion he practiced, they thought, so if the islanders would do certain rituals and show the gods that they too were worthy, these things would come to them too. How would the gods send this? Why they send them in airplanes, because, obviously, airplanes came from the heavens and the stuff came out of airplanes. These cargo cult groups sprang up all over the islands. In some cases, the Australian authorities, and the British before them, had found them to be threatening to the powers that be, and had locked up some of the guys that were preaching this stuff. In most cases, however, it was pretty benign.

I didn't come across any active cargo cult beliefs in New Guinea, but a strong cargo cult political party exists in Vanuatu. It's called the John Frum Movement. Now the cargo cult idea was already current in the islands and then World War II happened. Well, I saw photographs of what the docks in Port Moresby looked like during the Second World War. Mountains of crates of everything. I read about what the docks in Vanuatu looked like. The main island of Espiritu Santo was a huge naval base. That's where Tales of the South Pacific, Michener's books, are based. There was just this incredible mountain of manufactured goods, of everything that our military used, piled up around there. And who was picking this stuff up and moving it from point A to point B? The islanders were. Did you need anymore confirmation than that that the cargo cult people were correct about their belief? Anyway, the story in Vanuatu was that at one point an American showed up on Tanna Island, a large volcanic island south of Espiritu Santo. He told the islanders that he was John Frum. Now nobody knows for sure where this man came from, but you can imagine that an American would say, "I'm John from Philadelphia," or something like that? Anyway, John Frum, they say, told the people that if they followed certain rituals faithfully, that he would return from America and bring all of the things that they needed. And then he went away. The John Frum Movement has syncretic religious rituals. Some are Christian, but its mostly folks sitting around singing hymns that they have made up themselves. They put crosses

on their meeting buildings, but its not the kind of Christian crosses that you see on churches around the world, it's the cross the Red Cross uses, that square one.

I learned soon after I got there that while the John Frum Movement was a religious movement, it was also a political party on Tanna, and that there were two John Frum members of parliament from that island. I said I wanted to visit Tanna and try to pay a call on the John Frum chief. During my farewell visit to Vanuatu, my husband and I flew to Tanna, where I called on the chief administrator and went to see the island's active volcano. The John Frum village is on the sea at the foot of the volcano. It was a Friday, but we saw people walking all along the road carrying baskets of food and young men carrying guitars. They were all going in the same direction we were going. Our driver said, "Oh, yes, today is the John Frum day and so they're all going to the big John Frum meeting." Oh, whoop-de-do, I had picked the right day.

We got there in the middle of the afternoon, and I went to meet the chief. He was a sweet old man with maybe half of his natural teeth in his head, wearing a very faded baseball cap and a clean, but slightly ragged T-shirt. We came up to the gate and I told the man who we were and what we wanted. The chief was very pleased to meet us, but he said, "Oh, Ambassador, I wish you had let me know you were coming because we would want to do something special for you." I said, "No, I just wanted to say hello to you and to see your village." Oh, yes, wonderful, well, here we'll take you around. It was a very pretty, clean place. The houses were built in a semicircle going down toward the beach. In the middle of the semicircle was a big grassy area, sort of the town square. Now, at the gateway, there were flagpoles with a Vanuatu and an American flag on them. Further away, on the other side of that grassy area, there were three tall flagpoles. There was an American flag, an American naval flag and a Georgia State flag with the stars and bars on it. Woo, what's going on here? Well, it turns out that the chief and one of the John Frum members of parliament had been given a trip to the United States on a USIA travel grant about three or four years previously. One of the places he'd visited was the Jimmy Carter Center and the Martin Luther King Center in Atlanta. It was while he was in Georgia that somebody presented him with the Georgia State flag, and that's what was up there. The American flag was in tatters.

One of the other things he had been taken to visit in the United States was a Ford truck factory, the idea being, I guess, to show him where our consumer goods really come from. Now, this chief didn't believe that this stuff came from the gods in the sky. They had gone past that phase, but the movement still was a religion and a political party. The chief invited us to stay and see their religious service, but first all the men would gather at the meeting house. He apologized that he couldn't invite me to that gathering, but my husband was very much invited. I stayed with a group of teenagers who were watching all the babies, so we sat and played with babies for about an hour. They eventually brought my husband back, and the chief asked us to come down to where the religious meeting was going to be. The women and the young men with the guitars were already collecting down there. They told my husband he could video-tape the meeting, but my husband said, "Arma Jane, before we go down there, I've got to sit down. I can't see very well." I said, "What happened to you?"

Well, you've heard of kava. Now this is a drug that is made from the root of a plant found in several of the South Pacific islands. It is not used in Papua New Guinea or in the Solomon

