

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs History Project

**DAVID C. PIERCE**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
*Initial Interview date: March 10, 1999*  
*Copyright 2018 ADST*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Background and Education	
Born in Des Moines, Iowa on August 29, 1944	
Father worked for the FBI	
Grandfather was a notable Marine and a founder of Quantico	
Grew up in Yeadon, PA	
Graduated High School	1962
Dickinson College, Graduated	1966
Graduate work at Temple University	
Political science	
Chiang Mai, Thailand	1968-1971
Peace corps	
Teaching, particularly in physical education and swimming	
Married in 1968 to another trainee from Illinois	
Thai were very supportive of U.S. action in Vietnam	
Swim Coach, YMCA	1971-1973
Joined the Foreign Service	1973
Retook written exam in 1972	
Counter-terrorism in the mid-1970s	
Belize' Deputy Principal Officer	1974-1976
Discussion of sanitation, food production, climate, and environment	
"Visamon" - Consulate Work	
Washington, DC; ARA/CMA	1976-1979
(Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs)	
Caribbean Desk	
"Lobster War" in the Bahamas (influx of Haitian refugees)	
Sally Shelton and Barbados/Guadalupe	

Washington, DC; Economic Bureau Office of Development and Finance Inter-American Development Bank	1979-1981
California, Pierson Fellowship Refugee and Immigrant Affairs Coordinator	1981-1983
Seoul, Korea— Economic Officer (1983-1885) Demonstrations, political unrest, and economic booms Banking and Investment Political/Military Officer (1985-1987)	1983-1987
Khartoum, Sudan—Refugee coordinator Ethnic Tensions South Sudanese, Eritrean, and Ethiopian refugees	1988-1989
Bangkok, Thailand—Refugee Migration Coordinator Burmese, Lao, Cambodian Refugees Resettlement issues - Economic and social The Vietnamese government “Amerasians”	1989-1992
Washington, DC—Senior Seminar Diversity in the State Department, Women’s Class Action suit	1992-1993
Washington, DC—AF Office Director Somali Task force Haitian Task Force	1993-1994
Washington, D.C.—AF/EPS Office Director Economic Policy Office	1994-1995
Cape Town, South Africa—Principal Officer	1995-1997
Retirement	1998

## INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Pierce.]

*Q: Today is March 10, 1999. This is an interview with David C. Pierce. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I’m Charles*

*Stuart Kennedy. David, let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?*

PIERCE: I was born in Des Moines, Iowa on August 29, 1944. The reason it was Des Moines has something to do with my family. My father was an FBI agent, a new FBI agent as of 1941 so he had been transferred. He joined in Washington, DC, where he spent most of his time growing up and he and my mother were transferred first to Portland and then Salt Lake City, then Des Moines and finally Philadelphia. It was in the Des Moines part of that that I was born. I was the first of three children.

*Q: What sort of family did your father come from and your mother come from?*

PIERCE: That's a good question, a very interesting question. Both of them graduated from Wilson Teachers College in Washington, DC. How they got there is quite different. My mother was the daughter of General Albertus W. Catlin, who was the first commandant of the Marine Corps and retired as a brigadier general and had been the commandant in Haiti. He had been on the battleship Maine when it was blown up and was a Medal of Honor winner in Vera Cruz.

*Q: Any relation to the painter?*

PIERCE: Yes, not directly, but there's some.

*Q: Just for the record, he was a great painter of the West, the far West, where you could recall Indians during the 18th century, early 19th century.*

PIERCE: Early 19th century. George Catlin and he was, a lot of his work is in the 8th floor of the State Department as a matter of fact, quite a few pieces up there.

*Q: Also at the National Portrait Gallery.*

PIERCE: That's correct. He grew up in New York. My grandfather—the general, the marine—was born in 1868, graduated from the naval academy in 1890 and probably to this day, still the most important accomplishment he had notwithstanding the Medal of Honor and notwithstanding the Quantico, setting up Quantico. He came back and he was a commandant later. He also took the six marines into battle, he was one of the colonels who not only trained them, he took them into battle. The marines took on the Germans and stopped the German advance. What I was about to say was as far as the marines and the navy were concerned, his greatest accomplishment was none of those. It was that he was the captain of the navy football team at a time when in the senior year when they beat army.

*Q: Absolutely. My brother is a naval academy graduate and I lived as a young boy in Annapolis and I know one has a set of priorities.*

PIERCE: It's pretty high on the priority list. In fact, he wrote a book. He was wounded. He took a bullet in the left lung a couple of inches from his heart. He survived for another 19 years, but he wrote a book called With the Help of God and a Few Marines which is half about the Marines and the divine and the other half about football. It's very interesting because it really gives you a feel for the way football was used as an analogy to life and in particular and in general to the military because and it's probably accurate, his visions of sport. They predate a lot of the stuff in the '30s for example with Notre Dame and the four horsemen and all of that by a generation. So, this is really interesting stuff for those who are interested in football history and the relationship between training and leadership and how you prepare people to deal with adversity and that kind of thing. It's really a quite interesting piece of work and it's much older than anything else I've seen on football. That's my mother's side and it's interesting also. She was the only daughter of his second marriage. I knew my mother's half-sisters on both sides, his and hers. My grandmother was named Martha Ellen Catlin when she was married, that's also my mother's name. They kind of came from the New York sort of part of the world and had that kind of world view. My father and his family came from Corydon, Kentucky. That's where he was born. My mother was born in Washington, DC, at the old city hospital, not the new one. My father was born in Corydon, Kentucky and his father had been a YMCA executive. His mother lived to be 93. His grandfather lived to be 111. Judge Early, Robert Early was one of the men who built Corydon sort of from the ground up. He was a contractor, a judge. He was a Pony Express rider, just about everything you got. I actually saw him and he was 105 and I was 12. He was born in 1849 and he actually remembered parts of the Civil War. It was fascinating to talk to him. I never got to meet my mother's parents. They both died before I was born, but I did know my grandparents on my father's side.

*Q: I think it's interesting because it sounds like you grew up with a sense of American history in America which is not necessarily typical of many people who have come in. Did you have a sort of historical feeling?*

PIERCE: Very much. I think my parents were careful to make sure that I got exposed to both sides of that. My mother was an activist in church circles, was a Methodist activist in the local church, but it was sort of from the peace perspective if you will. Maybe that doesn't sound right, but something of a reaction, but I probably got an exposure on not only the historical side, but also the political activist side. My father was kind of conservative, not a movement conservative at all, but conservative in the sense that folks from the borderlands from Kentucky and Tennessee which is where his father came from. I grew up both with a sense of history and being part of the family on both sides and a sense of personalized history. Also, a sense of involvement and interest in the politics and political issues of the day. My parents had very different political views although they managed to have a pretty good marriage for 50 years. I think that was an important part of what's in my background.

*Q: In growing up, where did you sort of particularly at the elementary pre-high school stage, get most of your education?*

PIERCE: Actually I stayed in one school system my entire K-12. I grew up in a town called Yeadon, which is a little suburb, right outside of Philadelphia.

*Q: How do you spell that?*

PIERCE: Y-E-A-D-O-N. It was a community, one of the bedroom communities that developed off the streetcar lines in Philadelphia, the 34 and the 13.

*Q: The old main line?*

PIERCE: Well, no, this is south of the main line, the part that I grew up in is Delaware County. You know, pretty much blue collar although a mix of that blue collar and some white collar. The town is only 10,000 people. It has a couple of claims to fame, one of which has to do with sports. It's a little tiny town that won the Pennsylvania State basketball championship in 1953, a Cinderella team we never stop talking about it. The founder or the person most directly responsible for Flag Day came from Yeadon, so that's another connection to the outside world. I think the other part of it, which probably had the biggest impact on my background, it was an integrated town. The schools were integrated, the neighborhoods were not. African Americans lived in the western part of Yeadon and it was primarily Irish, Italian, Catholic, Jewish and the rest of them and the lone Methodist family in town, that's us, lived in the rest of it. One of the schools Kindergarten through fourth grade was all white when I went there, but quickly became mixed and that's another issue and I'll get to that later on. The other school I went to from fifth grade to junior high school and high school was all in one sort of complex and it was quite mixed and integrated. Yeadon was an interesting town because it was one of the few places outside of Philadelphia where African Americans of income and means, executives, ballplayers, singers, writers, could live, if they didn't want to live in northern Philadelphia which was the ghetto at that time. That had a very big impact on my growing up.

*Q: Tell me about the schools. Let's start with sort of the elementary, sort of what grabbed you, what were you doing and what were you reading and that sort of thing?*

PIERCE: I sort of remember the first grade school, Kindergarten and the first four grades were a few blocks from our house. I remember it and of course we went back there because that's where the gym was where they played basketball games. I went back and I knew it very well, but I don't really have a strong memory of the classes or the playground, more of the playground than the classes, to tell you the truth. Fifth grade I remember well for lots of reasons. One because it was a new school and I made lots of friends very quickly. It was an ancient school. On the upper floor, it was condemned. We probably weren't supposed to be up there during art classes and stuff, but we were, probably for fire safety reasons it wasn't a good idea. I do remember in both schools however going through the nuclear disaster drills, dive under the table when somebody yells. That did stick in my mind. I remember probably the time that I became aware of the

outside world is when our sixth grade teacher who was a very sly teacher, she was wonderful, tough as nails, but very sly actually had us bring in the paper and do a cartoon. We studied cartoons for I don't know, three or four weeks at least, five weeks. Pogo was big then, Lil Abner and all this. So, we had a ball. We all thought this was great, this was wonderful, what a way to learn. Then she said, you know, there's other cartoons in the paper. She showed us how to find the editorials. Well, to understand those cartoons of course you had to know some of the issues. It was like I say, she was very sly. She got us hooked on doing this and she shifted us into other ones and we had to know something about it. So, we started asking questions and we would pester everybody with questions. I still remember it was sixth grade and that's kind of when the world opened up. Sure we did the usual things, you know, the cultural days and the rest of it, but that's really the point that I think I remember not just domestic politics, but international politics starting getting interesting in what was going on. It was the time, it was '56, '55 or '56, and it was the time of one of the many Arab Israeli Palestine conflicts. It was the Suez War.

*Q: The Austrian, I mean the Hungarian Revolt at the same time.*

PIERCE: Yes, that's right. It was a very interesting time. It was a dramatic time for a lot of things. There were a lot of interesting issues out there, but I remember that very vividly.

*Q: What about at home? Were things of that nature talked about at the dinner table and all or was this sort of something you just did at school?*

PIERCE: More at school than at home although we did have some discussions, I mean obviously when you start asking these questions, you have a conversation. My memory is that my parents had pretty strong opinions and they were different.

*Q: You survived.*

PIERCE: No, no it wasn't that, but they had not only different opinions but different ways of expressing them and I learned that there were issues to discuss, things that my mother cared intensely about. My father was less intense. I can remember him waking me up when Eisenhower won the election in 1952 for the first time and how excited he was.

*Q: It's very interesting thinking about an FBI agent dad. Was J. Edgar Hoover God for your father?*

PIERCE: No. You raise a very interesting thing. Remember I told you my parents grew up in Washington?

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: This is my grandfather, of course my grandmother on my mother's side had died before I was born, but my two grandparents on my father's side were still alive. I

came down to visit them every, as did my sister, many Easters, not everyone necessarily, but most of the time. I kind of knew the city. My grandfather I mentioned had been a YMCA executive and he then came to Washington and eventually by the way of West Virginia left Corday and got into the insurance business. He was a baseball fanatic. There was no other way. He taught me chess and he loved chess. Give him a choice between anything and baseball, baseball wins. This is the senators, but baseball period. He was an umpire. He umpired the FBI police baseball games here. He got to know J. Edgar Hoover personally and I got to meet Hoover personally not because my father was an FBI agent, but because my grandfather knew him from baseball. My father actually started, both my parents actually started the time they graduated was 1939 from Wilson Teacher's College. There were as you can imagine very few teaching jobs in those days being in the middle of the Depression. So, they both went to work for the FBI's fingerprint clerks somewhat overqualified, but that was work and they were able to do it. My mother did that for a little while. I think she stopped before they moved. I don't remember when she stopped. Once he became an agent. The FBI was expanding then, they needed agents, right up until World War II and for the first time since Hoover took it over they were taking people who had college degrees, but were not accountants or lawyers. They were taking from inside. They eventually brought him on. They brought him on by '41 as an FBI agent. Hoover was because we had sort of an inside sense of who Hoover was through my grandfather; Hoover was never the sort of the God of the realm. I mean he was the boss, and he was a fascinating man to watch. I mean this was before this other stuff came out and long since. He had already been in that job by the time I got to see him you know maybe for 20 some years, almost 30 years I think, so he was a legend or whatever you want to call that already. There was a book an FBI agent wrote called No Left Turn. It's about J. Edgar Hoover. It's a very funny book. It doesn't detract at all from his leadership of the FBI at the time, but it points out a lot of funny things that went along with it including the fact that once he got hit in a car that was making a left-hand turn. He never let his people make a left-hand turn again. That got a little tricky when they had to scout these trips out in advance and make sure they could get from A to B without making a left turn. That's kind of the way we looked at it. My father was sort of resigned I think to the couple or three hours of overtime that was the voluntary overtime that was required. Did I say that right? Yes, it was in fact expected, let's put it that way because Hoover wanted to go up to Congress every year and say, "Look, I have, look at all these dedicated agents who've given you this time, give me what I want." Obviously he was able in most cases to get what he wanted. All that stopped when Bobby Kennedy became Attorney General. Kennedy being a family man said, "No, these people have families and they need to get home." I remember how happy my father was when somebody was able to tell J. Edgar, look these folks need to go home.

*Q: Hoover not being a family man.*

PIERCE: Hoover never being, that's right, not even close. I mean the man is clearly married to the job. He had as far as I could tell few other interests other than, you know.

*Q: Horse races.*

PIERCE: Horse races, yes, he did like horse races. He liked baseball, I know that personally. I certainly had a view growing up with him. I wouldn't call it cynical. My father was not a cynical man at all. He's not somebody that you would associate with the FBI today. He was in fact in that movie, *The FBI Story*. He's the only guy in the line that put his hat on his head. Everybody else had their hat off and he said, "Hey, they're too far away, they can't see me, I'll put my hat on." Of course, you can't see his face when he does that. He did about half of his work undercover. He was the kind of guy who could pass for anything. He did the other half very much in the open as a police liaison, a local police liaison for Eastern Pennsylvania, so he knew all the police. He was a sharp shooter. He was one of the first people at Quantico to get a 100% score and do it not only once, but a couple of times, it's very rare. He used to teach people. He was a teacher as was my mother. They were trained teachers, couldn't teach in science which was what he was trained to do, so he wound up teaching that way. I went with him actually on some of his trips out to Eastern Pennsylvania, so I'm not only related to the local police, but teach him how to shoot. He taught them how to shoot with their other hand because no bad habits he said. Usually with that other hand, the best hand.

*Q: Sort of at home, this is you were moving sort of into the teens when McCarthy came along, when the McCarthy period came along, did that enter into the family at all the accusations that people more or less of a liberal tendency might be considered to be communist and that sort of thing?*

PIERCE: My mother was disgusted with McCarthy I remember that. My father was kind of ambivalent because on the one hand you thought the guy was over the top, you know, he was not doing what he should be doing. On the other hand, you knew that there was a real threat. He knew that and he couldn't really talk about it in terms of any detail, but he knew there was a problem. I mostly remember my mother's reaction to that, but she was certainly not a sympathizer. I mean I remember her reaction when Stalin died. I think it was '53, her reaction was almost a Quaker reaction as she put it. She said, "It's never right to wish anybody ill or dead, but when somebody has died it's okay to smile." In her own way, you know, she was saying, "Look, I'm not", she didn't like what he was doing either, so. I think I may have exaggerated or it may have sounded like an exaggeration of the positions that they took. In fact both of them were recognized as middle of the road, just sort of a little bit sort of to the left and sort of to the right if you're using the standard.

*Q: Well, back to school. While you were in Yeadon, as you moved on towards high school, what sort of sports and reading and subjects were you taking?*

PIERCE: We had the usual sort of standard curriculum. It was an interesting school because there weren't many public schools that had a big Latin program at the time I guess because the wife of the Presbyterian minister was allowed to teach since she was there so they had it. I remember taking that. I played, I went out for football in junior high school, played some, but then I had an opportunity to get a job as a newspaper boy, which I did. I had to make a choice because I couldn't do both at the same time. I played a lot of



pickup football, a lot of pickup basketball, a lot of stuff, but they only had three sports in the school. I wound up doing this newspaper job which I was good at and I enjoyed doing and it actually led to a scholarship a few years later. The school also had some very good I think for a small school it had very good English, math and sort of history and history and international relations, world studies, world cultures programs, quite remarkable I think for that kind of school. There were 87 people in my graduating class. That's how small it was. I checked, we had a reunion, the first time I went to one, my 35th reunion a couple of years ago in '97. Out of the class of 87 there were at least 12 MD or Ph.D. people which is pretty remarkable for a small school in the middle of a mixed blue-collar, white-collar community, very much middle class, but quite remarkable. I attribute that a lot to the quality of the school and the teachers took a lot of pride. They were also defending themselves against being absorbed by a much larger school district.

*Q: When you graduated about '62?*

PIERCE: 1962, obviously Kennedy, Sputnik, the missile crisis, all these things were, the space race, all these things were hot issues. The big issue of course was immigration, civil rights and immigration and it was as unpolarized an issue as I can imagine in that school. There was one side. You know, we were all for it. It's probably worth recognizing that a large portion of the community because it was Irish or Italian Catholic did not go to school because there was a big Catholic school in a neighboring town. In those days there was a fairly separatist attitude toward, you know, we do our own thing. That broke down in the summer swimming club, however, because their summer swimming club that started in '54 which was another focal point of my life did not have those divisions. It had a race division because it was set up in '34 and not immigrated and a parallel pool was set up in West Yeadon. So, it was kind of a mixed challenging. The pool distribution reflected the housing distribution at the time that they were status '54 or '55. The school, however, did not. It reflected a religious divide between parochial.