Islands, where they chew beetle nut. But Kava is very important in Vanuatu and in Fiji, which are further south. It's not a strong narcotic; in fact it's imported into the United States with no controls on it and it's sold in vitamin pill shops. For commercial purposes, the root is ground up and dried, and then soaked in water to drink. It is a traditional ceremonial drink. In fact it was even served to me when I presented my credentials to the president of Vanuatu after we had made our speeches. It looks like dishwater, but it doesn't taste nasty. It just tastes very green. It tastes the way your lawn smells after you've cut the grass. However, traditionally, kava is prepared by the young men, who chew it and spit what they've chewed into a cloth. Then the chewed fiber in the cloth is squeezed into a pot and the juice is then served to all the people at the ceremony. Well, that's what was going on in the men's gathering that my husband was cordially invited to. Of course, since he was the guest of honor, guess who got to get the first sip of this stuff? I don't think that Yashar had ever had kava before. I mean I've only had it in a very diluted form at the credentials ceremony. This was the real thing. He said all he was thinking of was, "Oh my God, I hope these people don't have tuberculosis." But always polite, he drank some. After just a couple of minutes, his head started to spin, and he was just having a really hard time walking straight. It took about a half an hour for this effect to wear off, and he didn't have much of it. I've concluded that if you're going to take a drug of some kind, it certainly is better to use kava than alcohol, because while alcohol will make you feisty, kava just makes you mellow, mellow, fast asleep. That was his experience. I must say this was one of the many times that I was thankful that I was a woman. I didn't mind the kava served to me at the presidential palace, but drinking up somebody else's spit is not appealing. I'm happy to report that my husband hasn't developed tuberculosis.

Oh, I should say that that day my husband also happened to be wearing a baseball cap that he had bought at the White House gift shop which said "White House, U.S. Government." When the chief said he had visited the United States and we saw all these American flags around the village, my husband said, "Well, I think that you should have this." He replaced the chief's faded baseball cap with that nice new one with the White House insignia on it. Then when I got back to the office, I sent the chief a couple of new American flags for his flagpoles.

*Q: Maybe this is a good place to stop I think. Some of the questions I want to ask next time is what was the revolt in Bougainville all about. Missionaries; what was your impression of what they were doing and all? Why we didn't have AID in the country? I mean we had been such a major presence, the greatest war effort we had in land in the Pacific was fought right around there including Guadalcanal and up in Bougainville and all as well as right on the island itself. What was the Peace Corps up to? The Tsunami. Any reflections from the Indonesian Western I guess it was called? What we were seeing from the role in Western and all that and then obviously there will be other things, too.*

*Q: Today is the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, 2004. Arma Jane, let's talk. Again you were in Papua New Guinea, from when to when?*

KARAER: From March 1997 until May of 2000.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the Bougainville war. What was that about?*



KARAER: Well, an Australian mining company had built an enormous open pit copper mine in the middle of Bougainville. I had a chance to visit there before I left and saw both what had been the level of sophistication of the infrastructure that this investment had brought to the island as well as the extent of the devastation that the rebellion caused there. The mine is just about in the center of the main island of Bougainville and it is just enormous. We flew over it in a helicopter. At the foot of the mountain where the mine is located, is what is left of a fully modern, small Australian town, Kieta. The people of Bougainville over time grew to resent this intrusion, particularly the environmental degradation, the excavated earth from the mine washed into the streams. Before the mine was built, the main industry there was cocoa cultivation. (One thing that we were able to help with after the cease fire was the reconstruction of the cocoa culture.) The Bougainville people, tried to get the central government, which, of course, is located on the main island of New Guinea and which run primarily by people who are not Bougainvillians, to get a better deal for them. They wanted the mining royalties earned by the Government of Papua New Guinea to be used for the development of Bougainville itself. They also resented the influx of other Papua New Guineans from the main island, particularly the industrious and aggressive people from the highlands.

When you look at these internal rebellions, one thing to remember is that while from the outsider's point of view, everybody is a Melanesian, from their point of view, they are many different nations all expected to get along under one flag. Over 700 languages are spoken in Papua New Guinea. Ethnically these people are very different. The Bougainvillians are very dark black people. They call the people from the mainland, who are a sort of brown, "redskins." They feel very superior to the people on the mainland, and they don't know why they should take any kind of orders from them.

When I visited Bougainville, I was put up by a representative of the UN Development Organization to which the United States Government had given a significant amount of money to help with the restoration of the cocoa plantations. The idea was that after the cease fire, all these young men who had never known anything except fighting in their lives and consequently had no education, didn't know how to do anything except get what they wanted with a gun. The UN development program, helped by the European Union, the Australians and a little bit from us, was trying to help them get the plantations going again, so they could have a legal means of employment and some way to develop their economy. By 2000, most Bougainvillians were pretty darn tired of the fighting. They just wanted the killing to stop, and they hoped that the island would be able to negotiate some kind of autonomy that would allow them to get their fair share of development financing. The key rebel, however, was still holed up in his village near the mine, refusing to make any concessions whatsoever.

I visited Bougainville in November, 1999. It looked like the movies you see about the end of the world. What had been a very large industrial area outside of Kieta was almost totally destroyed, just pulled to pieces. You would see vehicles, including vehicles that were meant for very specific purposes, big trucks to move things for the mine, running around the roads. They obviously had been "liberated" by the local population and were being used for personal vehicles. The vines from the jungle covered everything else that wasn't in use. Huge power pylons, which had been erected to bring electric power, which was generated in the town up to the mine, had

been blown up and pushed over. I mean everything was wrecked. There were some houses left in one piece in the middle of the town, and that's where the NGOs set up their operations.

When you look at this, and you see all the surrounding natural beauty, the wonderful blue sea and the gorgeous trees hanging over these high hills, it makes you think that nature must abhor a paradise, because human beings had done everything they could to absolutely ruin it.

*Q: Were there, did you see any remnants of the Japanese airfield complex and all that?*

KARAER: Not the airfield, but they did have a Japanese tank set up along one of the main roads which led to the port of Kieta, which they were just getting opened. Some ships were still sunk in the harbor, but they had opened it enough to bring in some small vessels that could take out some of the cocoa production. I should add that the Japanese were very active in development projects in Papua New Guinea. I'm sure that getting things refurbished to remember the Japanese veterans was high on somebody's list who wanted to get some more Japanese assistance.

*Q: In Bougainville when you left there, I take it the whole copper thing was completely written off?*

KARAER: Oh, totally.

*Q: Was anybody going back to do anything or was basically Bougainville written off?*

KARAER: Oh, the political leaders of the community still had ideas that they could make it as an independent or, at least, a semiautonomous entity. When I met with them, they wanted to talk about what the United States could do to help them be an independent entity. I told them frankly, "Don't even think like that." I asked them if they knew what was happening in Bosnia. I pointed out to them how Washington and Europe had reacted initially to what was going on in Yugoslavia. I told them that if our countries could have built a big fence around Yugoslavia and forget about it, they would have much preferred to do that. They couldn't do that in Europe because they were afraid that the fighting would spread to other areas. I said, "Well you folks have got a big, blue fence around you already. You had better make your peace with the government."

Nobody wanted to even talk about reopening the mine. The Australians had abandoned it at least ten years before, and it had taken that long for the government of Papua New Guinea to become serious about its attempts to negotiate a settlement with the Bougainvillians. The trouble on Bougainville wasn't confined to Bougainville. They had the mutiny that I described earlier, which had been inspired by the government's wild idea to bring in mercenaries with the kinds of weapons that would have totally blasted away entire villages in Bougainville if they had actually ever used them. The mutiny was an eruption of the bitterness of the Papua New Guinean soldiers about the way they were sent over there and then pretty much abandoned by the government. There were times when these guys didn't even have food to eat. They had to get food from the local population. A lot of people died on Bougainville because of lack of medical care. The government had an embargo against shipping things there.

*Q: Was the rebellion trying to establish a Republican Bougainville there or was it against the government in place or a little more share of the power?*

KARAER: The original leader of the rebellion had wanted to get the foreigners out and make Bougainville one people. And by "foreigners" he meant the Papua New Guineans from the mainland as well as the Australians. Well, before the colonial period, Bougainville consisted of many, many tiny groups of people all around the island that were deathly afraid of one another, either hiding from each other or killing each other. Cannibalism was rampant on the island. It was a beautiful place, but for the human beings that were living there, it had been a very cruel and violent place. During the colonial period this had been brought under control, people had gone to school, and things were safe. But as soon as the rebellion started, nobody was safe anymore.

While I was there we ran into some Red Cross people, who told us that they had just told the Bougainvillian provincial government that if they didn't do something about the bandits, they were closing down their operations. What happened was that the young fellows with the guns would come to these NGO installations and raid them, mostly to steal the solar panels that ran their generators. Now, the Red Cross was vaccinating kids against polio and measles. Of course the vaccine had to be refrigerated. The bandits would steal the solar panels and then take them up to the mountain to run their own generators so they could watch rugby on TV, or whatever it was they wanted to do. The NGOs would bring in another solar panel display, and the bandits would come back and do it again. The Red Cross told the provincial government that if you want what we're doing here to be done, get control over these guys, because we're not going to be robbed indefinitely. It was a combination of an attitude on the part of the local people of "here we are, poor us, the world should take care of us", but little effort on their part to control these hoodlums walking the streets. They'd have red do-rags tied around their heads and just saunter around arrogantly. They had nothing to do except to take what they wanted, and there was very little authority there to stop them.

*Q: What were the missionaries up to?*

KARAER: One of the biggest groups that was the Summer School of Linguistics. It's an international organization that translates the New Testament into local languages. Mostly Protestant churches participate in this, but I did run into some Catholics who had also done work with the organization. They had a big compound up near Goroko, which is the capital of the Highlands Province of Papua, New Guinea, a huge place. Once you walk across the border of their compound, it's as if you're in small town America, little rambler houses, a super market, a nice big school, and a big central area where they did their editing and printing. Of course with 700 obscure languages, Papua New Guinea was going to give them work forever. I mean, either the New Testament got printed, or the language would die out. The translators were usually a husband and wife team, sometimes more than one couple, that would live in a particular area for several years, learn the language, and then do the translations.

There were other missionary groups that were running schools and parishes. The Catholic organizations were particularly active in the northern part of the country. The Catholic Church was established there very early on when the Germans were the colonial power in the northern

part of the island. They had big schools, hospitals. Where the tsunami occurred, the first coordination of a rescue effort was undertaken by the Catholic Bishop of that area. They had the radio network and they had the facilities to house the survivors and hospitals and so on.

One of the Catholic installations I visited there had originally started out as a hospital for leprosy victims, but now there's almost no leprosy left in the South Pacific. It had just been slowly turned into a place for people who needed artificial limbs. There were many children who were crippled or who had lost limbs in the tidal wave. This place already had a workshop where they made artificial limbs. They also taught people how to use them. They anticipated that this service would be needed for many years in the future, because the victims were little kids, and as they grew they needed new artificial limbs and training to do some kind of work. When we were there, we stayed with Franciscan nuns who have a convent in Aitape. There was an American nun there who had come out to Papua New Guinea about a year and a half after I got to Port Moresby. I had gotten a letter from someone in Washington who was her friend and who asked me to meet her and help her get on her way. Well, actually they had a better organization to do that than we did, but I did meet her at the airport with her fellow sisters. She had invited me to visit their house in Aitape, so when I decided to take this trip, I wrote to her and asked if there was somewhere that we could stay, and they invited us to stay at the convent where they have guestrooms. Sister took us around to visit the resettlement villages.