*Q: How about dating?*

PIERCE: Didn't do as much, but when I moved to the new district I met a girl in fifth grade that I went with all through high school. I wasn't exactly quite a catch. We eventually broke up. She is a wonderful person and she was trained to be a medical technologist. I'm sure she has done very well, but she basically was not interested in traveling and moving around the world and seeing what's out there. This was before the Foreign Service was ever part of it, but I knew I didn't want to spend my whole life in Yeadon and she did want to in that immediate vicinity. She was part of a big family of six kids and a father who died when she was 12. I can see reasons why we broke up.

*Q: Well, as a newspaper delivery boy, does this mean you read the newspaper a lot?*

PIERCE: Oh yes, oh yes. I pointed out my story in six phases because that's really what I got involved in and was very interested in. Yes, I read it a lot. All of the kids in our family were voracious readers. My parents read to us early and all the time basically. So,

we started reading to them. We did the same thing with my kids. At this point I was a day old that I was reading and it certainly has paid off in terms of facility with the written word. It's been a big help.

*Q: While you were moving up through graduation from high school, did you have any thought of where you wanted to go or what you wanted to do?*

PIERCE: Actually I respected what my family members had done. My father and my grandfather and my mother who was then studying to be a librarian and was very active in social, Christian social work. One of the things we did I did even in high school, there was already starting to be some pressures in terms of neighborhood desegregation, residential desegregation and even in Yeadon which had a history of this, there was a lot of angst and unhappiness and fear and concern. They were block-busting efforts going on. I worked with them in setting up a council, a community relations council to try to deal with those issues. There were a lot of churches involved in this and there was a lot of resistance and it was not a pretty time. That was an issue that we were involved in.

*Q: Historically, it was the blue collar who was really feeling the pinch of this. I mean the wealthy weren't being challenged by these you know mixing the neighborhood. It was the blue collar who felt not only the sort of homes were under threat because you mentioned block busting if blacks came in that it would mean a lowering of housing values and all that, this was part of the problem.*

PIERCE: I think, this predated the whole bussing controversy, but I certainly saw first-hand a sense of the anger and frustration that you saw in South Boston that we all saw. It was a time of civil rights sit-ins and activities in the South even in '60 and '61. We were concerned in the immediate neighborhood and towns nearby. I think you're right about the blue-collar sense. I think it's more than that though and I think it's worth recognizing that there were a number of factors in play. One of the things that's characteristic of Philadelphia, of Baltimore and a number of other neighborhoods that are immigrant and migrant towns is that you really have to describe the neighborhoods block by block. This block may be all Italian, this block may be Lithuanian, this may be Estonian, whatever. In the cities that's literally true because one person gets there and gradually, so that gradually pretty soon the whole block then becomes a whole neighborhood, then becomes one ethnic. We're not talking here about restrictive covenants or anything else; those existed, but that's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about a very natural tendency for people to want to locate near each other in those cities which has happened repeatedly and not just Europeans and Western and Eastern Europeans, but anybody else including African Americans. Certainly you saw that same pattern in some of the suburbs as well. What you also saw in the '50s and the early '60s is a massive migration out of the city into suburban areas as suburban areas developed and indeed a large portion of the Italian and Irish population was relatively recent arrivals in the sense that a few years earlier many of them may have started businesses in West Philadelphia that had moved out and sort of creating in effect a vacuum not unlike others who had been in those town houses, row houses, duplexes in Philadelphia. What was happening was this time and of

course as well, they recreated in effect the same flow that created little pockets of people in the city, created little pockets of people in the suburbs. If you then start bringing in individuals and often individuals with more means and more money, able to buy into the neighborhood at the highest prices because the dirty secret of block busting is that the real estate agents were doing just fine, thank you because they were getting top dollar when they sold. The block busting effort had the effect of driving down the sellers' income, but not the buyers' price and not the realtors' income. So, the interesting part was that very often people with higher incomes were coming in and able to buy in the neighborhood that upset people and it was more than just race, it was also the sense of you know, this is no longer our little enclave. That's you know, understanding that these issues are more than just one dimensional, that they cover a whole range and including future shock. There's the book *Future Shock*, I had not read it at the time, but it certainly applies to that as well, the sense of losing control, things happening too fast. This isn't the neighborhood I moved into, what's going on?

*Q: You were saying that you were involved?*

PIERCE: I was. It was my mother who took the lead, she and a number of people in the black community. My best friend in high school was an African American who was the first chair clarinet player and he'd had a chance. He was the first son as well of four. Both of his parents were music teachers, he didn't have a chance, he was going to be a musician. A wonderful guy, Walter. He's now a judge in Howard County, having used his musical talents to earn his way through law school and get himself a law degree. There were a number of people that got more involved in this. The Jewish community. There was a significant Jewish community there. They still from the members of the Holocaust and others were interested in this community relations as well as trying to help deal with pressures, the anger and the frustration to make it easier on everybody. Because it was going to happen, there was no way to stop it. Changes were going to take place, people were going to move in and the issue was how best you could help this happen as smoothly and gracefully as possible. I was involved in it. I was not the leader of it. My mother in fact was one of the leaders, but I worked with her. She by that time had gotten to know Reverend Leon Sullivan in Philadelphia and was involved in some of the stuff as was the church. She was a regional delegate to deal with regional and national Christian social concerns. So, it was very much for her a calling to do this before she then became a librarian and added that work in one of the schools nearby, a day school I think.

*Q: What about on your part, where were you pointing yourself towards college?*

PIERCE: I mentioned that one of my heroes was the military side and the other one of my heroes was Clarence Darrow. That may sound a little strange.

*Q: Clarence Darrow? Oh, yes.*

PIERCE: Yes. Very much. I mean, if you want to simplify you could say I was interested in national security and military side. I wanted to be a marine as well. I also wanted to be

a lawyer. I thought I had found a way to do both, the marines in Philly, which I was going to do at college, but I went to Dickinson. I never even looked at any of the schools. I just decided I wanted to go to Dickinson.

*Q: Dickinson is where?*

PIERCE: Carlisle, Pa.. The army War College is nearby. It's a good school. It's a big time party school as well when I was there. I was not a party person. In fact I had my first drink on the day I was 21. The only time I've been carded in my life is when I was 21. I literally had my first drink then. I know that's rare in this world, but it is literally true. I was a Methodist. I grew up in a Methodist church, it sounds a little strange because I also joined the fraternity there. I managed to make that work. I was going to be a platoon leader in the Marine Corps in the PLC program, which has a law branch to it. However, I had done some swimming in the summer and was fairly good at it. I went out for swimming in college. Even though my degree says political science, psychology and history, the fact is I was an excellent swimmer even though that wasn't on the books. Dickinson had an interesting year that year in '66 because we had a team in the college bowl. We went five in a row, the undefeated champion and it was the first year that we had any team that won the Mid-Atlantic championship and that was the swimming. I was not captain, but I was a significant part of that team. So, I came out very excited about that. That's what I wanted to do. Somewhere along the line I did take a couple of law courses. I remember taking them, but I remember not being that interested in them. I also remember probably there were two courses that were probably the most interesting. Stand-alone courses, I mean political science was interesting, psychology and history was interesting, but I took a sociology course that involved some internship at a nearby youth correctional facility, a sort of group home type thing. First let's talk about the Chinese professor. I'd never had a foreign professor before. The other course was international relations, which I really enjoyed. I had a great teacher. He was the kind of guy who had exchange students and people coming through all the time. Talk about a rainbow house, he had a rainbow house and didn't just talk it, he lived it all the time and I enjoyed that. I didn't act on it immediately.

*Q: It sounds like on the international thing that was there, really in many ways you're pointing or so towards sort of general terms sort of social work.*

PIERCE: I was actually. I was certainly very interested in that. I had coached a couple of summers and had some success at it. I mentioned that both of my parents were teachers, were trained as teachers. My father on the side taught lifesaving at the Red Cross and I learned. I watched him teach. I learned to teach with him. I was coaching and was excited about competitive swimming and had some success at it and did that when I got out of college. I actually worked in a warehouse; I was helping out as a coach, but that fall I started doing graduate work at Temple in political science. I had a local scholarship and it was nearby, but I was also recruited to be the coach of the new YMCA/YWCA, which was a big pool that had just opened up. This was the second year, they had a boys team and a girls team and so I was coaching four nights a week, plus weekends. I loved it and

was much more interested in that than political science. We won the girls league outright and tied for the boys league, took them to the states and had several individual champions, state champions in the younger ages. It's a little hard to get older champions in one year. That summer I actually coached three different summer clubs in three different lanes. Where my kids were that I'd had in the winter, they all wanted me to coach there, so I split my time and all three of them did pretty well. So, I was the coach and that's what I wanted to be at that point. I basically I was sort of still enrolled in the school, but I wasn't really interested in it.

*Q: What about the platoon leader thing?*

PIERCE: I couldn't do it and that was one of the great disappointments in my life because I got all the way through the process, the medical and I had dental problems. I had teeth that hadn't come down. I had a broken tooth here from knocking it on the bottom of the pool. The last step of the process was the navy. The dentist said I couldn't do it. He said my choice was either to get braces or to have all the teeth pulled and to have false teeth and his latter option didn't sound so good. I went and got braces and then somebody pulled out a road book and said, we can't take you in this platoon. I was signed and sealed, but not quite delivered and I couldn't do it. So, I was not real happy about that. In fact I was very disappointed. That was one of the things I really wanted to do. That happened my freshman year. I had to find some other way to do this. I thought about enlisting. As I was doing the coaching and the swimming I got more and more excited about it. I knew that was my passion, so I cast around to find somebody to pay me to do that. We were all facing the draft. I applied to the army as a recreation specialist there, the Peace Corps and IFDA and all three of them I believe accepted me and the Peace Corps got me first.

*Q: This would be '64, I mean '66?*

PIERCE: I graduated in '66 from college and I was going to graduate school for a year, but that was the year that I got into coaching full time over the winter. I had coached the summer before.

*Q: At the graduate school what were you doing as a graduate student?*

PIERCE: Political science. It was a time when the buzzword was maximum feasible participation and I, you know, partly because I had something I was really excited about, this was a drag. It was also a drag because my impression was that it was a full employment device for an academic specialist. The money tended to get stuck in the institutions and didn't actually get into the hands of the people who needed it the most. It wasn't really solving the problems. A lot of paper was being read and a lot of stuff was being done, but it wasn't really getting at the issues that had to be gotten at if you really want to make a difference. That's the social worker part of me. At the same time I was engaged in this really exciting coaching thing. Excited partly because I was working with kids and even teenagers are fun to work with if you can get them in a situation where they

want to be and they're learning and they're gaining skill and ability and they're excited about it. I've always been good at that, at motivation and helping people discover stuff and grow and develop and get really charged up about it. I was following my passion very much.

*Q: Then what happened? How did things turn out?*

PIERCE: Well, the Peace Corps sent me to training to go to Malaysia. In fact they picked me up partly because there was a specific job teaching in Chiang Mai in a transition school where they take people from some other language stream and put them into English. They sort of take them from the sixth grade and they teach everything in sixth grade in English. Having this all along, but they basically make sure now they're ready for high school. They also needed a swimming coach and they were recruiting. For some reason the job fell through at the last minute. That was September to December of '67 and so I had no job. The Peace Corps said there was a Thai training program coming up and they're looking for a physical education, elementary education teachers to go out and do movement education and train people to do that. So, I said, okay, let's try that. So, I came back to Hawaii from January to April to do that training, to learn Thai and I did go off to Thailand. I went off to Chiang Mai. In the process in the training one of my fellow trainees was a teacher from Illinois who a year later I married.

*Q: You were in Thailand or Chiang Mai from when to when?*

PIERCE: I was in Chiang Mai. I got there in April or May of '68 and left in March or so in '71. So, I was actually there three years. The first year I was with the general education development center, but at the time I got there the town, the city which is the second largest city in Thailand had been tasked with urbanizing the regional games. It was the first time they were going to have them outside of Bangkok. The mayor, the person who would eventually become the mayor asked me to organize the swimming team, which I did. The university was building a swimming pool and I helped them design it so it that it would be user friendly. I trained lots of people to swim and organized the first teams from Chiang Mai.

*Q: What was it like? What was Thailand like in this '68 to '71 period from your perspective?*

PIERCE: Very interesting place. The first year I had been able to go all around the north because all of northern Thailand including the border over at Laos and the border with Burma. It was not on the tourist map at the time. They were trying to get it on the tourist map, but it wasn't there. I won't say it was a sleepy little town, it was a pretty interesting place for us. Bangkok was as it is now, hot, polluted, but a lot less crowded than it is now. I was in Chiang Mai and it was a really pretty place. It was not a place that was threatening in a lot of ways. There were some very good people up there. There was also an international community. It was interesting because a lot of consulates were there. While you were not exactly in the mainstream or in the thick of anything, the Vietnam

War did not really resonate very much up there.

*Q: I thought they had a fairly large air base there?*

PIERCE: There were some airmen and some GIs and some soldiers in Chiang Mai, but they were manning, I think, an antennae ray or listening post. They were not flying out of Chiang Mai. Most of that was in Udorn in northeast Thailand which is closer to that area. There was an air base I think further south. There may have been something in the lower part, but they weren't flying out of Chiang Mai, let's put it that way. At least to my knowledge they were not. There were obviously some concerns because at that time we understood that the Chinese were building a road through Laos coming toward Thailand so there were concerns. I think it was mostly a listening post up there.

*Q: How did you find working with the Thais?*

PIERCE: I enjoyed it. The Thais in my experience are like a number of other folks: they value interpersonal relations and absence of conflict very highly. It was kind of an interesting situation because here I was teaching a competitive sport. Competition is by definition conflict or can be. In a society that ostensibly values non-conflict or non-confrontation it had some interesting ramifications in terms of competitive sports. What I discovered of course was that the Thais are just as competitive as anybody is. It's only a couple of layers down; it's crude to show it, but they are very competitive. It takes a long time. In my experience it takes a long time to establish relationships with Thais that can get beneath the hi, how are you, happy sort of good feelings and good relations on the surface. That you can do in an instant because they're very motivated to do it. It takes a while to develop the kind of deep connections with people that most Americans like to have. It is easier if you are a teacher and I was a teacher both in the school teaching English at the university and in the demonstration school at the high school level and also at the college, but more at the high school, but also as a coach. We were able to develop relationships with people that probably would not be possible for normal working colleagues in the sense that when you're a teacher that's a very important role in Thai as in any Asian society. Not only do you develop relationships with students, but also with parents. So, that was nice. It was a very deep experience for us. We spoke some Thai and some northern Thai from just exposure basically from the Peace Corps base that we had and we used it a lot. We still speak some Thai at home because there are a bunch of Thai words that are a lot more expressive than some English counterparts. That's really both our first second language in the sense that that's the second one we're comfortable with.

*Q: What's your wife's background?*

PIERCE: She grew up on a farm in Illinois ten miles outside of a town called Morris which is on Interstate 80. She grew up on a farm three. It may sound strange, but she went to an even smaller school than I did. At one point the school that she was in was a one-room classroom. She was the oldest of six kids. A girl, three boys and then two girls that spanned 18, 17 years. Her father was a farmer. He couldn't make ends meet on 80 acres

so he worked nights in a box factory. Her mother eventually worked part-time in various jobs and obviously, she, my wife, grew up helping out as everyone does with the house and with the kids on a farm situation. She was one of the first kids in her high school to go to college, probably the first, I think, in her family to go to college. She wanted to be a teacher. She went down to Illinois State University, which was the Illinois normal teachers college. The teachers college is now a state university. She got her teaching degree and decided that she didn't like teaching. Well, they didn't let her into the classroom to practice teaching until she finished all her class work. She liked other kinds of teaching. She's very good with kids. She loves that kind of relationship, but the structure of a formal classroom she doesn't like as much. She graduated in December of '67 and went right into the Peace Corps. She knew for a very long time she wanted to travel. She was very interested in the outside world and her mother strongly encouraged her. She showed up in the same training class that I was in.

*Q: After this Thai experience, were you getting any reverberations with the Peace Corps or some within Thailand about the Korean War at that time?*

PIERCE: You mean the Vietnamese War?

*Q: I mean the Vietnamese War.*

PIERCE: Yes, very much, but not directly affecting us. I mean obviously some of the GI's who were there at some of the posts. I remember when Spiro Agnew came through Bangkok he was treated like he was royalty. From the Thai perspective, the Vietnamese we took care of that was one less Vietnamese they had to worry about. They regarded what we were doing in Vietnam as a very positive thing. They were very supportive. We didn't see them in Chiang Mai very much, but at any given moment we saw probably 1,000 or 2,000, maybe more, GI's on R&R in Bangkok from Vietnam, all with a lot of money in their pocket, cash to spend and they spent it very freely. There were a lot of restaurant-style, American-style creature comforts, not to mention all the things that Bangkok is associated with available. We did know a number of Americans in Chiang Mai because there was an AID presence there, and there was a consulate. In fact the consulate helped us get married. I recruited a number of the international community to be part of the swimming team that I first set up, the second one not the first one. The first one was just for the older high school kids, but I wanted to create an age group team as well. I recruited a lot of the parents. There were some parents attached to some foreigners, Americans and others attached to the medical school and dental school. I was after the people who would be interested in this kind of sport which is the mainstay. I also needed them to contribute a little bit to the cost because I wanted to have enough money to be able to bring a lot of the Thai kids and the local kids who didn't have money. I wanted the sons and daughters of doctors and lawyers and dentists at the medical school, Thai doctors and dentists, to get them that way. I also wanted to be able to bring in kids that had interest and talent, but no money and I had to find a way to do that. We set up a system where that would work. I did know a lot of the Americans who were up there, but there were not that many first of all and secondly, there were probably as many at the



university and the medical schools as there were in the other capacity.