*Q: Did you use the missionaries as sort of a source of information or as a practical measure was there much you needed to know about what was going on in the interior?*

KARAER: Oh, sure. Well, for one thing, when we recruited American citizen consular wardens for these places, we had recruited a number of missionaries, particularly Catholic missionaries, up in that area, because they had radios and contact with the rest of the community. They were the wardens for our system, and so I would always go looking for the wardens. When I would make my arrangements, I would write to them or call them and ask them if we could get together. They were always happy to do that, and they would gather what there was of the American community for me to meet, and we'd have some kind of a picnic or tea party. We did that on the island of New Ireland. The warden was a priest at a boys' vocational training school that they ran there. He invited the Protestant missionaries, who were working elsewhere on the island, to come to the school and meet me. We saw the school, met the boys, had a nice American picnic and found out what it was like for them to work there.

*Q: What about, let's talk about the tsunami. When did that happen and how did that impact on you and what happened?*

KARAER: It happened in the summer of 1999. The embassy, having lost half of its American personnel, including the DCM, to transfers and not having gotten our new people yet, was getting ready to receive the Secretary of State, who had agreed to stop in Papua New Guinea for two hours on her way from the Philippines to Australia and meet with the government of Papua, New Guinea. We were in a real panic, as you may imagine. Then this horrible tidal wave hit the northern coast of New Guinea. It hit right at supper time and it washed away whole villages that were built right on the beach.

*Q: There had been no warning?*

KARAER: No, there wasn't. After the tsunami, we got to be very familiar with the earthquake and volcano warning systems that exist around the Pacific and some of the money that was donated by the United States was used for refurbishing one of the big stations that records all of the underground earthquakes and movements in the region. The seismologists decided that in this case, the undersea earthquake occurred so close to the shore that there was no advance warning of any kind. Everything was fine one minute, and the next minute people were being washed away.

Some nuns had a house built on a hill just on the edge of the village that suffered the most devastation. From there, they saw what had happened and they were high enough so that they were not washed away. They radioed the bishop, and the bishop alerted the authorities. Then all kinds of organizations, particularly the Australian government, provided a tremendous amount of assistance. The oil and mining companies sent in helicopters to help with the evacuation. My impression was that the great bulk of the assistance given to the people was given by foreigners who were organized to do this kind of thing fast. The government caught up later on, but they were slow.

*Q: How many were killed? What were the estimates?*

KARAER: There were probably around 1,000 people who disappeared, and many others who were horribly injured. People were picked up by the wave and just thrown against the trees further inland. Most of the buildings were thatched structures, so they just washed away. An American organization has dogs that help to look for cadavers came within a couple of days, but by the time they got there they said that it was just bodies floating in the water. The ones who were still alive had been found right away.. The rest were dead.

*Q: Did you get involved in the rebuilding and that sort of thing?*

KARAER: When the Secretary of State came, she told the government of Papua New Guinea that the United State government would contribute an amount of money, I think it was \$500,000, for rehabilitation. We gave some of that money to the local Red Cross for training local people to deal with displaced people. Some of the money was used for replacing and refurbishing equipment at the volcano research center in Rabaul.

I was also able to use the disaster program that is administered by AID. When there is a natural disaster, ambassadors can ask for assistance. Then AID sends an expert out to take a look and make suggestions about what we might be able to do. Right after the tsunami, we sent one such message and as a result we got a C-5 in from Hawaii with all kinds of emergency gear like plastic sheeting and water containers.

We asked the Red Cross to distribute those supplies.

*Q: Was it hard to get to where the tsunami hit from Port Moresby?*

KARAER: Well, you had to fly, because if you think of the map of the island of New Guinea, Port Moresby is at the middle of the bottom of the island and the tsunami hit to the west of the center of the north of the island. So, everything had to be flown in. The roads were awful. When we were up there and we went out with that nun to visit these installations and resettlement villages, the roads that they had just pushed through to make the resettlement villages were just barely passable. Road building is a problem in these countries, because the soil is sandy and you get really heavy rains. When it rains, little trickling streams become huge torrents, and they just wash everything away. Roads don't last. You have to keep building them and fixing them constantly, and the local governments don't have the equipment and the financial wherewithal to keep up with that sort of thing.

That was why the villagers were living on the beach to begin with, because you could paddle along the edge of the shore and get from place to place without too much difficulty. You didn't need a road. But the trouble with living on the beach is that waves can wash you away.

*Q: Do you want to talk a bit about the Madeleine Albright trip and how that went and your relationship with the staff and all that?*

KARAER: First of all, why did Madeleine Albright come to Papua, New Guinea to begin with? That was because our Assistant Secretary, Stan Roth, had been a staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the senior aide to the head of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. About four years before I went out there, that subcommittee had sent a study group to the region to report on the situation in the islands. The report had argued very strongly for more developmental assistance there. Of course, during World War II, the importance of that part of the world to the United States was huge. But now the war was long over, and their report was ignored. The United States government had decided that it was going to limit its developmental assistance to certain things, like the Middle East, and that the South Pacific was not important to it anymore. The Australians, New Zealanders, Japanese and Taiwanese, however, were very active. The European Union had an active program development program there also.

Anyway, the US had closed down all of its aid programs in the Pacific, and our embassy didn't have any development money unless there was a disaster. That certainly made it difficult for us to get attention from the government, because, as I kept writing in my reports, the attitude of the government there was that diplomatic relations were a barter situation. Their attitude was, "We support your position in the United Nations, for example, and you provide developmental assistance." While everybody was polite to me, and I think I was still able to trade somewhat on the reputation of the United States in general, we just didn't have anything for them at all. The attitude of many of the ministers was if you're not bringing us something, why are you wasting our time and yours?

Anyway, I think Stan felt the shame of the United States not being more of an active participant in building these little countries, having had such a close relationship with these people during World War II. Since we had no money to use for projects, he made it a point to schedule luncheon meetings on a regular basis with the ambassadors of those countries in Washington, which was quite a hit, because they had been so thoroughly ignored for such a long period of time. Then Rea Brazeal, who was our Deputy Assistant Secretary, came out to visit me. I think it

was toward the end of '98, and the Japanese had just finished a nice airport for Port Moresby. The one that they had been using before, and the one to which I had originally arrived, was just a slum. This was a lovely new building.

We were sitting in the VIP lounge waiting for her flight to be called, and she said, "Arma Jane, if the Secretary were to agree to a short stop here do you suppose that we could receive her? She could meet the government officials here in this building." I knew the Papua New Guineans would be so thrilled to have the Secretary of State visit them that they'd do anything to make it work." She said, "Well, one of the things Stan had suggested to her was to see how we might get the Secretary to agree to make a short stop in PNG." She wasn't going to spend a lot of time, but if it could be done without a lot of security fooling around, Papua New Guinea would be a really interesting place to visit even if it was only for two hours. So in due course we got the notice that the Secretary would like to stop there, and I informed the government. They were overcome. I must say, for folks who were pretty lackadaisical about many things, when they wanted to put their mind to it, they did the right thing. We had very good cooperation. We got whatever we wanted. We set up the visit at the new airport. Well, this planning was perking along, and I was sort of overwhelmed, because I had only three other Americans on the staff at that time, no DCM, no American secretary, and we were getting boiler-plate telegrams by the bushel instructing the post on all the stuff that had to be set up for a Secretary's visit. It didn't seem to make a bit of difference that she was only going to stay for two hours instead of two days. We're supposed to have a special room set up with computers and copying machines and you name it, all the stuff that you'd need to conduct World War III from that place. We needed a room for a press conference with particular instructions about the podium and the microphones. Oh, and telephone lines for the press of the world who were going to come with this thing. Of course the press was traveling with her, so they knew there were going to be press people at this thing. We also needed to provide a special place for her and her staff to withdraw to and a room for the meeting with the government.

We asked if she would meet with the embassy staff and their families and the Peace Corps director asked if the Peace Corps Volunteers who would be in town could come also. She agreed. They wanted somebody to transcribe in shorthand everything that was said at the press conference. I pointed out that we didn't have an American secretary so there wasn't anybody to do this. Eventually they sent me a USIS officer from the States to supervise that part of the thing, and they sent us a lovely young man from the GSO's office in Jakarta to assist my poor admin officer. We were getting underway with the preparations for the visit and the tsunami struck.

I made my economic officer the tsunami man. He had to send in the daily reports and deal with the AID people who came through. While he was doing that, the government of Papua New Guinea came up with its program for receiving her. Part of her reception would have groups of dancers representing different ethnic groups in Papua New Guinea performing in the outdoor area at the entrance to the VIP portion of the airport. Well, I sent all of this in to Washington. Our program was measured down to the minute, and about two days before the Secretary was to arrive, I got a telegram saying, "Cancel the feathered dancers." They made it sound like Las Vegas. Cancel the feathered dancers, because it wouldn't look good to the American press if they saw her being received by dancers when all these people had died or were suffering in the north.

Oh and by the way, they're wondering would it be possible to arrange for her plane to fly over the devastated area.

I went to the Foreign Ministry with this message. I told them that I was ready to explain what their customs were in this respect, but I wanted to tell you what they said. The Chef de protocol said, "Ambassador Karaer, we can't cancel those dancers. The other Melanesian people would hear that we didn't have them, and they would say that we were ashamed of our culture. It's not like we're celebrating." So, I sent a message back saying what he said, but it didn't make any difference. "We don't want them." I just sat back and thought, "Well, too darn bad, because they're going to be there." I stopped arguing.

In the meantime, fortunately for us all, I guess, the bishop at Aitape had a memorial service for the victims of the tsunami which was caught on Australian television and carried on CNN. And guess who carried the gifts down the aisle to the alter and led the priests to the mass? It was feathered dancers, of course. After that broadcast I received a message saying, "Well, we guess dancers will be all right, because they participated in that memorial service." I thought, "Right, you'll believe television, but you won't believe the ambassador!" That is the kind of the thing I'm sure every ambassador grates their teeth over, that Washington just does not pay attention to the judgment of the people they have sent to work in the country, who, after all, do know something about how the culture works in those places.