*Q: Had the Foreign Service crossed your radar by this time?*

PIERCE: It had. Because I saw the folks in the consulate in Chiang Mai I took the exam there in the consulate in '72.

*Q: Well, wait a minute, you were.*

PIERCE: Not '72, '70, and 1970. I took the exam in '70 and passed it and could have come back from the interview because we were finished by then, we were back, by the time I got told I had passed it and scheduled an interview I was back. We did come to Washington, but I wasn't really interested at that point. I wanted to be a swimming coach. I wanted to come back and one of the kids that I had coached I had placed on a team in California. It was one of the best teams in the country at the time and I wanted to come back and check up on her, but also, see if this is what I wanted to do. I was sort of on my way to Santa Clara by way of Los Angeles, Lakewood, California which was the team. So, we used our readjustment allowance to buy a Volkswagen camper, which ate up most of it. No job, just headed out West to go to California. When I got to Lakewood, I made sure she was okay and the coach there, Jim Montrella was his name, asked if we could stick around for a couple of weeks and just see what he's doing because I was thinking at that time that I wanted to be a big time, full-time coach at that level, at the Olympic level which is where they were working. I said sure. Two and a half years later I left. That's when I joined the Foreign Service.

*Q: Well, the two and a half years, this would be what '71 or '73 or so?*

PIERCE: May of '71 by the time we got there until the fall of '73. That's right.

*Q: Well, what were you doing? Were you hired as an assistant coach?*

PIERCE: I was there about two weeks when his assistant coach quit. By that time he knew a little bit about me and he knew I had a coaching background. He said, are you interested, would you like to do this. I said, yes I would and I started working for him.

*Q: How did you find it at the Olympic level because one how young people were treated and used because it does strike one that sort of when you're up with the really competitive level that the kids really are pressured or something. I mean what was your impression of this?*

PIERCE: I wouldn't say they were pressured, certainly not the swimmers that I was working with. Again I was dealing with kids who really wanted to be there. It's probably worth saying right now that the reason I didn't stay and keep doing this was because after two and a half years of walking down the same sort of 50 meter patch of concrete, working very intensively for tiny little margins and gains. It was not as satisfying or

interesting to me, fun to me to work with, satisfying, not just fun. What I liked was working with people who got really excited about it and were really excited about the margin and changes and the travel. I'd been all over Southeast Asia. I'd gone with the Thai national team. I'd produced a lot of swimmers who had done well. We went to Singapore, all the way from Chiang Mai to Singapore on a bus with a bunch of swimmers, that was a lot of fun. I went to Hong Kong a couple of times. When you've traveled all over like that and you've seen a lot of the world, to go from—as your big trip of the year— Los Angeles to San Francisco or from Los Angeles to Chicago, it's just not that big a deal. Yes, it's exciting, but it's not the same. You get hooked. I really, really was hooked on international and I missed it. We missed it, both of us did. Were we successful? There were six people from that team that made the 1972 Olympics, yes and three of them were world record holders and did very well. So, yes, but it wasn't what I really wanted to do for the rest of my life, and that's why. It was intense. You were talking about your experience with swimming and one of the things that the coaches do is to look out for the people. I think that that really gets to the question that you were asking before. It's something that has been a very important value for me coming into the Service. There's a transition that you make from being a player to a coach. Particularly when you're young, you know you can be a player coach, I mean you can swim, too, you're still fast and you can, particularly when you've got newer people you really are the model, but your success as a coach is not how fast you are. It's how fast they are, it's how much they actualize out of their potential and how the whole thing works. It is very much a shift from being an operator to a supervisor or a leader or manager or director of an office. It's a shift that a lot of people don't make. It's a shift my father never wanted to make. He never wanted to be a manager. He said, no, you can't pay me enough to manage other people, I won't do it. That's not where I was coming from. I was a coach and you know, very early I began I think I described the level of enthusiasm I got, the satisfaction and the joy of helping other people get where they wanted to go. You're not really supplying all the motivation, you help, you mirror in many ways the connection between that and you know, there's some direction to it, but a lot of nondirectional counsel. You just kind of huddle up in the mirror so people can see. You're dealing with people who are intelligent, who are not damaged, who can understand themselves and you're really trying to foster and encourage them. But critical to that is the sense that they have that you're looking out for their best interests even if they don't agree with it entirely every time and even if it's a little uncomfortable sometimes, part of the deal is their being convinced and your acting in every time in their best interests and what you believe their best interest is. It's very important and it's critical to a lot of human relationships; that's far beyond coaching relationships.

*Q: I would think though particularly when you're at the Olympic level one is always struck by one hears much more about the skaters and all, but what about parents. I mean I would think if you're at the Olympic level you'd have parents who are sort of giving their all and trying to live vicariously and this puts, I mean did you run across that sort of thing?*

PIERCE: Well, certainly some of that although I saw it more at the age group level in that

area and the club I worked for was very good in a lot of ways for that. One, it channeled parents' enthusiasm and energy into things like fundraising projects. It was very much a big part of the parents' life to be involved in the whole club. But, there was a pretty clear separation of responsibilities. The head coach, Jim Montrella, was acknowledged as one of the best technical coaches/mechanics and structure organization training in the country. In fact he was the coach of the year brought in by the American Swimming Coaches Association for '69 and '71, no '71 and, no, '69 and '71 or was it '71 and '72? It was two years in a row. He had started out as I had as a YMCA coach and he just got better and better. Suddenly his kids were real big and one year they took off and beat Santa Clara, which is unheard of. He made it real clear who was the coach was and kind of defended and protected it. Coaches were responsible. It was our job to make sure we knew it and did it right. We didn't have as much of that problem of people. Occasionally you get parents who come to practices and try to give their kids hand signals and that, do this. He'd kick them out. He said, "You know, I can't help you if you insist on being the coach." We didn't really have much of a motivational problem. A lot of the kids and of course part of the coach's responsibility is to create the atmosphere in which excellence can occur. Although our focus was particularly in training as you know from swimming yourself, you know, when you're in the water you're really alone. Yes, you have feelings and sometimes you can hear them in-between the waters as you turn your head, sometimes you can see, but basically you don't see a whole lot. There's a Zen to the sport in the sense of an interconnection and understanding that has to be internally driven. You can't really impose it from the outside and it's really got to be inside. I think that comes back to answering your question about exploitation. Were there pressures? Sure, we had to deal with it. I think we were pretty successful.

*Q: Well, then we come to getting in the Foreign Service. You took the written exam. When did you take the oral exam?*

PIERCE: I took the written exam again in '72. The second year I was in a program where Californians train their city managers. It's basically a rotation of internships and a core program for public affairs and public relations. That summer of '73 Occidental had to finish it off with a master's degree program where you took three courses and did a thesis. I took the exam; I did the oral in Los Angeles as well. I took the exam, the written exam, passed it again and took the oral in Los Angeles, passed that, but I hadn't been told that I was coming to a specific class or anything.

*Q: Can you remember any of the questions in the oral exam?*

PIERCE: Oh yes. One I remember more than anything else. It was a three examiner panel in those days. They had three folks here and I'm sitting over there across from them. What they did was draw you out on an issue that you thought you knew something about. Then the three of them took completely opposing positions. Whatever you said, it didn't matter what it was, because they were testing you was to see A) could you defend it without exploiting, A) could you defend it effectively, B) could you deal with the fact that there was hostility and attacks? Some of them were fairly intemperate, without blowing

up. I think that was part of the test. I cannot remember the name of the examiners. The issue they drew me out on was whether Thais would ever let Americans fight on their soil for them. I said, "Absolutely not, there's no way that they will." When it comes to defending their home turf they're not going to let anybody. It's not just a formalistic thing; they will not let anybody do it. They have a very strong sense of nationalism. As the Vietnamese found out a few years later when they came into Thailand and suddenly discovered that the people that they thought were pushovers on their own territory, were anything but, very tough fighters. As long as they were on somebody else's territory, they weren't that way. Anyway, he drew me out and of course this is a guy whose experience has been Western Europe and you know, the whole German, the whole NATO allied relationship. Of course, so the idea that some host country wouldn't no matter what allow us to fight for them, was not only just an exercise. He really believed it. So, it was a very spirited discussion and I remember as I walked out and hearing them say, "Wow, nobody's ever going to move him off a position." I knew I was going to fail, but they called me in later on and said, no I had passed it. I think they reached me at the consular register first and that's what I came in on as a consular officer.

*Q: Well, how about your wife, how did she feel about it?*

PIERCE: We were both excited about going back overseas. We really missed being overseas. You can tell from our discussion about our Thai friends. We had real friends and were really close and it was a very good experience for us. That was becoming and had become kind of both our passions. She missed that, too, you know.

*Q: Well, then when did you come into the Foreign Service?*

PIERCE: October of '93, '73, sorry, '73.

*Q: What was your class like?*

PIERCE: Good class, a lot of good people. Actually the class didn't start until November. I got here in October. I literally pulled out, I mean we stopped at her folks' place and you know, I left in late September and toward the middle of October, from the middle of September I guess, about a month I took to get here. I called once in a while, no, nothing, no job. I remember getting here and calling them and their saying, "Where have you been, we've been trying to reach you? We want you to come in this class." They said, "We want you to come." Here it is the middle of November, whatever it was and I said, "Well, okay. I'm here now. I just happen to be here." So, they actually brought me on officially and they put me on leave without pay. We stayed with some friends and helped them housesit a house and I went to FSI and took the Thai tapes out and just got my Thai back up to speed because I hadn't used it much except at home for a couple of years. I could do that. It was a really good class. It was mixed. We had one guy from agriculture, a couple of commerce people, several USIS people, good folks. Good enough that we played baseball together in the spring. We were still waiting because of a transfer, we finished in December, so a lot of us were in language or whatever.

*Q: While you were there, did you get, you were put on the consular register is that it?*

PIERCE: That's correct.

*Q: What about consular training, what was your impression of it?*

PIERCE: I remember thinking it was okay. It was not intended that you should walk out there and know everything. It was intended that you should be able to find the stuff in the regulations. I think it was actually on purpose. It was never strong. Actually for the first three nights, three almost four nights I didn't take the consular training until April. I took one in Spanish. I wanted to do it even though they said I didn't need it, but I figured I would have the chance to learn it so I've got to try. I was actually working in the office of counter-terrorism with Lew Hoffacker. They needed somebody to come over as a special assistant basically for the first few months. So, I did that from January until basically April.

*Q: I'm going up, I'm going to be spending a couple days at Lew's house around the 22nd or 23rd of March.*

PIERCE: He moved back to?

*Q: In Austin.*

PIERCE: Back to Austin. He was up on the Cape for a while. He was in Houston I think when I saw him right after he retired. Well, good, please say hi to him.

*Q: I sure will.*

PIERCE: But that was a good experience basically.

*Q: Tell me about counter-terrorism at that time. It was fairly early in the game.*

PIERCE: Very early in the game. Ambassador Nolan and his DCM were killed in the Sudan in the fall about the time that I came in the Service.

*Q: Curt Moore and Ambassador Cleo Noel.*

PIERCE: Curt Moore, that's right. I remember we had everything from hijackings. It was a time when the Palestinians were doing a lot of hijacking. We had the one case that I remember in Hermosillo, Mexico, where the fellow had been taken out of the desert and killed.

*Q: That was very unclear about who did what and why wasn't it?*

PIERCE: I think they eventually figured out it was a drifter, an American drifter. It wasn't Perez, but we didn't know at the time, so we kind of had to keep our watches open. I spent a fair amount of time running task forces, not running them in the sense of the directing of the task forces, but setting them up, organizing and getting them underway, staffing them up in the Op Center and the rest of the time doing whatever Ambassador Hoffacker wanted me to do.

*Q: Was there any feeling of concern that you were getting from Hoffacker or others at that time that you had the president and Henry Kissinger talking very tough in the middle of negotiations, you know, we won't do anything and we won't give in and all that. At the same time you have to do something, I mean this sounds fine for the press, but it doesn't help your people who were under, literally under the gun. Were you picking up any?*

PIERCE: I certainly got a sense of angst in the building, but I think there was a general understanding that to do anything else to pay a ransom for example, to pay a ransom put everybody in the Foreign Service immediately at risk. You then become a prize. I think everybody understood how difficult that was, what the risk was if we did that and I think the other part of the thing, we were all groping around. This was a time as I recall we didn't have airport metal detectors and that kind of stuff. This was very early in the game in the sense that we were dealing with the threat of exploding on our fates and didn't really know that much about how to deal with it. I may be using this opportunity to suggest that one of the things that we were not very good at then and only very recently have gotten much better at is contingency planning and sort of systematically going through planning. Part of that is the structure of the Service and the way we're staffed and the rest of it, unlike the military, we're operational all the time, basically we are. All operational all the time and their up tempo is considerably less. A lot of differences, but we, even the military were caught short on this one. I was kind of sensitive to it in a couple of ways. One because of what happened in Munich in '72.

*Q: You might explain what that was.*

PIERCE: Well, this was the attack by the Black September group on the Israeli athletes at the games. It was the wrestling team, but I was obviously having been part of the team, I didn't go to Munich, but my boss did, Jim Montrella went there even though he wasn't one of the official coaches. He had six people in the games; he was going to go. Most of the swimming was done when this happened, but barely done and so I had a personal interest in what was going on and watched all that in horror. Jim a few months later, a couple of months later, took an U.S. national tour down to Chile and got caught in the middle of the coup in Chile. I had his first-hand account of being pinned on the floor of the hotel room and ducking and covering with bullets coming into the room from the street. I was very much aware of not only terrorism, but the other risks out there in a personal sense. I think there was certainly a sense that we really needed to find the mechanism to not only coordinate what we were doing, but begin to get ahead of this curve somehow and figure out some way to deal with it systematically. One of the books that they made us read coming into the Foreign Service, perhaps they did with you as

well, was a book called Fires in the In Basket.

*Q: Yes, I think it came a little later then. I came in in '55 and I remember that.*

PIERCE: I remember the book, but the concept of it actually captures what I'm trying to say because it is the notion that you walk out and oh, that one's exploding today and you hope the others are coalescent, but you don't have six or seven little volcanoes going at the same time. I think you know, one of the things that I noticed was a sort of ad hoc, you know, let's-deal-with-it culture. In a crisis situation, often that's all you can do, but as the crisis became chronic you really need to shift into a let's-plan-for-it, let's organize this, deal with the conducive contingency stuff. I think that was one of the feelings I got out of that particular assignment that this is important to do and something that the culture of the Department wasn't yet doing.

*Q: It still has a problem, I mean, we are, you know, you come in and you pick up the Washington Post and the New York Times and the headlines in international affairs is your agenda for the day.*

PIERCE: Part of this, as we and I see this, incurrent in the '90s as well because in the '90s a lot of the military tasks have turned to sort of contingency short of full blown out war that how a humanitarian propose if migration components have a lot of civilian stuff or what we thought of civilian stuff. Not only is there pressure on them to do much more contingency planning, unless we do that we can't match up with them very well. We can't match up with them as well as we otherwise could. I think we're doing better in the specific terrorist crisis that I started with, but there are always other channels out there that complicate life for everybody and demand more work to be effective.

*Q: So, where were you planning to go, I mean when you came out, did you know where you were going to go when you came out of the Foreign Service class?*

PIERCE: Oh, I had been assigned to Belize.

*Q: Belize.*

PIERCE: Yes. One of my classmates had been assigned to Vietnam, both of us got the sympathy of our friends and both of us had a great tour.

*Q: You were in Belize from when to when?*

PIERCE: I got there in June, my wife's birthday, June 24, 1974, and left in either late August or early September in 1976.

*Q: Can you describe Belize in 1974 when you arrived?*

PIERCE: We had to drive down. We drove down in that Volkswagen camper I told you

about. We got to Mexico, Merida, south of Merida. No problem, the roads were paved. It was not bad getting there. It took us four or five days I guess. The last day was only 90 miles, but it was over what looked like a swamp of roads. There were huge holes from the cane farmers who were doing the harvest and had torn up the road. It was a dirt road to begin with and it was really a clay mud road. So, that was our introduction to Belize. We got there late in the evening. It's a very small town, 30,000 or 40,000 people maybe, an interesting little town. A town that had no sewer system except trenches, open trenches. I remember my friend from Guatemala came over and described to us a town of open sewers openly arrived at. Not very flattering you know, it's because they built privies over the canals that joined into the sewer. It was fine for the nine or ten months of the year that the water change, the tide change was two feet every day, but when it dropped down to two inches every day for a couple of months it got pretty rough. Even so, it's a warm place; it's a place where it never gets cold off to kill off any pests. So, it's a very fertile place. You can grow almost anything and it's cheap.

*Q: This is tape two, side one with David Pierce.*

PIERCE: But a fascinating place as I said, food is cheap. It's a subtropical place where things grow all the time, including all the pests. You just have to get used to that. With that said, people were remarkably healthy. They had a pretty good diet. There were not a lot of demands in terms of shelter. You didn't need much to survive. I was the one consul. We had a good impression of the place. I think part of it had to do with it was clearly a place of mixed ethnic racial composition. All kinds of different people were there even though a small population, all kinds of mixtures. It was a place where like Brazil I'm told it's one of the places where truly multiethnic mix and people have managed to figure out how to get along with each other without killing each other most of the time. We enjoyed it for that reason. They put us up in the upstairs to the consulate. The consulate had been built on a cesspool in the floor so it had some odors. It had been built on a pad that had covered the cesspool. This was on the second story. I looked out the second story about 7:00 the next morning, it was a Thursday morning and there was this line out in front of the consulate all the way around the building. Everybody wanted to come and check out the new "visamon" to see if he could beat him out of a visa.