Anyway, the Secretary arrived. She obviously was enchanted by the feathered dancers. The prime minister took her around to all the groups and told her about who everybody was and where they came from and what they were supposed to be representing. Then he escorted her to the meeting rooms. where we had the meeting with the government and the press conference. We were informed by the Secretary's staff that there could be only one picture with the embassy staff and that if the Peace Corps was going to be there, then the Peace Corps would have to be in that one picture, the Secretary wouldn't have time for two to be taken. Now, this then turned out to be a pretty big gang, so we have got a picture all right, but its quite a crowded picture with everybody with the Secretary. We presented a small gift to her. Then those people who had no time to have more than one picture took her off to the retiring room, where they sat and ate canapés and talked to each other, while the people at the Government of Papua New Guinea reception downstairs hung around and talked to each other. The French ambassador walked out very indignantly, unfairly blaming the PNG government for having brought him out there just to see Madeleine Albright walk by and not mingle with the crowd, when in fact it wasn't their fault at all. I was embarrassed. The Secretary was charming for the couple of minutes that any of us had to talk with her, but the policy was to just blow us off, us, the Papua New Guineans and their guests. When it was time for the plane to leave, they brought her down, she walked through, shook a couple of hands, reviewed the dancers again and left.

I was really proud of my staff, the way a small number of inexperienced people had handled the visit. I was very grateful that the Government of Papua New Guinea was so cooperative and understanding. But I really wondered about the insensitivity and the arrogance of the Washington staffers who dictated how everything was to be done and cared very little about the impression they were leaving about the United States or the Department's attitude toward its employees. For example, I thought my GSO was going to burst a blood vessel. He had slaved to convert a room



at the airport into a mini emergency communications center, just as Washington had instructed us to do. He told me that the Secretary's staff had glanced into the and said, "Oh, look at all the stuff you've got in here," and then walked into the withdrawing room. I'm not terribly proud of those people at all.

*Q: Did you get any feel, did anybody ever tell you, I mean was this, I mean sometimes you get the feel that Madeleine Albright was overly controlled, not on policy matters, but by her staff who were kind of throwing their weight around?*

KARAER: Well, certainly that was the impression we got, because when we were able to deal with the Secretary herself, she was perfectly charming. She didn't act as though we were wasting her time, but those iron maidens who dictated how things were going to be done were just not going to be moved, and were not the least bit interested in sticking their head out the door to see what was going on down in that reception.

*Q: Well, moving on to why no AID? You arrived there the AID had stopped? Why had we just not had something going?*

KARAER: Well, there had been projects. In fact when our building was renovated, there was a whole suite of rooms for the AID office, but by the time the building was finished, AID had already been withdrawn from the Pacific. The whole Pacific no longer had AID.

*Q: It was a Pacific thing I guess?*

KARAER: Yes.

*Q: What about the Peace Corps? What was the Peace Corps doing?*

KARAER: They were mostly teaching English or science. It was a difficult situation for them. I think we had about 50 volunteers at any one time in the country, and there were smaller groups in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Of course Papua New Guinea is spread over several islands, and it's difficult to get transport wherever you're going. It was tough for most of these volunteers. They were welcomed by the people in the villages and, as far as I could tell, most of them had very close relationships with their host families. But it was difficult, and sometimes dangerous, for the women who were in remote places without any male volunteers.

The trouble was the lack of security in those places. For example, two young women were originally assigned to teach on one of the islands in the Trobriand chain. Peace Corps had to remove them after a few months there because, although they were okay when they were in their town of assignment, when they had to travel to buy groceries or get medical checks or whatever, they had to go in these little local boats that other people traveled in, and they had some bad experiences on those trips with men trying to molest them. It was that kind of a problem. Wherever I traveled, if we had Peace Corps people there, I went to visit with them and for the most part they were grateful to the schools that they were working with. A female Volunteer who was assigned to a girls' school in Port Moresby, which was supposed to be so dangerous, was

really enjoying herself and really had a good experience there whereas some of the others who had to go to very far off places had difficult, if not scary, experiences.

The Peace Corps training center in Papua New Guinea is in the town of Goroko, in the highlands. I got to swear in a couple of different Peace Corps groups while I was visiting during the same time that they were being trained there. I was impressed by how sweet and how welcoming the local people appeared to be who had been Peace Corps host families. During the training period, Peace Corps sends the trainees off to live with a local family for a week or so. Wherever I've been, I've found that the Volunteers form a very strong bond with those families, a bond that remains long after they've left the country. It seemed to be the case there, too. When you think about how the people in the villages live in Papua New Guinea, that is really a test of one's adaptability and willingness to be of service. For example, fruit bat is considered a delicacy.

*Q: In the first place did you have a Peace Corps director with you or did one come around from somewhere else?*

KARAER: Oh, no there was a resident Peace Corps director in each one of our countries. They were good people, and the Embassy got on very well with them. However that reminds me of another incident that I didn't appreciate that rose out of Washington that exposed the fiction that ambassadors have got great authority and the ability to run things in their own countries the way they want to. I got a message from the country desk officer saying that the then undersecretary for administration had met with her counterpart from Australia, who was visiting Washington, and had told the Australian that the U.S. would like to put its embassy in Papua New Guinea into the Australian Embassy building in Port Moresby. This was the first the desk officer had heard of the idea, and it certainly was the first that I had heard of it.

The country director asked me to find out if this would work. Now the Australians had just opened a brand new embassy building in Port Moresby. It was a big place that was built out in the middle of a big empty area with tall fences around it, so their security was as good as they could make it. I thought, well, we'll ask, but I think this is a rotten idea. I had my admin guy inquire about whether they had extra space, and he was told they had no extra space. In fact they were still renting offices outside of their compound for their GSO, because even though the new place was a big building, they needed the whole thing. I told the Department that even if the Australians had room, it was a terrible idea. What was being suggested was to intimately associate us with the former colonial power. While we have many interests in common with the Australians, we have a number that are not, especially our commercial interests where we are competitors. Why would we want to have any Papua New Guinean who wanted to see us have to pass through Australian security in order to get to see us?" The message I got back from the desk was "Well, how can you make this work?" I said, "Why should we even try to make this work? Does the Assistant Secretary agree with this?" Then I sent a copy of that message to Rea Brazeal, who was traveling in Australia and due to visit us. They answer I got from her is that the Assistant Secretary thought it was a lousy idea, and nobody was going to do it.

Apparently the administrative area of the Department thought that they would save money by moving small American embassies into shared quarters with another friendly country. Their question was, "Well, if it doesn't work with the Australians, is there some other government

where you could share quarters?" We replied with a list of the countries that had diplomatic establishments there and why we thought the idea wouldn't work with any of them "What about all the security that we've been hearing about?," we asked. "Who is going to be in control of security if we have shared quarters? Are we going to give up security, or will other people have to put up with what we require?" Well, nobody in Washington had thought that one out yet. Then I proposed, "But, I admit we've got plenty of space in this building, and this building has its own generators. It has its own water supply. We are quite free of most of the problems that afflict the rest of the city of Port Moresby. The Peace Corps rents property in another place that is continually running out of electricity and water and is in a pretty dangerous part of town. Why not have the Peace Corps move over here? They can have the whole ground floor. We'll move our consular officer upstairs, and they can have the whole ground floor. It would be easy for their people to come and go." This wouldn't work, we were told, because the Peace Corps has a policy that it does not want to be associated with the embassy, so that they will not look like they are somehow an arm of the executive of the U.S. government. Okay, understandable, but if it is okay for us to look like the coat closet annex of the Australian embassy, then why is that better than having the Peace Corps in the American Embassy? I mean, I didn't argue this, I just laid it out there and said, "This is a very good possibility that will save everybody a lot of money." Washington just dropped the idea

*Q: What about in the first place the Indonesian representation in Papua, New Guinea and then the relationship with Irian Jaya and all, what was going on there?*

KARAER: Well, there was a fairly large Indonesian embassy in Port Moresby and I don't recall there was any particular thing that came out in public anyway that was memorable about the embassy's activities. All of their ambassadors were retired generals. On my visit up to the provincial headquarters of the Papua New Guinea province that's right on the border with Irian Jaya, the district commissioner arranged for me to go to the border where we met there the Indonesian commander. We all walked across the border and they showed us their customs and immigration facilities. The Papua New Guineans were in the process of opening a similar facility on their side of the border to facilitate the recent increase in border trade.

There were Irian Javan refugees in Papua, New Guinea, which was an issue for the Papua New Guineans. They would not shove these people back across the border, but, on the other hand, they did not want them to do anything inside of Papua New Guinea that would annoy the Indonesians. There were some political activists in Port Moresby who did stuff like put up signs once in a while outside their office building saying, Irian Jaya forever, or something like that, and then the cops would come and take them down. This would become a freedom of speech issue for some Papua New Guinea human rights activists, because the indigenous people of Irian Jay are Melanesians, too and those people who bothered to think about them at all in Papua, New Guinea were sympathetic to their problems.

The biggest issue for any Melanesian is land rights. Anything or anybody that threatens the traditional land rights of a particular group is going to get a lot of fight. That was one of the things that happened on Bougainville. In Irian Jaya the Indonesian government, besides having brought in huge mining interests, had brought in a lot of farmers from Java to settle what was sort of like the American West. From the Javanese point of view, they were settling empty,

uncultivated lands. The indigenous Melanesians didn't consider the land empty at all that. It was their land and they didn't want these "foreigners" around. Irian Jaya was like the Ohio Valley in the early 19th century. Farmers would get massacred and then the Melanesians would get massacred back. It was pretty nasty over there, but that was not my portfolio. We did some reporting on the refugee situation. My consular officer, who was a very talented first tour junior officer, took a couple of trips to the refugee camps to see what was going on there.

By the way, I was very pleased about how the assignment of consular officers to Port Moresby was worked out. The position there was classed as mid-grade position, but the Department had a hard time finding someone to fill it at that grade. I said, "I'll take a brand new officer who can take the responsibility." I'd been a consular officer. My DCM had been a consular officer. We could provide supervision. So, we got this great officer who wrote really well and appreciated the chance to have his own section and political reporting responsibilities as well.

*Q: Did you have any contact with our embassy in Jakarta in particular?*

KARAER: No, except for that lovely GSO who came and helped us with the Albright visit.