*Q: Is it visamon?*

PIERCE: Yes, visamon. I'm using their term. I'll explain that because, so we went through I don't know several hundred people each day for two days and it got to be Friday night, Saturday morning, we just took off. All day you know they were just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

*Q: I assume they were almost all refusals, weren't they?*

PIERCE: Pretty high level of refusals. At that point about half of the Belizeans of working age were working in the U.S. and I later was to document this with some of the population data. It was a small enough country that I could actually get, you know, write



down the individual names and actually say okay these people are here. It was fascinating because what I began to see very quickly was a picture of immigration, which in fact is true among most of the West Indian countries, as I understand it. Lots of people. Basically people had their kids as soon as they could physically with or without marriage. That wasn't the issue. By the time they got to be about 25, their kids were not infants anymore. They're now children, you know and one or both of the parents would then find a way to get to the States and work. Now you're talking about one or two 25- year-olds, but basically, they're there to make money, that's what they're doing. Sober, serious, hardworking folk, speak English, had no trouble getting a job at any time, legal or otherwise, that didn't seem to matter. They sent back remittances; the biggest crush of the thing that passed for the closest thing to a rush hour was whether remittances came back. They used the postal remittances. There were bank remittances as well, but the biggest thing was postal, money orders would come back and lines to cash these things. So, the grannies and the aunts, the people who stayed behind then were their child care people. Kids being raised in Belize were relatively cheap and they want to drive with their parents but could then compete as adults unencumbered by their children in the great job market to the north. It was a relationship that I had certainly not been trained in in the consular course and indeed I did a lot of documenting of it that I sent back because it was a fascinating thing to look at. It meant that these folks knew us and particularly in some of the poorer areas where Belizeans tended to concentrate very, very well, better than most of us. It was very well established.

*Q: How did you deal with this? I mean, you're talking about almost a subsistence economy so that anybody who couldn't point to a grocery store they owned or something like that would just not be eligible for a visa? How did you deal with that?*

PIERCE: Well, we had a very high refusal rate, probably about 85% or 90% I'd say. There were some groups there. There were Mennonites there; there were Mexican Belizeans people who were Spanish speakers who had come from Mexico. A lot of Belizeans had come from neighboring Spanish-speaking countries because land was cheap and the Belizeans were like, y'all come, we're happy to have them because it was from their perspective and probably so under populated for what it could produce. Quite a few people were able to qualify. The biggest single group of people who had money, but had a job were cane farmers, Tate & Lyle Sugar Company divested their land ownerships and concentrated on the production of the processing of sugar. So, all of a sudden a lot of the cane workers suddenly became landowners as well as cane workers and owned 30 hectares of land. That's part of the reason the roads were chewed up because they each got a truck or they each did their own thing to get their cane to the market, to the processing plant. That was two years or so after they divested the sugar prices from five or ten cents a pound to 50 or 60 cents a pound. So, all of a sudden these cane farmers had money up the wazoo and they all want to go buy trucks or boats or whatever up in Texas. I mean I literally had people coming into my office saying, "Look how are you going to do this?" They showed me their title to the land that they had now had for a couple of years. Well, how are you going to buy this \$50,000 truck? They pull out \$50,000 and put

it on the counter and I said, okay. A lot of them would then show me the truck when they came back, you know, if I was out in the area, they wanted me to see the truck they had bought. Many of them, it wasn't that not anybody could qualify. There were pockets of people who could. The Chinese could as well because of the many of them had business and having independent incomes were waiting for the connections to open up that didn't overstay. I think it worked partly because there were established Belizean transfer mechanisms to get to the U.S. without a visa. If they could get a visa that's great, it makes it much cheaper, they won't overstay and many of them could do what they wanted to do. If they didn't, it became a little more expensive, but the established route was to go through San Diego in California and through Los Angeles. The cousin would come down, a big religion from Los Angeles. A cousin would come down from L.A. on bullfight day on Sunday and come in solo and go back in with seven people in the car and these were English speaking, they looked like African Americans. They had a West Indian accent, but he'd been there long enough to sound like he belonged in Los Angeles and so then he had documents and they didn't ask him for them. The way it worked on the borders, they just, you know, in those days, they were looking at that border for Juan and Rosita, they were not looking for John and Mary who spoke English and looked like they belonged in Ohio. So, that's how I think to answer your question how did we deal with it, it wasn't as fractious or as hostile an atmosphere as you would think. I think that's because they had other ways to get what they wanted. The other part of it is that I made a point of being very close to the police. I played on the police basketball team. I ran an open bar for the cops in my house. I made a point of every time they arrested an American to get them to call me even if it was 3:00 in the morning I would go down there and talk to the American and calm him down because Belizeans are really nice people. They really are nice, genuinely nice people by and large, but the facilities look like something out the Tale of Two Cities and they look like the Bastille. There is an 1802 prison that is pretty forbidding to look at and people would come down and get in trouble for whatever.

*Q: What would they be doing down there?*

PIERCE: Marijuana, drugs were one of the things they were into. It was a one way to understand Belize and I don't mean this in a negative way, but think of it as a drain in which anybody who has trouble dealing with the Spanish speaking environment of Central America and Mexico comes to Belize. This is before it was a big diving destination. It was becoming that, but it wasn't that yet, but sort of foot loose and fancy free travelers, not a whole lot of money and they're just tired of speaking Spanish and they want someplace where they speak English and feel comfortable and they came. A lot of them. The other thing that was happening which was not I think recorded in anybody's books, but the state of Texas in its wisdom was paroling people who were serving life sentences to Belize to spend, but who had contracted a terminal illness and the state didn't want to go through the expense of treating them, was giving them a one way ticket to Belize and a couple hundred bucks and a suit of clothes and say, y'all have fun, but don't come back to Texas. These folks would come and discover they could buy a bottle of White Horse Scotch for \$2.00 and live very cheap. You could live on \$2.00 a day very nicely there and make a little money on the side if you want to. I must have buried dozens

of those folks whose time gave out and they died happy. The state was happy, they were happy, they weren't bothering anybody, they were on good behavior. This was the Jimmy Buffet idol in the sun and they were having a good time and that was it. We had quite a few people like that. It was really interesting because when I say a joint I don't mean that in a negative way. It was the kind of place where a lot of people washed up who were interested for whom Belize was as comfortable as an old shoe and it was an easy place to live and the Belizeans were pretty tolerant.

*Q: Who was your consul there?*

PIERCE: John Goff, Jay Goff who had spent most of his time in Europe.

*Q: He was political military in Italy I think.*

PIERCE: Naples, I think he was in Naples and Milan and maybe Rome, basically, he was a European man basically. Elizabeth Goff was his wife and they had a couple of kids there with them. I think they may have had a couple of other kids, a girl and a boy who were teenagers. I think John was not the young one, was maybe below ten at the time. It was kind of tough on them because they were there I think because of the GLOP program, you remember that "global outlook program"?

*Q: Yes, trying to get the Europeans to know more about the other parts of the world, mainly it was South Americans know about the European lands, but of course, nobody was happy with this, but this was Henry Kissinger's idea of mixing it up.*

PIERCE: They were good sports about it, but this was a tough situation. Schooling was not exactly kind of what they would have hoped for. It was okay, but it was not kind of to the standard that they wanted.

*Q: I take it that American interest in the area, this was not exactly a navel of American foreign policy?*

PIERCE: It's been called the navel of the Caribbean, but it's not geographically. It's been called a few other things, too. Belize was a fun place; it really was particularly if you like water sports. Jay Goff had graduated from the naval academy and spent some time in the navy and he loved going out in the water and the consulate had a boat for evacuation procedures and they used it and we all used it a lot. So, there were some nice things about it. We had actually some interest, more peripheral than central. Belize at that time was a crown colony; it was still a colony. In fact I thought one of the interests we had was this sort of under the table migration labor clause. I think we documented something like \$10 million a year coming from Belizeans back to Belize in the banking system alone. That's not insignificant. That's a significant amount of money and interests. We were a stand-alone consulate. We didn't report to any embassy, we were for all practical purposes a small embassy because we didn't report to anybody else except Washington. Technically we were a consulate because it was still Great Britain, one of its colonies. A couple of

things happened that they brought into us, the Guatemalans sort of rattled the saber and decided they were going to take back the Belize that belonged to them and immobilize all ten of their APCs and send them up to the border at which point the Brits brought in the five carriers. It was a standoff since nobody did anything beyond that. But, there were some tensions in that area and the Brits had a base near the airport they used to rotate people away from Northern Ireland, get them some jungle training and get them on a shooting range so they would be immediately at risk in Northern Ireland. There was the migration issue. Drugs were not that big an issue when I was there. It became a huge issue later on. It was becoming an issue at the time, but hadn't been this gigantic issue that it was now and has been for the last two decades. American businesses were few. Coca Cola was there, this was before Coca Cola got interested in the orange groves down there, Coca Cola at that point was just bottling and selling soft drinks. There weren't that many dive operators there, so the basic interest that we had was the protection of American citizens. That was of big interest. We did get a lot of challenging and interesting things in everyday in addition to what I described about the kinds of people that were coming in. A bunch of different kinds of people. When I got there, there was a justice case, an American from Texas who had been convicted of murder and was sentenced to hang. There was a racial component to that. He was white and the Belizeans had just hung somebody, a Belizean who was black. Historically they had never hung anybody who hadn't killed a policeman or hadn't done that in this case, but they were making a big deal out of this because they had gotten some criticism for hanging this black guy, black Belizean. So, the ruling party at the time was doing the drumbeat about hey, we're going to prove that we're impartial justice, we're going to hang whitey. Those were their words, fairly intemperate words and serious enough that even a lot of the Belizeans were convinced that this was not right and I managed to take it on and found the brother of the speaker of the parliament to take the case pro bono. He took it all the way to London and he got it within 72 hours of being hanged. It was not a gimmick because it wasn't a whole lot of enthusiasm for that. He was not a nice man, but basically he and his land partner and a girl got into a drunken brawl. What we I think would have immediately handled as a manslaughter or something like that, they didn't have that to do a distinction, so, I decided to take it on because I really didn't think this was right. That story has an interesting twist to it, as well, because the man's name was Wayne Alton Moore, or Alton Wayne Moore, I can't remember which was first. After he was commuted, the head of the prison called me; he was very upset when he got the letter to execute the guy because the governor had refused to commute it. The head of the prison did not think this was right either, did not want to carry out this execution. He called me when he got it, much relieved that he wasn't going to have to carry out this execution. After the sentence was commuted on order of the Privy Council in London, Wayne Alton Moore, Mr. Moore became a model prisoner. A few months later, I guess after I had left, he saved the life of a couple of prison guards, somebody in the kitchen had grabbed a couple of knives and held a guard hostage. He basically faced him down and told him if you touch these people or hurt them in anyway, you'll have to answer to me. So, pretty soon, he was out running around the town with his guard buddies now in and out and the story gets even more interesting because a few months later and he is sort of at a trustee status, if you will, still under a life sentence, but a trustee trusted by the guards and everyone else, somebody gets

into prison connected with a drug operation. I mentioned that drugs were becoming an issue. The reason he was successful in warning these other people off was because he had cultivated this reputation in the prison as a tough guy. So this guy who had been arrested for running drugs and was apparently part of the drug mafia that was some kind of operation in Texas offered him a job as a hit man. You know, would you like to take out these people we think we have these DEA plants in our operation and we want you to kill them. Moore agreed if they would help him break out. They did when they broke this guy out; they broke Moore out as well. Moore didn't go back to Texas, he went to Guatemala and went to talk to the DEA agent there and became a double operative and they faked the hit in Texas and eventually rolled up a whole bunch of these folks. Now he's in the States in the witness protection program and then he gets himself in trouble, the last I heard of him he was in jail in California for something. The Belizeans also discovered that now they want him back. I don't know what's happened to him since then. A fascinating story, but all because and in fact he said to the DEA guy in Guatemala who he had met because he had come over I had brought him over just before he was to be executed. He had said he had information he wanted to pass to the DEA so he did. He asked him why are you doing this, you don't have to do this. You can just disappear and we can't find you, you know. He said, no, he said, when I needed your help, the federal government's help and I was facing execution, you helped me, and I want to repay the debt now. That made me feel good when I heard about that because you never know when you do these things how it's going to come out. You never know what somebody's going to do with the freedom or whatever they find as a result of that so, it was kind of nice to get some feedback. A fascinating story though and interesting and a reminder like when you approach kids, or when you open doors for people, you never know how that's going to happen, what kind of impacts they're going to have and it's nice once in a while to hear what happened.

*Q: I think we might quit at this point and I'll put at the end you left Belize in 1976 and we'll pick it up there? Great.*

PIERCE: Good.

*Q: Today is May 17, 1999. David, in 1776, you left Belize. Whither?*

PIERCE: 1976, yes, came back to Washington in August or September or so to work on the Caribbean desk in ARA/CAR.

*Q: So, you did that from '76 to when?*

PIERCE: I left at the end of January of '79, when the FSI's economic course started.

*Q: Okay. '76 when you arrived back in ARA, who was the head of ARA at that time?*

PIERCE: Ted Heavner was running ARA and I can't remember the deputy's full name. John, I think, but I'm not sure of his full name, but Ted Heavner was running it.

*Q: What area did you have I mean was it all of the Caribbean?*

PIERCE: No, they had several desk officers, but in a way I did have all the Caribbean and I was a floater. They had me floating around to different jobs filling in for desk officers and I was a second tour officer so I was not yet tenured. All the other officers in the office were, so I sort of filled in for others while they were gone. I was also given a project to organize negotiations for the military facilities that were coming up for renewal in Antigua and in Barbados and in the Bahamas. We had several military facilities there that we were trying to renew the leases on.

*Q: Was Cuba sort of out of there?*

PIERCE: Cuba was in another office, its own separate office.

*Q: I was going to say I mean Cuba is sort of off.*

PIERCE: They were down the hall. The fact is, this was ARA before, now they've changed the name to Western Hemisphere Affairs, but in those days it was the American Republics Office. It was to my knowledge the only office, the only bureau in the Department in which AID and the State folks were integrated at the office operational level. I don't think that occurred anyplace else. It was a large suite; we had AID officers and State officers all in the same office.

*Q: What was your impression of how this worked?*

PIERCE: I think it worked very well. This was prior to the Caribbean initiative. It was sort of in-between points. The Caribbean was a very hot topic of interest back in the early '60s. I know that because of some of the agreements and indeed our military facilities' agreements came from that as you might expect in the aftermath of the Cuban change and revolution in Cuba. It was also a time when a lot of these countries were pushing for independence and there was a sort of short-lived West Indies Federation. That had sort of fallen apart. It had been replaced by something called the CARICOM, the Caribbean community, sort of, but it had also been replaced by a number of those countries going and becoming independent on their own at various stages. Belize where I had been before was part of CARICOM even though it was physically in Central America, it was part of that Caribbean sort of follow on entity. It was not independent and a couple of the islands, small microstates, were not independent either, but were eventually going to become independent or were becoming independent or had just become independent. What one of our friends described as satellites in search of an orbit because the British had just sort of said, right, it's time for you all to be independent, so they're sort of shoving them out the door without the kind of golden handshake that the Dutch gave the Surinamers, for example. They were kind of looking for us to revolve around us, the U.S. and the U.S. wasn't terribly interested.

*Q: Yes, I was going to say there wasn't much focus at that time was there?*

PIERCE: No, this was prior to the Caribbean base and initiative. The CBI that came sort of after I left the office and that was a political initiative at a fairly high level, but this was not, I mean while there was an AID presence, there wasn't that much of a level of attention. I think the political concern that I picked up, I was on the part of the administration at the time that these satellites would become our financial responsibility. I remember very clearly a couple of times going up to Phil Habib's office when we had some of the premiers or prime ministers, depending on whether they were independent or not, coming in sort of to call on the under secretary for political affairs. It didn't take very long before the question of when are you going to start supporting our budget came up. Mr. Habib was marvelous at handling this because his first tour had been in I think Guyana. He knew all of these folks and what's more important is he knew their parents, you know, before a lot of this political stuff in the Caribbean, political, politics tended to be you know, elder man, younger man, and so on and passed on to the next generation. More than once, he was very good at deflecting this simply saying I knew your father and you know, we talked and throw in a couple of anecdotes that showed very clearly he knew them quite well on a personal basis. Then said, of course that's not what you're interested in, what you really want is this and this and this, development.

The other part of it was -- and it's tied in with these military facilities negotiation -- that DOD for whatever reasons worldwide back in the early '60s did not want to pay rent on these facilities when they signed the agreement. They signed the agreement with the West Indies Federation. Sir Grantley Adams, I think, was the head at the time. So, they used AID as a vehicle to provide in effect compensation for them. There was no rent, but there was a very clear, unmistakable understanding written out that aid of a certain volume and amount would be forthcoming to those places that were close to these facilities. Well, 17 years later, when they wanted to renew the agreement or I guess it was 15 years later, it was going to run out, or 14 or 13 years later, DOD was now prepared to pay rent. What had been a link between AID and these facilities was long broken. The aid had long been delivered and so it was not unreasonable for these countries to come around and say, well, how much aid are we going to get this time and try to up the ante and raise the price. It was an exercise in sort of confronting expectations from an arrangement that was worked out and that made sense at the time given the lights at the time, but no longer made sense to any of the parties of this side of the Atlantic, in the U.S., but made a lot of sense to these newly emerging and still fairly dependent small islands.