*Q: What about with our embassy in Canberra?*

KARAER: Oh, yes. First of all, our military attaché was the military attaché in Canberra and had accreditation to the governments of the three countries that our embassy was accredited to. The fellows from his office would come up regularly. They had a plane, so a couple of times a year they would fly to one of our areas and then either I or the DCM would hitch a ride with them to visit parts of our "parish" that would be otherwise hard to get to. I took a great trip with them in Vanuatu and saw the point on the north end of the island of Espirito Santo where at the end of the Second World War tremendous amounts of U.S. equipment were dumped into the sea. I'd read in history books that the U.S. military authorities waited for a time after the war ended, thinking that the French planters would buy this stuff, bulldozers, refrigerators, you name it, but they didn't. Apparently the French planters thought that if they waited long enough, the Yanks would go away and leave it to them for free. Obviously they didn't know how stubborn Yanks can be. The US military pushed it all into the sea. To this day, you can walk out onto a rocky outcropping and look down into this beautiful clear water and see all this stuff. It's like the lost continent of Atlantis.

*Q: This is naval ships going down up and down the bloody, you know.*

KARAER: Your referring to "the slot" in the Solomon Islands. Not anymore. The only U.S. naval ships there now are under the water.

*Q: How about divers, did they cause a problem for you?*

KARAER: No, although there were some people who dove all around the area. In Port Moresby there is a commercial diving operation that has a decompression gadget, whatever they called those things, for people who ran into difficulty. One diver did get seriously injured in Vanuatu.

An American citizen who has a business there helped this guy get the medical attention that he needed.

I started a dialogue with the Department over appointing consular agents in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, because while the resident Americans that we knew and worked with there provided emergency help to Americans out of the goodness of their hearts, we thought it would really be much better if we had someone in each capital who had an official appointment. Before I left I was able to get an appointments for Keithie Saunders in Honiara, and I had requested an appointment for another businesswoman in Port Vila. The lady in Vanuatu, in case you ever go there, runs a wonderful restaurant called Jill's; her first name is Jill, and she serves American style goodies, hamburgers, hot dogs, tacos and it's really good stuff. The best French fries you'll ever have anywhere in the world.

*Q: As a kid I read all of Jack London's stories about the area there and the ships. Did you have any sort of drifters, American drifters going off and living with the, I mean creating a family or just being nere-do-wells or was that all passed?*

KARAER: My consular agent in Honiara in the Solomon Islands had a guy that just sort of became destitute there and didn't seem to have any desire to help himself. The local folks said, "Well, he can sleep in the jail. She thought, "Oh how can an American do that? Being more hard-hearted, I told her, "You watch it, or you're going to have the whole world coming to your doorstep to be fed." He came and he went. She helped him get some money and get a ticket and get out of there. No, there weren't many, because it's just so expensive to get there, I guess.

*Q: Had Pidgin English disappeared by this time?*

KARAER: New Guinea Pidgin is the lingua franca of the country. There is some English, German, local words and syntax, and Australian slang. The verb in New Guinea pidgin for "to break" is "bugger up." It's a perfectly respectable verb.

*Q: Just like a Korean mechanic who told my wife when our car wasn't running in the middle of a little village in the middle of Korea, he worked for the army at one time, and he looked at the water pump and he said, "Your water pump is all f\_cked up." He was right, it was f\_cked up. Were you ever invited for "long pig?" A long pig being a human being.*

KARAER: No, there is no more cannibalism in those countries anymore. As far as the local folks are concerned, it's not a joke to refer to that old custom. Although at a national day reception, the Fijian Ambassador surveyed the crowd of the good and great of Port Moresby, leaned over to me and said, "You know, my uncle was eaten here." His uncle had been one of the islander deacons who had been trained by the foreign missionaries to act as sort of the first wave into these unproselytized areas like New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The idea was that perhaps they would be more acceptable to the local people than the Europeans would be. He was one of the folks who bit the dust there, but that was the only reference I ever heard made to that part of their history by a South Pacific islander.

That doesn't mean that people aren't realistic about their history and their culture. Before coming to the islands, I had read a number of newspaper statements by Melanesian leaders about the Bougainville conflict to the effect that Melanesians should be allowed to resolve these conflicts without outside interference, that there was a "Melanesian way" to peacefully find a resolution. I asked a Papua New Guinea politician about that. He said, "Ambassador, the "Melanesian Way" to resolve conflicts is to hit the other guy over the head." Before I left Papua New Guinea, the Speaker of the PNG Parliament, who is a wonderful man, had gone on a trip to South Africa, where the UN was sponsoring a meeting on preservation of traditional cultures. He made a speech there, which was reported in the Port Moresby newspapers. He was brutally frank. He said something like, "We in Papua New Guinea understand the importance of preserving our culture. We're proud of our culture. But there are some things that were not good about the old culture and that nobody wants to preserve." He mentioned cannibalism. Then he said, "For example, if I stood before you today in my traditional costume, you would have me arrested for indecent exposure."

*Q: Do they wear those penal gourds?*

KARAER: They do. I came across that when I made that trip up to the northwest coast. When my husband and I got off the little plane, there was a dancing group to meet us arranged by the local government authority. These were the most nude of all of the dancers that we had seen so far. These guys were wearing these long, curly gourds on their prized possessions. I had read about this custom, of course, but stupid me, I had assumed that the goal was for some kind of modesty, but of course it's not. As soon as I saw them dancing around, I knew that it was simply an enhancement.

*Q: Well, then you left. Is there anything else we should talk about do you think about this?*

KARAER: No, I guess not.

*Q: Well, you'll have a chance to work on this and you can also enhance the report with or without gourds. Well, you went back when 2000?*

KARAER: May of 2000.

*Q: Then what?*

KARAER: Then I retired at the end of June.

*End of reader*