*Q: Well, were we concerned about if we didn't do something of this nature, some support that Cuba or the Soviet Union might start fishing on these troubled waters?*

PIERCE: There obviously was a concern. The countries that I eventually got responsibility for at various times were the smaller island states. So, everything from the Bahamas down to Barbados, except for Trinidad. I was never the desk officer for Trinidad, but all the little states. The minimicro states whatever you call them, the Lesser Antilles and so on. Clearly there was a fear of that and clearly that fear was validated in

what happened in Grenada not too long thereafter I left. I left in January of '79. I think it was February or March while I was in the Econ course that the regime of Prime Minister Erich Garry and Grenada was overthrown essentially by the classic formulation of six guys and a pistol. Earlier in that process even about the time I was leaving the ATF or Customs or somebody in the U.S. government had discovered an attempt to ship arms to Grenada from New York. So, there was not a huge amount, I mean, you know a few weapons, but that's all you needed. Because with that pistol they took a police station and took the arms from there and essentially took over the government. You will recall when the U.S. went into Grenada a couple of years later.

*Q: It was '81 I think.*

PIERCE: In the early Reagan period a few years later, or whenever it was '81 or '83, but when they went in the Cubans were there building an airport. They were building an airport in part to make the flight to places like Angola and Namibia each year. Certainly in Angola, they were intensely involved there. For them, they were interested in the region, obviously that was a fear that people had with Central America as well. But it was something of a back burner issue, not as strong a fear as elsewhere, certainly when I was there.

*Q: When the Carter administration came in in '77, did that have any particular impact on your area? Sometimes administrations concentrate on one area or another. I was wondering whether this made any difference.*

PIERCE: I think it made a difference in that folks were more interested I think in the Caribbean than the old folks appeared to be, but I didn't have much to judge that with. The biggest change was in the structure of the administration. The Carter administration appointed a person of fairly young age and I say that because she and I are exactly the same age. She was born on exactly the same day and year I was, Sally Shelton to be the Deputy Assistant Secretary, something that irritated a number of older, longer serving hands, no small amount to be the DAS, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in that bureau. In addition, they went through one of these periodical sort of delaying exercises where they essentially sort of took deputy directors out of the equation. In fact they even tried to take directors out of the equation and say, right, from now on desk officers will report directly to the DAS. Keep your director informed, but you know, we're not going to have all these layers and we're going to simplify. Now they did this at the same time that they were cutting the lights off in the building and cutting the hot water out of the bathrooms. I mean this was all in relation to the second energy crisis in particular, but you may recall that. It was pretty amazing. So, you had on the one hand this sense that we were streamlining. On the other hand, you had the sense that when you walked out into the hall because you couldn't see because it was so dark, there being no windows on any of the halls. They took three of the four fluorescents out of every fixture, you got the sense that you were sort of walking into a cave and back out again. This kind of structure where you reported in effect directly to the DAS, put a lot of pressure on the DAS and you. You had to run up and you were clearing papers directly with them. This was before the e-mail



computer revolution. So, all this running around had to be done by your feet. They did have an early word processing equipment, Lexitron, which was a godsend because you could edit for the first time, you could edit stuff. You had rudimentary though it was very user friendly, it was tape drive 30 pages on a tape, easy to use. The other thing that it had that nobody else had as I recall they had another CR character reader up on the sixth floor that could take any courier document and turn it into an electronic document or a tape document. This was really very helpful. I mean these were all parts of the same approach to what they were doing. It did certainly change the atmosphere. One got the sense that they were interested in the Caribbean in an intellectual sense, but not if it cost them any money. It certainly was not their highest priority in terms of what they were paying. This was of course in the immediate aftermath of the Vietnam period.

*Q: I would suspect that our effort to get out of Panama and Panama Canal Treaty wouldn't have had a hell of a lot of impact on the area you were dealing with because they didn't, again I'm going, they didn't identify with the Latin colonial thing, did they?*

PIERCE: No, in fact the other way around. We were seriously talking to the Panamanians about turning the canal over and they eventually reached agreement, as you know. The argument was: we may be the biggest physical player in the hemisphere, but we're not hegemonic in our attitude or approach or effect. You know, we may be big, like Trudeau says, living with the U.S. is like living with an elephant, you know, a mouse and an elephant. We may be big, we can't help that, but we're friendly and we're trying to be partners in this process, partners for development and that kind of stuff. It was all, you know, it was logical, it made sense, it was reasonable. It didn't respond exactly to what a lot of the West Indian leaders wanted which was budget subsidies, but it did respond to what they wanted in terms of independence in the sense of being treated like somebody important and being treated like their own country which is not a small issue for countries that are pretty tiny and for whom dependence on a metropole is a fact of 400 years of life. You know, if it wasn't us, it was the Brits or it was the British Empire or whatever in most cases. Of course you still had a couple of French territories back then that were in fact and some of them may still be. I don't know, is Martinique still part of metropolitan France, I think it is?

*Q: I think it still is.*

PIERCE: Guadeloupe, I don't know. It was a heady time in the sense that people were considering possibilities. I got involved in a lot of stuff including the so-called lobster war in the Bahamas which is related to the Cuban refugee flows in Miami. I'll talk about that for a minute if you're interested?

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: It was in a time when there were Haitian boat people flows coming from the Bahamas. The issue has come back more than once, as you know. There were the beginnings of serious drug trafficking through the Caribbean, as drug smugglers

discovered the paradise of lots of ports that were not very well observed, you know, little keys and little nooks and crannies around the edge, an easy place to go and hide. I specifically remember working with the Bohemians. I think it was '78 when a police constable flying an airplane had spotted a drug running operation and it made a bust. They picked up something like 40 pounds, it was either 40 pounds or 20 kilos of cocaine. This was a huge monstrous drug haul, unprecedented. There are kids running around the street with that much stuff now, but in those days that kind of gives you a sense of I won't say naivety, but the degree to which these were still fairly new issues that were coming out. So, you had lobsters, you had drugs, you had military facilities as I mentioned and you had American investment. I was involved with Dr. Geoffrey Bourne who was Peter Bourne's father, Peter Bourne worked in the White House as a medical advisor or something, but his father was involved in the medical school in Atlanta at Emory and put together a whole bunch of retired doctors who hooked up with a New York investment firm that started the medical school in Grenada. I was involved in that. Early on he coordinated his efforts with us and it was a model for a bunch of others that had developed and of course it was one of the rationales for the invasion of Grenada. What did we call it? the intervention in Grenada or whatever it was. The landing in Grenada, landing there to protect the medical students was one of the reasons we went in. I got a chance to see a lot of the hot issues.

*Q: What was the lobster war?*

PIERCE: Interesting picture of bilateral and international relations. Like a lot of the countries that were emerging, they had lots of coastline relative to their size. In small places, lots of coastline islands tend to do that. Of course the Bahamas had lots of islands, it wasn't just one like St. Vincent and the others; understaffed, underfunded coastal patrol facilities, inability to protect their coastline and their fisheries. That was also a time when a lot of the sea treaties were being negotiated. Maybe it had been negotiated and not fully adopted, I don't remember, but it expanded the economic zone from the standard 12 miles -- that was considered the sovereignty of the place -- to 200 miles. Obviously the Bahamas is not 200 miles or 400 miles from the U.S., so you split the difference basically in those cases which meant that the Bahamian economic zone, in other words where they were theoretically in control of the resources out of it like lobsters, spiny lobsters which are clawless lobsters that inhabit that area and walk back and forth, move back and forth like shrimp and other things and fish and other things. So, all those resources were up for grabs. That created a need for them, a perceived need for them to try to protect these resources. Fishing areas off the East Coast of Florida were the ones obviously closer to the U.S. and within that split of the economic zone with the Bahamas. The Cuban refugees being latecomers didn't have any claims on those areas, so guess where they were pushed? They were pushed over. If they wanted to take lobsters, that's fine, not where we've been fishing. You guys take your chances over on the Bahamian side. So they were in effect poaching lobsters and other things on the Bahamian side of the economic zone. The Bahamians didn't have the ability initially to patrol it. Then they went out and bought a couple of boats that gave them that ability and you had for a while a wild west situation where the Bahamian patrol boats were coming in and shooting at the

Cuban fisherman who in some cases shot back. These are American Cubans. So, you can see where there was a potential for friction. In fact there was more than a little friction. To the best of my recollection, nobody got seriously hurt or if they were the casualties were minimal. I don't remember dealing with serious casualties, but there was an awful lot of friction that had political content. Of course the Bahamians were all over us to try to get us to keep these people on our side of the line, as it were. Politically that was a difficult thing to do because then as now, very few people were prepared to talk tough to the Cuban lobby in Florida.

*Q: Well, State's responsibility at least as far as people being on the wrong side of the fishing line, I mean there's not much we can say is there, I mean as far as?*

PIERCE: We are not the agency to enforce it, that's certainly true. There are some issues where the U.S. involving in effect poaching on somebody else's territory or moving something into another territory where if not State then we're the voice or the means by which that information is conveyed to the right agency. One example is the guns that were found going into Grenada being shipped for Grenada, smuggled into Grenada. They were caught in New York Harbor in New York Port and there was a U.S. agency, I can't remember whether it is ATF or Customs or some combination thereof that is responsible for enforcing U.S. law that says thou shalt not ship guns to another country. Obviously the Grenadians were talking to us, we were the conduit by which complaints would come and requests and so on. We would try to find the right agency in the U.S. to do whatever is supposed to be done. As I recall we got involved with the Coast Guard and put our heads together with the Coast Guard and a few other people to try to figure out how to calm these tensions down so that the folks would not routinely flout Bahamian customs or Bahamian jurisdiction in these areas because our assumption was that if they shot back one too many times then the Bahamians would unload and then you'd have some dead. By that time Americans in the water on the high seas, but in the Bahamian economic zone, that's not an outcome that any of us wanted.

*Q: Once the drug trafficking started going, particularly in that Bahamas, but there may be other places, later drug money became really a very corrupting influence. Was that a concern of ours at this time or was this a later manifestation?*

PIERCE: I think it was a later manifestation. I think I mentioned my experience in Belize was you had the guy right at the top who was corrupt, the minister for home affairs who was running the drug trafficking himself. The grunts on the street, the police on the beat, despite the fact that they were grossly underpaid, were basically clean. It was pretty amazing to me. You can argue that I was completely naive, but I don't think so. I played basketball with these guys. I was around them all the time. I did stuff with them at 3:00 in the morning to help, so I knew them probably better than their bosses did because I was with them all the time as a consular officer, trying to help them out and trying to work with them. Plus my security depended on that as well. It struck me, what you had I think was the holdover from the British system which was the British Empire system. These folks thought they were part of a much bigger entity. One of the compensations, even

though they didn't pay them all that much in terms of cash on the barrelhead, they had so-called home leave, people who were born and raised in the colonies, in Barbados or Belize or wherever would get tickets for trips to England because they were supposed to be able to go home after so many years. In fact home was there, but that's one of the things that fell away I think with the independence eventually, there was an initial attempt to try to preserve this, but it was simply unsustainable. There was no money for it and no one was really willing to pay for this kind of stuff. So, what you were left with were people with very low salaries and no sense of propriety or responsibility or duty or honor or that kind of thing beyond their local area and then on top of that you had all this drug money coming in. I think the combination of any one of those things might have been enough, but certainly all of them together put enormous pressure up and down the line. As I say, the policeman who found these 40 pounds or 20 kilos of cocaine: this was a huge big deal and he was a national hero. It was a less cynical time I think because first of all, finding that now would be sort of routine, number one and secondly, the assumption would be at this point that well, what did they really find? How much are they on the take? I don't mean to sound too cynical.

*Q: It was a different time.*

PIERCE: You're right, it was a different time and it was a time when there was in fact a lot of motivation and a lot of effort to try to control this thing and no sense that the whole thing had been suborned which I think is the sense that a lot of people have gotten since.

*Q: What about offshore banking and this sort of investment and this sort of hanky-panky that goes on, was that much of a matter?*

PIERCE: It was an issue. But when you look at the volumes of funds that were being moved around, the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands had banking secrecy laws, similar to Switzerland, not quite as strict. You could go in and get stuff if you could give them clear probable cause that a crime had been committed or was about to be committed. They were basically selling themselves as money handlers in a banking sense. I remember a specific case that irritated the Bahamians to no end because of the IRS. There were some Chicago alleged gangsters, people who were in the mob and parking money in the Bahamas. I can't remember all the particulars, but the story was that the IRS, the Internal Revenue Service, our Internal Revenue Service lured this guy to Florida by offering a prostitute. While he was with the prostitute, they copied the contents of his briefcase which had and that was the source of the information tracking the money. They brought a court case on it to lock this guy up for laundering money in Chicago and of course that exposed the connection and the Prime Minister and the foreign minister of the Bahamas was outraged. I think and they were outraged not because of the violation of the bank's secrecy act, they were outraged because the IRS hadn't bothered to come to them and give them the evidence and said we could have helped you, we could have done this. Now, I can understand why the IRS might not want to do that because there were already some countries where the minute you tip somebody off like that it was in their hands

covered up. It was in the hands of the people, of the suspect and they immediately moved everything and you lost all trace of everything. My sense is that the protests were indeed genuine, that they would have been willing to cooperate and they would have. It was still a time when you could have counted on it being basically protected, but that's the difference, that was the difference between the Bahamas and say even Mexico at the time. If you recall it wasn't much later that narcotraffickers in Mexico began to, when was Camarena killed? It was only a few years later if you recall. So, I can understand why the Justice Department, our Justice Department certainly didn't tell us in the Department, but they apparently didn't tell anybody else. The IRS did this little sting operation on their own and maybe didn't even tell the people at the desk that they were doing it. But it complicated our relations and it certainly complicated our negotiations with the Bahamians because of all the facilities that we had in the Caribbean. We had tracking stations, downwind stations for Cape Canaveral for the launches from there and we had navy SOSUS stations, these were the underwater acoustic listening devices which have been obsolete for some time. We had one in Barbados, which we closed because they wanted a million dollars a year and the navy said, not worth it, close it up. We kept the one in Antigua, a tracking station. In addition, we had both of those in the Bahamas as you might expect, being that close to the canal. We also had the AUTECH, which is the Atlantic Underwater Testing Range. There are only two of these in the world. There's one off the Philippines, and the other one is here. It is an anomaly in the surface configuration, the underwater configuration of say, a huge trench of a couple of thousand feet deep surrounded on almost all sides, but one narrow entrance point by water that ranges from three feet or one foot to four feet or something like that depending on the tides. So, it's quiet, so there's no trafficking there. What they did is they basically wired these things electronically so that you had in effect a testing range that you could then calibrate your weapons systems on ships, submarines, and torpedo planes, everything because you could map in real time exactly what your torpedo, dummy torpedo or the target, you could input your calibrations. Then you could shoot I think to match what you thought you were shooting at with what you actually did. It's like sighting a rifle, only electronically. A very valuable facility and it was real close and something we cared a lot about and still use, I'm sure. I don't think what it does is secret. I mean how it does it, there's some secrets to it, but that there is an acoustic underwater testing range is known, so I'm not revealing any high secrets, but this is a fairly important thing for us. I can remember having a discussion because the Bahamians were really mad about this IRS thing. They were really angry. I remember having this discussion with the people upstairs.

*Q: When you say upstairs?*

PIERCE: On the sixth floor, in the front office of the bureau and on the seventh floor, people on the political level saying, "Well, the Bahamians aren't going to tell us to get lost. I don't care what they think. It doesn't make any difference to us what they think. They aren't going to tell us to get lost. I mean we're big and they're small and they need us and if we want a military facility, they're going to give it to us." I said, "Well, a funny thing about that: the Barbadians just told us to get lost if we wouldn't pay their price." Oh, it was very useful to have that example, that in fact we reached an agreement with the

Antiguans, not a problem. It worked out. They wanted and we wanted, it was a nice smooth negotiation, pretty easy. The Barbadians way overvalued the facility and they built all their prestige and they negotiated in the press and they laid out impossible positions. They did all kinds of things and basically at the end of the day it was worth the price they demanded. So, we said, thank you very much. I think they were also prepared to say, "You won't pay us our price, we're not having you." I think they thought that we would pay any price as well. I think when we didn't that was a bit of a shock to them, but it was very useful to have that example to be able to say, "Well, it just so happens that this little guy right over there just did that." Sure, I mean they're going to be inside our nuclear umbrella anyway, but to take them for granted and assume that they'll give us anything we want just because we ask for it I think was a mistake and fortunately I was able to convince them it was. The interesting part of that, the Bahamians not only because of this other event, they were also very protocol conscious and they weren't going to negotiate with just anybody and the Deputy Assistant Secretary simply didn't cut it as far as they were concerned. This was not somebody that the foreign minister should be sitting down with. They were not going to negotiate with us until we got somebody of appropriate stature. They said, "No, we won't do it." So, I remember, we cast around and we finally found somebody who was willing to do it. It was George Aldridge who was I think the deputy to Elliott Richardson, Ambassador Aldridge. He had the ambassadorial title. He'd been a senior-level negotiator. I think he'd been involved in the Vietnam negotiations, too at some point, but his main claim to fame at that point had been that he had been Elliott Richardson's deputy in the law of the sea negotiations and spent a lot of heavy capital on that. So, basically the hour that we sent the message that we've asked George Aldridge to do this and he's being designated as ambassador, the foreign minister and the president both agreed to see us. It was very smooth after that, but it was the protocol. I think part of it was that they were mad. The other part of it was, hey, you know, we're a real country and we're not going to negotiate with just anyone you feel like sending out here.

*Q: How did Sally?*

PIERCE: It was Sally Shelton that they were rejecting, in fact.

*Q: I've interviewed her a long time ago. How did she respond to this when she first came on board? Was she attuned to what the problems were and how to deal with it?*

PIERCE: My impression is Sally is a very smart politician, very good listener, very plugged in. I may be biased. We had a good relationship and of course it was fairly heady wine for any desk officer to be able to walk into a DAS's office and not just be summoned. They would expect that you would have a give-and-take relationship, that that was what was supposed to happen and she made sure that happened. Not with just me, but with everybody. I remember having a couple of conversations with her and she was very clear that she was not a career person, that she was a political person, but she had these responsibilities and she was going to carry them out. I didn't have any, I think the relationship worked out pretty well. I think what happened very soon after that I think

Ted Heavner moved on. It might have been the summer of '77, Ashley Hewitt then became the Director of the office. Just at the time that the deputies and directors were supposed to be phased out, so they were empowering us to do a whole bunch of stuff. Again, I enjoyed working with Ashley a lot, good man. I was very blessed to have good mentors I think in both cases, they were really helpful and a relationship with Sally Shelton that I felt positive about it. Brandon Grove replaced her eventually and she moved on, but the bureau was still organized that way. I had also that kind of relationship with Brandon as well. It went pretty well. If she felt attacked or pressured or bothered by this she never showed it to me. We had a lot of operational things to do. The idea was that you would try to handle them. You would tell them what you were doing and seek guidance if you thought you needed it and they would tell you if they thought you needed guidance, but basically they really did try to push the responsibility down.

*Q: I take it in your area human rights didn't, this is the hallmark of the Carter administration, but I wouldn't think that human rights would have been much of a problem at that time?*

PIERCE: Not in the area that I was working with, I mean the coup in Suriname hadn't occurred yet, the coup in Grenada hadn't occurred yet, both of those became human rights issues of some serious significance. There really weren't hitherto, as I recall, very significant human rights issues.

*Q: Yes, what about did you have any sort of American services problems, pirates or kids on the loose wandering around?*

PIERCE: There were some. I was in the Caribbean office when the Jonestown thing occurred. It wasn't my area, it was Dick McCoy's area. That was a really sobering experience for lots of reasons. There were huge boat people issues with relations to Haiti. I can remember seeing the Haiti desk officer go walking into his office and looking behind him at the windowsill and seeing 5,000 Haitian passports. We were not set up to deal with Haitians as refugees at that time, we simply weren't. The citizen services stuff, the big issue of the entire time was Guyana.

*Q: Did you get roped into that at all?*

PIERCE: Well, I sort of either volunteered for it or was asked for it because I had volunteered for virtually every task force that came along because my first job in the Service had been setting up task forces in the counter-terrorism office. I'd had plenty of experience and was happy to do it. It's fun and interesting and I guess my personality type I like cutting into that kind of stuff. I did get involved in the task force as I did in a bunch of others. As I recall it was sometime around Thanksgiving I came back early to try to help out. I don't know, I mean it's a little bit off my personal experience, but I will say one of the things that struck me on this and I had a conversation with some of the press people in the building on this issue, was the responsibility or lack thereof of the media in pushing somebody once they realize they've got a psychotic or something like that on

their hands, to continue to push this person and catch him in the act, sort of play gotcha with him on video and then assume that he's not going to react. There was no sense of responsible coverage. Indeed, the other thing that was really kind of frightening or troubling, is I remember seeing Dick McCoy brief Leo Ryan and his staff a couple of times when they came to the State Department. Fortunately, he reported all this, put it all in writing and gave them handouts, all kinds of stuff. The first words out of Leo Ryan's secretary, from the hospital bed was it's the State Department's fault, they didn't tell us there would be a problem there. Fortunately, thank God, Dick McCoy had been a former air force investigator and had documented everything six ways from sideways, so when the New York Times reporters came down to hang him, he just said, "Here, this is what I gave them. Here it is, got any questions?" You eventually got a nice piece in the New York Times saying what an extraordinary diplomat, which he was. He had been the guy, again, fortunately for the Department because this isn't the normal drill, fortunately they had taken the guy who knew the most about that subject from overseas and put him on the desk in Washington. Plus he was the guy who couldn't be suborned.

*Q: No, no, Dick is*

PIERCE: You may have talked to Dick, but he is.

*Q: I've interviewed Dick. Was there a feeling though, as this thing played out, that the Department of State wasn't doing all it could to back up its people at the top. I mean I sort of have the feeling that people are sort of moving away from the situation rather than.*

PIERCE: If Dick had not done what he done, if he had not been the expert, if he had not pushed as the consular officer in charge, pushed right up against the limits of what was permissible under the privacy act, again and again and again, and recorded it and having been told several times by the Department's legal experts, "You can't go any further. You must back off. You must stop. You cannot pursue this." Because these were hijacking cases. These were kid-snatching cases. The allegations were that these people were being held against their will. These are nasty cases. Worldwide, they're nasty cases. This is a very difficult troubling area anyway. But he had pushed constantly, so that was in the record and couldn't be hidden by anybody. Secondly, as I say, because he had put together all the briefing materials, had made a record of it and had had the smarts to have done it in the Department where there was a record of these people coming in to be briefed. Now, I saw him, we had witnesses, but the fact that the Department had records of their entrance again, made it impossible for anybody to deny that this was there. Again and again, now this is the trained air force investigator. Most of us in the Foreign Service are not trained to be that thorough and that particular. So, thank God he was. Had he not done all of those things, had not we been cleaner than anything, I think they would have backed away from him until they realized that he had in fact covered himself very carefully. Then they stood up for him and his was a horrible event. It was kind of sobering to see what you have to do. It's not enough to do it right. You've got to document it and even then you can't be sure that folks higher up are going to support you if the political



winds are blowing the other way, but thank God he did.

*Q: Yes, well, you did this for three years which particularly at a relatively junior rank, it was pretty good experience?*

PIERCE: When I left Belize, my supervisor said, “You know, I think what you ought to do is throw this guy onto a really hot desk and see what he does. I think he’s good, but let’s try him and let’s see what happens.” That’s exactly what happened. No, I’ve been fortunate. Pretty much every job I’ve had once I’ve been in there for a little while, they’ve said, “Oh, why don’t you try this, why don’t you do this?” They keep adding on these things and this was a particularly good case of that where they kept on. It was a busy office. In moving the responsibilities down to the desk officers put more and more responsibility and opportunity in my way as well as time commitments.

*Q: Well, it sounds too like this was the time of fray that the natural I don’t know if osmosis or whatever it is that the system has added the layers back on again. They keep trying to take them off.*

PIERCE: They do, but this downsizing exercise we just went through in the last couple of years, I mean, you know, ask people in the hot bureaus like the Africa bureau for example, whether they’re getting any rest or any slack and I think you’ll find that they’re not. There are still plenty places in the Department, we’re still understaffed for my money anyway of the demands we put on people to be operational.

*Q: How did you find Congress on this because I would have thought that you would have had I mean as close by, there are lots of constituents who want to have houses down there, particularly upper, I mean wealthy people, plus the fact that an awful lot of people who have come from these islands and have gone to the United States and have worked their way into the work force and all that. I would have thought that this would have meant congressional interests.*

PIERCE: Less so in the small island states. I mean I didn’t have Jamaica or, I did have Barbados, but Jamaica of all the Caribbean states has the most, had the most I think attention on the Hill. In those days you had some pretty positive Congressional supporters of not only Latin America, but the Caribbean. Dante Fascell being one in particular.

*Q: Dante Fascell was from Miami, wasn’t he?*

PIERCE: Yes, but his interest I think predated the Cuban flow and certainly was not limited by that. One of his babies was the Inter-American Foundation which was essentially a small grant making organization that my wife was an intern for. I knew about them partly because I knew what they were doing in the Caribbean, but I also knew what they were doing in the rest of the hemisphere. I think that was fairly typical. I think there was a pretty positive sense. Certainly I didn’t get the sense of great hostility or angst or anxiety in the Congress about what we were trying to do in the Caribbean about

Caribbean policy. They seemed to be interested in the general sense, but not in the particulars. The lobster war, sort of quote, unquote, now that did get the people's attention and there were some mapping issues. There were some boundary issues connected with the implementation of the law of the sea stuff that got people interested, but the impression I had was sort of general interest and concern. We weren't being called up every six weeks to go to some committee, which was true in the early '80s, when I worked in the economic office because of the changeover to the new administration and the whole new way of looking at things. We were up there a lot.

*Q: What about the ambassadors there, had this reached the point where this was the place to put your wealthy contributors?*

PIERCE: Well, we had a regional embassy, Barbados was the embassy credited to the mini-states including Grenada. This was before the coup, this was before we had a separate mission in Grenada, so everybody from St. Kitts, Nevis all the way down to Grenada was represented out of the embassy in Barbados. I think, I don't believe at the time we had a mission in Antigua. We did then get one. We of course had the military facilities there. Then or a while there was an embassy and it switched back and forth and it's closed now, but the ambassador, Frank Ortiz, was the ambassador in Barbados, the first Carter administration ambassador there. There was another fellow there when I came in whose name I cannot remember.

*Q: Frank was not a political appointee.*

PIERCE: Frank was not a political appointee.

*Q: He was a Foreign Service officer.*

PIERCE: A Foreign Service officer, but I think, I'm trying to remember whether Sally Shelton succeeded him, I think she did. My memory is a little hazy on that because I had moved on by that time. I'm trying to think, the political ambassadors, I can't remember who we had in the Bahamas. I think they were even. If we had a political ambassador, we had career DCMs and career people also.

*Q: It wasn't a particular problem. There have been times and Jamaica comes to mind.*

PIERCE: Jamaica, with Sheldon Turner and some others.

*Q: I mean some really, you know, names that sort of stand out as being awful, too much money.*

PIERCE: When you are going to have a guy show up with his polo ponies in the belly of his yacht, that sets a certain tone. That was not the tone of the relationship, particularly with Manley in Jamaica, that wasn't my area.

*Q: Yes, but still you were getting reflections.*

PIERCE: Yes. I don't think it was the kind of place where you primarily had that; Belize when I was there, did not. It was a consulate general, a consulate stand-alone consulate at that time and it was career people. I think they've had some political people down there since, but no it wasn't that big an issue. I know there was some concern. I remember some officers in this building, some female officers expressing very serious doubts about Sally Shelton, primarily as a function of age. My reaction is, hey she's schedule C. If they want to put a 23-year-old in there, they can put a 23-year-old, I don't care who they put in there, that's their call. They can fill political with whomever they want to fill it with.

*Q: Yes, and she had some background, I mean, she spoke Spanish, she'd taught in Mexico, been a staff aid.*

PIERCE: She had been married to a Mexican ambassador, she was not exactly wet behind the ears as a political person, out of Texas, as I recall. I know there was some concern and I think when you go back to that time it was in the mid-'70s, it was only a few years after the Secretary's directive on women in the Foreign Service. There weren't that many women at higher levels in the Foreign Service and to see, I can see where somebody who had clawed their way up basically, because it was a pretty hostile environment, would be upset at seeing somebody who apparently didn't pay their dues. It was apples and oranges. The person certainly paid their political dues, or they wouldn't be there. I just didn't see the issue. It didn't bother me. I was prepared to work with whomever was there and it didn't make any difference.

*Q: Then in '79 you left? Where did you go?*

PIERCE: I went to the econ-commercial course for six months.

*Q: That was what, a six-month course?*

PIERCE: It was at the old FSI building in Rosslyn.

*Q: What pushed you that way?*

PIERCE: My experience in Belize. When I was there I got there in '74, by the spring and summer of '75, they had had two attempts to replace the econ officer Bob Driscoll who was a deputy principal officer who had left on regular transfer. As I recall and I don't remember the names, but as I recall one person resigned the Service rather than go to Belize or be assigned there. The other one got as far as going through the airport and never got out of the plane, didn't like what he saw and kept going. I didn't see either of these two gentlemen in question. The bottom line by the end of August or so of '75, the position was vacant, there was nobody there and they couldn't get anybody. It would be the equivalent of a 2 level position, FS-2 level position there now and they couldn't get anybody to fill it. They decided that it was easier to find a brand new, newly minted JO

than it was to get somebody in their career to go there for some reason, I don't know why. They looked around, there were two of us who had been brand newly minted JO's there. I was reading the Economist at the time and my boss said, "You read the Economist? You are the economist." Okay. But, I got interested at that point in the labor migration of labor economics because as I mentioned before half of the working age Belizeans were working in the States so there was this connection between consular work which I dealt with, that issue everyday of people with relatives in the States and the effects of labor migration or in effect the labor sending state, a labor exporting state, that's what they were. In fact, that's what all the West Indian countries were, all of them. You look at the population and it's interesting because you go back to Barbados and you recall I think a couple of hundred years ago, it was one of the Pitts, the elder, I can't remember one of the Pitts an argument in the British commons basically said, all 13 colonies aren't worth one Barbados. Barbados was.

*Q: Well, Guadeloupe was picked instead of Canada I think on a treaty, one of those treaties, or Dominique or one of those had sugar and Canada, hell with this.*

PIERCE: Sugar, rum, slaves were the driving forces. Mercantile, lodging. You know, what do they need with the rest of the stuff? We were just trouble, the 13 colonies. The point was that we I'm sorry I've lost my train here. Barbados, I look back from the time of its establishment, Barbados had a population virtually identical within about 10,000 people three hundred years ago that it has now. That's all you can sustain on that island. Ninety percent of whom are in sugar cane because it is the only thing that holds the island together and keeps it from falling into the sea, sliding into the sea. So, you've got all of these islands that were producing people in effect for export in the British Empire. They were producing civil servants. It's not an accident that lots of West Indian civil servants wind up all over the world. There are more educational institutions there. They come with an attitude -- and this also you see in American immigration, you see West Indians come - - with the sense, "yes, I can do that", because they've grown up with it and it's part of the culture for 300 years. They've been supplying talented and capable labor to the rest of the world for a long time.

*Q: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell came out of there, Barbara Watson.*

PIERCE: Lots of people did.

*Q: I mean, you know, this is...*

PIERCE: Our friend, Louis Farrakhan, Reverend.

*Q: The Nation of Islam.*

PIERCE: The Nation of Islam leader is a West Indian, I think by birth in fact or certainly by family if not by birth, but the point is: that is what got me interested in the economic side. It was clear to me in doing this research it was not an accident. So, I did a bunch of

stuff and wrote it up and in those days we used air grams and somebody actually read the full thing. Bill Luers read the thing because he was interested and this was when illegal immigration or whatever you were calling it, undocumented immigrants or illegal aliens depending on your political persuasion. This was a hot issue as it was often for many years and the run-out to immigration reform in '86. This was something that he was writing on, so he was interested in it and he picked it up. It was an area that I've spent a fair amount of time on ever since. That kind of got me into it. The fact that I was asked to do it, but I was also moving in that direction partly because of my exposure in the consular side, but seeing beyond just the issue of are these people telling me the truth or not which is the visa issue. What's the pattern? What's driving this? What's going on underneath here? How does this relate? Of course, moving into the Caribbean office, I think that's what cemented it in my mind, because these were all issues here. I think to get back to your earlier question here about Congressional interest though. This is not a constituency group like the Cubans or the Haitians, which tended to be defined as a Jamaican group, or a Belizean group, or a West Indian group even because these people were moving rapidly into American middle class. So, they tended to identify themselves as Americans first: no, I'm a Jamaican or I'm a Belizean. I saw that process first hand in Belize and then a lot of other West Indians that came. Just fascinating to watch. That's kind of the thing that got me into the whole economic area.

*Q: How did you find the economic course at that time?*

PIERCE: Excellent. Now it happens that math was the one subject that I could get A's in consistently in high school. I loved political science and history, but I had to work harder at that and I never had to work hard at math. It just sort of came easily to me.

*Q: Well, math is the thing that usually stopped most of our people cold. I mean, who took the course.*

PIERCE: They did walk us through it. They did go right back to high school algebra. They went fast, but they did go through it. They were careful in presenting it. They did it well and I felt I didn't have a problem with it. It was keyed right to where I was or better. It was easy.

*Q: What was sort of the corridor gossip in the Foreign Service about being an economic specialist, was this good, bad, indifferent?*

PIERCE: I can't remember the exact timing of it. I believe about the time I took the economic course or shortly thereafter we gave away the commercial function to Commerce which is I guess the best way to put it. We didn't defend the commercial function. The corridor gossip at the time was if you went and took a tour at Commerce, taking a tour at Commerce was death on your career. You don't want that on your resume. Part of that I think goes back to the bias between operational and substantive or substantive or non-substantive, the notion that the only real work in the Foreign Service is substantive in the political work and everything else is subordinate to that or sort of not

relevant which is about as rational a thought as saying that since you have water and electricity it's not relevant to what you do. You sure miss it when the well goes dry and the power goes off. I dispute the notion. I describe to you the link in fact between consular work and substantive economic analysis. I think that's just as true and I think that was just as true in the political area.

*Q: This is tape three, side one with David Pierce.*

PIERCE: I think it's true substantively and politically as well because if half the population that you're dealing with knows the underside of American cities very well because they've got relatives there sending back letters all the time and sending back money all the time in a country that's small as Belize, 150,000 people, bringing in \$10 million a year in remittances, that's a hell of a lot of money.

*Q: That's a hell of a lot of money, yes.*

PIERCE: So, the impact is enormous. There is a built-in dependency. There is a built-in sense of "we really depend on you" that infects everything, every kind of dialogue you have with anybody. If you don't understand that, you're going to miss a lot of what you think is high political dialogue and if you want to be effective, you have to understand that. The notion was I think that economics was important, but it was clearly a secondary science to political science and besides that anything that smacked of trade promotion or commercial activities was considered by a lot of people as beneath them. It isn't what diplomats do, we don't sell widgets, that's not our job which I think is also garbage.

*Q: Oh, it goes back to the good old British class prejudice or something like that.*

PIERCE: Well, it isn't even close to what the reality is.

*Q: So, about 1980 you were free and a newly minted economic officer.*

PIERCE: The summer of '79.

*Q: The summer of '79.*

PIERCE: I started in the economic bureau in EB and was working in ODF, the Office of Development and Finance which for good or ill in those days was known as the EB's Jesuits. Part of our mandate was to have some kind of rational impact on AID allocations. It was a time when a group called ITCA was the development coordination body that was supposed to be sitting over AID and others. We worked with Treasury on the international financial institutions and EX-IM and OPIC and with the World Bank and all the banks like that. That was our portfolio. It was an interesting set of issues.

*Q: You did this from '79 to when?*

PIERCE: '81.

*Q: '81. What piece of the pie were you getting?*

PIERCE: Initially, because of my experience in Latin American or the Caribbean affairs they had me work on the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB, which was the International Development Association. This was the soft loan window at the bank basically. Plus, I was working on what was known as the WGMA, which was the Working Group on Multilateral Assistance. Treasury chaired it, but shortly thereafter, shortly after I got in there I was also asked to handle the human rights piece of it. In the latter areas, you asked about human rights in the Carter administration, toward the end of the Carter years, there was quite a bit of betting going on in terms of every loan, everything whether we would support or not depended on the human rights performance of the country in question. There was a group set up to monitor those issues, to look at those on an interagency basis. State was the chair, nominally HA, the Human Rights Bureau and EB were co-chairs of this. In fact I would end up being the chair because HA wanted not to be a neutral in the process, but wanted to be a part of something. They found that the chair role and the partisan role didn't work. So, I wound up sort of being the chair of this working group. I can go another five minutes or so.

*Q: How did you find human rights, Pat Derian was the assistant secretary for this and by many was considered sort of a bomb thrower. I mean, not just her, but her crew. How did you all find it at this particular point?*

PIERCE: Remember now that my role is to chair and to find a consensus and now we have HA and the folks representing Pat Derian in effect being advocates on one particular side and often, very often, Treasury, the desk, and others on the other side. My job was to try to find points of convergence, where could we find an agreement. We didn't. It didn't take me long to find out that the best way to do this was to try to proxy, it was to try to talk to everybody, to do it separately and to try to do what desk officers do which is to try to create a consensus with a draft and then circulate drafts and let people comment on that. Then when you get their comments back, make another consensus, what you believe is a consensus draft and try to sell that. That's what we wound up doing. We wound up doing a lot of consensus building that way. It was the only way I could get stuff done. We did have meetings, but we tried to wire as much as we could in advance to reduce the friction and the tension that would otherwise be, where we'd spend all of our time fighting over basic principles. So, that was one of the more interesting parts of the role. You can see there's a classic diplomatic skill involved. It was within the bureau and within the government, you know, as many people have said, the hardest diplomatic job is inside Washington and sometimes inside the building.

*Q: Oh, absolutely. Well, I would have thought that Latin American would have been a real problem in this era of dealing with human rights. I mean, you know, trying to give both aid to what were essentially mainly almost exclusively military dictatorships at this time or were they coming out of that?*

PIERCE: There was some back and forth, but the Carter administration as I recall was very anxious to sort of reward those who were moving in the direction of democratization and to deny those who it felt were not. The primary instrument for that was not the international institutions and organizations. It was the direct bilateral stuff. We had a lot more leverage there. We didn't have to go vent it with anybody else. A lot of the bank loans, the World Bank loans and other things were technical. When you get into sort of technical things like water projects and other kinds of things, either you did them or you didn't based on the internal rate of return and that kind of stuff. Where it got interesting was in the sort of structural adjustment loans. I remember one in particular; it wasn't Latin America, it was the Philippines. This role as the coordinator was not just for Latin America, it was worldwide. It was for everybody. One of the most difficult ones we did was for the Philippines, which obviously had problems then. This was when Marcos had sort of gone off the deep end. It took an awful lot of work to get that one resolved, but that was one that was fought out over those issues. You try to get a structural adjustment loan and then there was a question of okay, so would they actually live up to their obligations or were they just going to take the money and run. I think at the end of the day they decided that it was better that we had more leverage in that kind of a situation through the international institutions because it wasn't us saying to the Philippines on a bilateral basis, "clean up your act." It was sort of the world saying, they had a lot more money in their hands than we were prepared to dispense directly. It was a fascinating process. It wasn't as I recall that there weren't some controversial things. Chile was certainly on there and a number of countries were on the list to be concerned about, but the biggest controversies I remember were in the Philippines and on the question of PLO membership in the World Bank and Fund as an observer. There was a worldwide campaign to keep them out, to keep them from politicizing that at the time.

*Q: We probably better stop at this point, do you think?*

PIERCE: Okay. It'll give me a shot at catching the bus, if that's all right?

*Q: We'll pick this up next time. Is there anything else we should talk about for this '79 to '81 period, do you think?*

PIERCE: I think I've given you pretty much all there is. The campaign was interesting because it was worldwide and I got to know all the bureaus that way and it was delivered at the last minute. John Holtzman was my colleague in this fight. We called and got somebody from one of the African embassies to go and deliver the vote ten minutes before the deadline. It was one of these things where the bank and fund people were very anxious that it come out this way, but couldn't say anything until the vote was delivered. When the vote was delivered they started applauding. I wasn't there, but I heard about it. It was one of these deals where you grabbed a cab and dragged the guy over there.

*Q: Okay, David, we'll pick this up next time in 1981, where did you go?*



PIERCE: I went to California on a Pierson fellowship for two years.

*Q: All right and we'll talk about California on a Pierson in '81 to '82?*

PIERCE: '83. Two years.

*Q: Great.*

\*\*\*

*This is June 21, 1999. David, from 1981 to 1983, you went on a Pierson to where?*

PIERCE: The consortium cities of Orange County. There were six cities, some big and some small in Orange County, California.

*Q: Could you explain what a Pierson was?*

PIERCE: A Pierson fellowship was a gift from Senator Pierson of Kansas who was of the belief that FSO generalists should know something more than just the capitals of the countries that they serve in and Washington, DC. After they have been in for a few years, they should spend a little time in something other than Washington when they're home. So, he gave the Department 25 positions and he got legislation passed for 25 new positions and the money to pay for them which is critical. The Department would assign that number of people every year to work for either state or local governments or agencies of that size and range to be voluntary as well, but generally state and local governments or for congressmen or senators from those areas or from some area outside the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. That was the logic of it.

*Q: What interested you in this and then how did it work out?*

PIERSON: Well, the central problem that the folks in Orange County were facing was that they were being flooded with immigrants and refugees of all kinds. Illegal immigrants, undocumented workers depending on your politics, unauthorized whatever, refugees of all kinds, legal immigrants of all kinds. Los Angeles County had been a magnet for all kinds of immigrants for a long time, particularly Hispanics and Asians, but not just them, many others as well. Orange County had a reputation of being a bastion of conservatism, sort of a John Birch society kind of conservatism. But in fact it was changing very rapidly as it had changed rapidly through three decades earlier, or two and a half decades earlier when Disneyland was opened up. If you look at the population of the county then in '55, which is about when it opened up it was about 200,000. If you look at it 25 years later, 25 or 26 years later when I was starting to work there it was well over 2,000,000 and lots and lots of people from all over had come. Not only did you have this massive influx of people from other parts of the U.S., but you had from '75 on, lots of visible people from outside the U.S., particularly Asians, but there were quite a few folks from Latin America as well. I worked in Santa Ana, which is a city older than Los

Angeles, one of the mission settlements. It had a very old fourth- or fifth-generation Mexican-American population. Some had people in it who remember talking to people who had talked to their parents, grandparents, whatever who were there when Fremont came to California when it was Mexico, before it became the United States. So, you had a relatively small historic barrio. Still it represented about a quarter of the population of the city of Santa Ana. By that time it was pretty substantial. But in Garden Grove and in Westminster and some places in Anaheim and in Santa Ana in particular, you had all kinds of Southeast Asians. They came mostly as a result of the settlement from Camp Pendleton because that was one of the four places that was the biggest single settlement of those who were taken in as refugees in 1975 when Saigon was overrun and Phnom Penh fell, when they were taken over by the North Vietnamese and so on. So, we had lots of refugees living in those places. A couple of years earlier they had not been so visible, but starting in 1978, you started to get sort of rapid development that made them very visible in the sense that what happened was a lot of malls opening up along Freeway Crossroads. It pulled a lot of the commercial traffic out of these strip malls that were there and the strip mall owners rather than go bankrupt or see the places destroyed started offering space at extremely cheap rates just to get somebody in there. You're going to have to tell Vietnamese and others that was an economic opportunity and all of a sudden whole strip malls suddenly became Vietnamese or Southeast Asian. The funniest story from the time -- but it gives you an idea of the impact and it kind of catches the flavor of it was reflected in a picture in the Orange County Register. The Register was a libertarian paper.

*Q: Libertarian means what?*

PIERCE: It means that that government is best which governs least. Essentially, minimal government intervention at any level at any time, that's basically their view and preferably no government. Their basic philosophy was that governments exist on revenues that are stolen from people by force of law and arms and therefore they're illegitimate. I'll get into that later because it plays a very interesting role in the county celebrating refugee values and immigrant values. Anyway, in the Register one day was a picture of a lady who herself had been an immigrant and lots of people from Oklahoma had come to California in the '30s and '40s and '50s.

*Q: Used to be called Okies.*

PIERCE: Okies. Even in the '50s and '60s because California then had unemployment rates lower than the rest of the country, and Southern California lower than that, so there were jobs. There was lots of opportunity. The same reason that the other people came, there were opportunities. But, here's a lady who had come, she was in her late '40s, early '50s, and had come from Oklahoma. She was standing in front of a sign from one of these strip malls that a year earlier had been all in English. Now there are 15 different languages on this sign, every Asian language you can imagine and Arabic. Not one word of English, not a single word of English on this huge sign. She's standing there kind of shaking her head and saying, "You know, I really don't mind all these folks coming to

Orange County. I don't mind them coming here, but I wish they wouldn't put their signs in refugee, I can't read it." In a way she's right. She couldn't read any of them. They might as well be Greek or Chinese or whatever. In fact there were Chinese, there were Japanese, there were all kinds, and Arabic. It was sort of Middle America meets the Pacific Rim and plus the rest of the world. Part of what happened as a result of this sort of massive explosion there were some school districts when they emptied out Camp Pendleton and the refugees were put on welfare which meant that they had a reliable source of income, which meant a lot of apartment owners who had been renting to illegals who didn't have a reliable source of income that could disappear tomorrow, much happier to have refugees and essentially kick the illegals out and take the refugees in. There were schools in Orange County that went from 0% to 40% Indochinese in six weeks from the middle of the school year. Boom, just like this, all of a sudden you have all of these kids who don't speak English. You don't know what they speak, you don't have translators, you don't have any ability to deal with this and you are overwhelmed. It is a massive future shock problem. You suddenly get a sense of everything being out of control and one of the problems that I saw immediately was that the standard and for want of a better word, I'm not trying to be political here, but there is a school of thought, the standard liberal reaction in Southern California. There were plenty of liberals there, many of them who had political power even in Orange County. The standard reaction was an expression of concern about this state of affairs, an expression of racism. My reaction to that was a little different. My reaction is these people have just had their world turned upside down. Are there racists? Sure, there are racists, but the great bulk of the people were in fact just like that lady in front of the sign, quite willing and tolerant of newcomers, sympathetic in many ways to their situation. If you could reach them in terms of the values that they in fact had. They work hard, you know the classic American values that we all ascribe to even the people who are clipping coupons in Newport Beach. This was a way to take some of the heat out of that confrontation for the good people to understand, to cross the barriers to understand what was going on on the other side. From their perspective people dress funny and write funny and speak funny and eat funny and look funny, but if they understand what they're doing and understand what their values are, there was a way to connect. I spent a fair amount of time working with a lot of people, trying to get them to understand that.

*Q: When you went there did you create the job, did they give it to you and what was the job called?*

PIERCE: The job was a refugee and immigrant affairs coordinator for these six cities. They knew they had a problem, but couldn't articulate it. They just knew there was a lot of hostility and anxiety. They wanted me to come in and in effect give them expert advice on how to resolve these problems, how to deal with those problems. I've described what I think was the core problem that I was facing, that they were facing, that we were all facing together, and some of the solutions. They knew they had a problem. There was a lot of hostility and anger building up. One of the problems was that this response by some of the political leadership was in fact creating racists. People didn't know what they were angry about exactly. Some would tell them it was because they were being racists and

they would accept it as validation and say, well, that's right. Damn it, you know, these people don't belong here, this is my state not theirs, they shouldn't be here and you know, I'm angry. That is the wrong response. Anyway, I spent a lot of time working with the police, talking with the police and talking with the community leaders. I was the closest thing to a Fed in Orange County. There weren't very many federal offices there, there were some, but they were way out in Laguna Miguel and other places, while I was right downtown Santa Ana. I could go to a lot of these meetings and people could vent and say, it's all Washington's fault, it's all your fault, you did this to us. It gave me the opportunity to try to talk to people and help them work through, help them find the points of identification where they could actually see what these folks were doing. It was a fascinating challenge and very interesting. A lot of practical diplomacy as you would imagine. I mean some of the solutions were as simple as encouraging people to put subtitles on their signs so that people would know what was going on inside there. Just that alone.

*Q: Well, we still have the problem here with the Koreans tend to put up a sign in Korean in Hangul and so anybody who doesn't read Hangul won't know what it is, you know, a church or something like this, a poor idea.*

PIERCE: If you do it right underneath a church board then you can figure out okay, the Koreans have a congregation here, too. If it is a whole strip mall and there's nothing in it, now there's a couple of them over by Seven Corners, it's a big strip mall over in Seven Corners. What's it called?

*Q: It's called Eden Center.*

PIERCE: Right, but if you notice there are subtitles in most of them.

*Q: Oh absolutely.*

PIERCE: Because the second thing they figured out is that you appeal to a much broader market, you can sell to a lot more if you put it in English. In some cases they were going English and Spanish because they wanted, they were going after that market, too. It took them a while, the initial response was to just do it in their first language and not anything else. Just as there were massive changes in the schools, there were massive changes in other things. I mean the number of Indochinese businesses in Orange County in 1978 went from three to over 500 in less than six months. Now that's a huge change. In California you've got somebody who loves change. Even the San Franciscans say they don't, but in fact, you know, that's part of the whole culture of California, particularly in Southern California and particularly in Orange County. When change hits you culturally and your whole neighborhood suddenly is not the neighborhood you thought it was, this is pretty scary. People were not addressing the legitimate concerns about rapid change, future shock and they were focusing instead on older definitions and not recognizing what was really happening. As I said the newspaper was aggressive in attacking any government official who called somebody racist. Their reasoning was they're doing this

because what they're trying to do is to create a rationale for massive federal intervention and massive programs to line their own pockets as bureaucrats. I'm not sure I agree with that rationale, I think it was more of you know, this work in the past, I'm going to do it again.

*Q: What paper was this?*

PIERCE: It was the Register, the libertarian one that regards government as illegitimate, but the flip side of that is the Register which had color presses long before any of the other papers did, and good color, really good stuff, because it sold a lot on it's, you know, color now has the function of headlines, used to have in terms of selling papers and for the same reason that the Times had color long before the Washington Post and the New York Times had it. These new folks in our community have these strange, interesting and exotic, but fundamentally understandable and similar customs. Wedding customs, work customs, patterns of family relationships. They would do color spreads on these people and they did a lot actually to get across the point that sure, it's variation on a theme, but you understand this theme. These people are no different than we are. People are just like the rest of us. That was the pitch and that was a very important pitch in that community.

*Q: I would have thought you would be up against almost a moral dilemma because knowing the Indonesians, not Indonesians, Indochinese and all, say maybe Koreans and some of the others, but these Orientals coming in, the Filipinos, I mean these people are going to move towards the middle class rather quickly. I mean they go for entrepreneurship and all that. You have your illegals and education is absolutely tops on their priority.*

PIERCE: They're coming into a county, a state at a time when it was rich, it hadn't funded anything that styled of education.

*Q: So, you've got that and yet you have this other subset who are the Hispanics, I mean basically Mexicans, for whom education was low on priorities. I mean people are willing to do hard labor and all that, but still we're not on that you might almost say the fast track on the American scheme of things of getting property and education.*

PIERCE: My experience in Orange County was a little different. Now maybe it's because it's Orange County, but I think if you look even in South Central L.A. and Watts, my understanding is that Watts is no longer even 50% African American, it is more than half Hispanic. These people are here, many of them, let's put it this way, illegal aliens and take that term or unauthorized workers which is probably the unauthorized or unadmitted, but working still. They are working, they are in fact on the same track or a very similar track without the blessings of illegal immigration status, but they are on a very similar track most of them, many of them as many of the Eastern Europeans and others who had come in earlier. The track is actually pretty similar. In fact it worked the same way with many of the refugees with the exception that the refugees were able to access the welfare system. For good or ill that's what they did. You know, Uncle Vito comes and he gets

enough English that he can serve as an interpreter and he's a supervisor. He brings his cousins, he brings his brothers and they eventually bring their families. It takes a couple of generations to do that and that's the track in my experience that the illegals are on. But, you're right, the refugees and the Asians are on a much faster track because they expect their kids to compete now with the Anglos, with the Mexicans and with anybody else in the school system and they put that kind of pressure on them by and large. I will say one other thing. I have never seen an immigrant group as aggressive in terms of using educational resources, community educational resources as the Southeast Asians would, particularly the Vietnamese. By aggressive I'm not saying anything negative, I'm saying very positive, you don't usually see 50 and 60 year old grandmothers struggling to learn English among immigrant populations and that's exactly what they were doing.

*Q: Well, I know today, we're talking about 1999, if you go up the road to my library here in Fairfax County, and go in the George Mason Library at 7:00 in the evening, if you were to drop a book every face that would look up at you practically would be Oriental.*

PIERCE: We have something to learn, don't we?

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: There were kids who came out as refugees who were 13 and 14 years old, who came out as refugees of Vietnam who four or five years later scored between 750 and 800 on the English portion of the SATs. Math you can understand, math is a common language. English? Where did they come from? All right, part of it is that it happens to be an age when if they are motivated they will learn just incredibly, but also part of it is a culture that places an extremely high value on whatever educational opportunities are there. You put your finger on one of the very things that applies to not only that group, but even the illegals We do in fact have a pretty open and absorptive system. We're not bad at turning immigrants into Americans. We're still pretty good at it still. When you think back that was the function of the public schools 100 years ago and it still is. 150 years ago that was the function.

*Q: Did you find or were you able to appeal to the local politicians to sort of say, look, a little difficult now, but these are your constituents in the next decade and be nice now and you're going to do something?*

PIERCE: The politicians tended to think in the very short term, in terms of what's blowing up now and how do I deal with it. They were perfectly happy to throw me in as cannon fodder. If I volunteered to take a meeting that was going to be nasty and confrontational, they would be perfectly happy to let me do that. That's fine and I understand that. I'm an outsider. It's safe for me to do this. I'm not running for office, I don't care. We had a good relationship pretty much at every level. I think it was a positive experience. I think they discovered the very thing you were talking about. I think it was very helpful to have the *Register* on the left side., Plenty of people on the liberal side were looking very hard at any rationale that could be used for adding to

government programs and tax regulars. Whether you agree with the philosophy or not, in terms of this particular situation, in terms of building acceptance and integrating people into a dynamic, active economy, it was very helpful.

*Q: How did you find your Foreign Service background or experience at that point help you in the job?*

PIERCE: I think it helped me in part because it gave me certainly a sense of detachment. One of the jokes that went over fairly well was to say something to the effect that Washington thinks Orange County is so strange that they had to send a diplomat out here and treat it like a foreign country. Of course, their reaction is, Washington is so strange that it really belongs in another universe. I think it gave me a sense of detachment in a way; it was a little bit like when I was a Peace Corps volunteer. One of the advantages I had as a Pierson and as a Foreign Service person coming in is that it was very easy for me to connect with anybody at any level. I wanted to partly because I was an unknown quantity. I was somebody that didn't quite fit anybody's cubbyhole as to where I belonged. I was an employee working for the six cities. I wasn't even an employee and I worked for all six.

*Q: Which six cities were these?*

PIERCE: It was called the consortium cities of Orange County. They were six of the largest cities: Santa Ana, Garden Grove, and Anaheim were the three big ones. Costa Mesa and I'm trying to think of the other two real quick. I'll think of them, it's been a long time since I thought of it. The bulk of the population was in those three areas. Anaheim as you know and Garden Grove actually were pretty big settlements of their own. Orange was another one and the last one was up north. It kind of stood away from the others. It had a different set of problems.

*Q: Not San Marino?*

PIERCE: No.

*Q: San Gabriel?*

PIERCE: No, not that far north. They were pretty much older. Costa Mesa was probably the only one that was sort of the classic beach town there. Most of them were interior cities that thought and acted like interior cities and had rather substantial numbers, I mean really large numbers of immigrants. There were all kinds of confusion about who was what as you can imagine. It was a fun assignment. It was an interesting assignment and a challenging one. One of the things that I did -- I got fairly close to the refugee coordinator back here, Eugene Douglas I think was his name, who came out and did a visit out there that I organized for him. I did various things. I worked with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, primarily the urban, the city municipal organizations.

*Q: Were there any sort of ethnic organizations that were helpful? I'm thinking of people who have settled here longer and you know, like in the old days, Hyatts and the Tolstoy Foundation and other groups?*

PIERCE: All the voluntary agencies were involved in resettlement. There were many folks from a Jewish background. The groups that had been interested in refugees for a long time were certainly represented there. The Catholic Migration Commission, a lot of the typical refugee folks. Not so much cultural and social in the sense that this was a fairly recent large and rapid flow. There were certainly groups inside, there were recently established groups, but not others of longstanding, of that particular culture and background because most of these folks were pretty new to the area.

*Q: What was your impression of the effect as time went on?*

PIERCE: I think there were problems with using welfare as a mechanism to deliver assistance because it made refugee resettlement a positive sum game for anybody to play. Basically you could get a resettlement from the State Department and instead of the usual kinds of tapping into individual family connections, church connections, other kinds of do-gooder group connections, it became almost a factory in terms of seeing people getting enrolled as quickly as you could because the support mechanisms were there. The big concern that the counties had and the cities had was: what happens after three years when the money runs out and the feds are no longer picking up the state and local portion of the welfare assistance? Are these people going to be working or not? Now, the amount of money was probably necessary in the case of the Southeast Asians refugees in most cases, with the exception of Lao Mung. Lao Mung, at least in my experience, took a lot longer to adjust.

*Q: They were illiterate essentially, weren't they?*

PIERCE: It's a lot harder for them, who were basically farming and moving people in many cases; they were slash-and-burn farmers. It was a lot tougher for them. They were a lot closer to a tribal structure than the Vietnamese, even if they came from a rural area. They were still pretty city oriented in the sense of taking advantage of the goodies in the city, the opportunities in the city. I think it was probably a good investment. Whether the welfare mechanism was the best way to go is another issue that I'm not sure of. I think it certainly made it more doable. I do think it contributed to the very hostility that I was trying to deal with; it helped them deal with it because there really was no downside for the agencies involved. There were a certain number of externalities that were coming along with this. Just for example, one of the things that happened in Orange County, in the city of Orange in fact, in the Orange County unified school district, was you had a TB scare. When a lot of kids showed up and they started testing them for TB, the standard test that we use is a time test. For those who have had subcutaneous testing which was the way that they were doing in Vietnam, it's a live virus testing, attenuated, but live. It will produce a positive every time, or just about every time. So, close to 100% of these Asian



kids were testing positive for TB on the first screening because they had been tested with this other stuff before. It shut down the entire Orange County school district for a week until they figured it out, until some medic had come back from Vietnam and said, hey this is your problem, folks. I don't mean to exaggerate it, but they were acting responsibly, they didn't know. You can imagine the fear that was put in parents' minds. "I'm not sending my kid to school, you know. They just shut it down." That's one of the externalities you run across with this sort of massive influx. What was happening was that people at the federal level were making assumptions that people would come in. Even when they would try to spread them around, the fact is people clump, they always clump. They always do because it's just easier in terms of your personal adjustment to find folks who also speak the language of your heart; that's classic American. So, we're thinking we can absorb another 100,000, 500,000 not realizing that two-thirds of them are going to wind up where there are already a whole lot of them. If they don't get there immediately as soon as they get wheels they'll be here. That was happening, too, a lot of secondary migration. So, some of this hostility and angst and anger I think could have been prevented, or at least diminished. Even the welfare assistance didn't come close to covering all the costs of this. For example, local medial people and public health people followed TB cases and others when in fact they did have TB and lots of other things. It really did complicate a whole lot of peoples' lives. You can imagine the difficulties of police trying to deal with people who had never driven a car before and all kinds of problems that were attended to large populations and movements. Because we have an ideology that says, we're a nation of immigrants, we're a nation of refugees, this shouldn't be a problem; shouldn't be, but of course it is.

*Q: How did you find the city? What was your impression of the competence and response of the city officials, the area officials?*

PIERCE: I've probably already given you the strongest criticism that I have of the sort of knee-jerk approach to the response to the problem, what I described as a "liberal" response. That was among a few leading politicians. It was not among city administrators and operators, police chiefs, and others. I have tremendous respect for the people who deal with this on a day-to-day basis, who do not have the luxury that I have had of living in a whole bunch of places in the world and for being paid to learn about other cultures. That's my job, that's not theirs and yet that's what they were being asked to do. I think they were, as a group, impressive. They tended to have better equipment, better office systems, certainly better computers or word processors back then and to be run in my estimation a lot more tightly and a lot better managed than many of the federal operations I've seen. Part of that is that they're pretty close to the road, the wheel is close to the road. If they screw up they hear about it immediately and they've got no place to hide. They're right there. So, there's a pretty strong sense of accountability and responsibility that I sensed. There were certainly disagreements at the time I was in Santa Ana. It was just before the Hispanics, the long-term Hispanics decided that they were going to start voting and be involved in city politics. They had their own community, their own structures, and they were quite happy there. John Acosta and some of the other folks who were there decided it was time to take over city government and pretty shortly they did, after I left.

The quality and responsiveness and the accountability of the people involved across the board impressed me. Even the folks whom I criticized at the beginning for their policy sense, they wanted to do the right thing, to be responsible. It was beyond their experience. They were using an older model that worked before, but really didn't relay effectively the situation that they had. It took a while for them to understand that, and finally they did.

*Q: Well, in '85 after this really fascinating and one has to say extremely worthwhile experience, what did you do?*

PIERCE: '83, '81 to '83 I was there. In '83 I went to Seoul, Korea as an econ officer, number three in the econ section. Within a couple of months of when I got there, in July I think, we had a visit by President Reagan. It was a time when I got to Korea when the Koreans were complaining mightily about how terrible it was that their growth rate had dropped below 12%.

*Q: What was the income at that time?*

PIERCE: I'm trying to remember. It was less than \$2,000, but it was growing rapidly.

*Q: When I was there in '79, I think it was just hitting 1,000.*

PIERCE: Yes, I was there for four and a half years so 2,000 was kind of the magic number we were looking for.

*Q: Well, let's.*

PIERCE: So, you were there just before I was.

*Q: You got there in '83 to?*

PIERCE: I left in December of '87.

*Q: What was your impression of it? Had you been to Korea before?*

PIERCE: Never been to Korea before, I'd been to Thailand, but not Korea.

*Q: What was your impression of Korea when you arrived, both the political system and the economic situation?*

PIERCE: The economic situation I did a fair amount of analysis of. My analysis was, what are they buying with this money because they were borrowing heavily? Are they buying gold palaces, are they buying investments? Primarily they were buying intermediate manufacturing goods. They were aggressively trying to break in, across the board, almost anything you can imagine they wanted to make or do. They were not afraid to take on anybody including the Japanese. The impression I had was of a society where

the large corporations were vertically integrated in a lot of ways, pretty highly leveraged. It was more borrowed capital than equity, but a pretty intense work ethic, pretty systematic approach to investment. It was a tightly wound society, that's the impression I had. Tightly organized, it was a different society than in Thailand because the Thais can take care of business and they certainly hustle, but they tend to be a little bit more relaxed in terms of not only behavior, but morals and a lot of other things. The Koreans were tightly wound in all of those aspects. With that said, it was much easier to make a very close relationship with Koreans than it was with almost anybody else, certainly with the Thais and other Asians.

*Q: What was the political situation at the time when you arrived?*

PIERCE: I didn't spend too much time on that because the economic side was where we were specialized. In 1980 they had essentially what amounted to a military takeover again. The generals essentially took over and put down the revolt. They managed to blame us and get us blamed for it. There was a lot of tension, a lot of hostility, a lot of anger. My kids at the time were three and Holly was six months, three and a half and six months. Even at that time you had regular demonstrations by students and others, regular tear-gas Molotov cocktails sort of events. My kids at age four and one knew what tear gas smelled like and had a fair amount of it because you know, tear gas when it disperses it goes where it goes. If you were going to school anywhere near there you were aware of it. I'm trying to think what else. I had the impression of a military run, if not a dictatorship, something that was certainly organized and led by, very tightly, by the generals.

*Q: What about the threat from the North at that time? How was it? What were you getting from your colleagues and all?*

PIERCE: We all went up to the DMZ, we all did the usual. We all were aware that we were within artillery range of the front and there were, I can't remember too many instances, there were some, but I don't think there were too many striking ones at the time we were there. There was occasional, occasionally you had people come through the DMZ or they'd make a big deal about finding a tunnel or something like that. I guess I would describe it as sort of semi-tense, you know. You're always aware that there was a real threat and a risk. We were living in an army base, so we were certainly aware of it. I wouldn't say it was a sort of massive preoccupation that we spent every day of every week worrying about. We just sort of tried to get on with life.

*Q: Who was your economic counselor?*

PIERCE: The first year was Walt Lundy who then came back to the Department after he left there and spent a few years working here and then retired. The second year was Don McConville. Don McConville eventually wound up in Mexico City as an econ counselor. We had a pretty good group of folks. I think John Hoague was there. Sam Bosken who was the science attaché who did nuclear stuff is now back at WA working on a nuclear issue with respect to North Korea. When I finished in the econ section they recruited me

to work in the political section because they couldn't get anybody to take Korean language. That's another story, but the guy who replaced me was Chris Hill, Ambassador Hill now in the Balkans. The guy who replaced me as the acting political counselor in '87 came in as the new political counselor, Chuck Kartman. He is now deputy assistant secretary in EAP; he also was seized with the Korean question day by day. So, a lot of the folks in the Korean account are still around. The ambassador at the time was Dixie Walker. I'm trying to remember, I think Paul Cleveland was the DCM for the first year and then David Lambertson after that, but I'm not exactly sure.

*Q: What was your impression of Ambassador Walker?*

PIERCE: A very interesting guy. I watched him do two farewells, one at his house and one at the command. The command did a farewell for him which was stunning. They don't routinely let American ambassadors sort of inspect the troops like they're one of them, like they're one of the generals, but they treated him like that. Ambassador Walker had been a Chinese translator for MacArthur in the days ending World War II and certainly thereafter. He was a Chinese scholar I think. What he did for relaxation was go to a temple halfway down the country and paint calligraphy with Chinese monks. He and his successor there, Jim Willey, both were fluent in Chinese and they both made attempts at Korean, but the fact that they were fluent in Chinese was all the Koreans needed to have anyway. There's enormous respect for things Chinese. I mean the Koreans still, if you ask them to describe themselves as little brothers to the Chinese and the big brothers are over there. Quite a different attitude than the Thai had toward the Chinese. The Thai regarded the Chinese with intense hostility and suspicion even though something like a quarter of the population in Thailand has Chinese origin, but they were the outsiders and the interlopers. They had a Chinatown and it was in Thai, the low words in the language were Chinese origin and the high words were Cambodian, Sri Lankan in origin. In Korea all the high words in Korean were of Chinese origin. If you really wanted to write high-class stuff you'd use more and more Chinese characters and expressions. So, for them to be fluent, what I'm trying to get at is if both of them particularly Ambassador Walker had exuded this sense of I don't even know what the Chinese word for it is, there is a Chinese word and somebody told me it. It's a sort of a sense, it's a combination of sort of a great man, but a humble man at the same time, what an incredible talent and humanity and interest, very positive. They could have kept that house, the ambassador's residence open 24 hours a day for six months and took people through there every day, every hour and he wouldn't have run out of people that he knew and that respected him enormously. Tremendous man.

*Q: On the economic side, here you had a military government and essentially you'd had one really since, I'm not sure if you'd call Syngman Rhee's government anything but authoritarian. By this time, what was the feeling, the economy was obviously growing, but was it the military government, the authoritarian government was well tuned to promoting this economic growth and all?*

PIERCE: Some people described it as sort of the Asians' approach which is different

from the way the Japanese did it.

*Q: This is the Japanese commerce and industry, it is the central sort of governing.*

PIERCE: Yes, but they operated very much like a central planning operation, very close to that in the sense that the bureaucrats told the business people what to do and they picked all the winners and the losers. It wasn't quite that way in Korea. I think the generals decided that they knew how to do some things well, but there were other things that they couldn't do as well and they were quite happy to let the business people do their thing as long as they would compete successfully and effectively. This is not to say that they weren't lacking involvements, I mean there certainly were. I mean there were generals, a big shot is a big shot in Korea and elsewhere. They tended to have their fingers in lots of different pies. The impression that I had is where you might have a linkage in connections, it was not a tight linkage like you had in Japan. The business people were the lead partner in a very close dance with the government. In Korea, the government set the conditions, but was willing to let the business people compete aggressively themselves without trying to direct down to every last nickel what they would do and how they would do it. I won't say it was a top-down strategy, but it was enough of an empowerment that the government took care of the politics and the security and the business people took care of being aggressive and pursuing. Sure, I had a lot of friends in the economic planning board and there were some brilliant people in that operation. Many of them were American trained, that's not why they were brilliant. They were brilliant first, but they used everything and they were very, very capable. We had very talented interlocutors on the other side. It was very clear though that while they were involved and interested and active in this, they were not trying to dictate, there were relationships, but there wasn't this very tight control that the Japanese I think have.

*Q: Was there the system where when senior generals retire they'd go into business or be absorbed onboard?*

PIERCE: Many of them went to work in defense industries, a phenomenon not unknown in this country. Sometimes they would go into completely unrelated businesses. My impression was that the military in South Korea had a role similar to that of the church before. It was one of the places where a lot of talent came up. The Koreans are at least as fanatical -- and I'm probably making an understatement -- aggressive, and active in terms of education as any other nation, maybe more. They are right at the edge of what is humanly possible in terms of education. They go through an extremely tough Korean system and to get their bachelor's degree, very tough high schools and very tough colleges. Then they'd go off to graduate school in the States and finish off whatever they were going to do and come back with understanding and with a foot in both camps. They were pretty effective people. Everybody had military service, like the Israelis, and like we used to have. Everybody had to do military service, but not all of them chose that route. We were there at a time when the economic side was surging and growing very rapidly so those credentials meant a lot to people and were respected.

*Q: Were we concerned at the time about the I'm not quite sure what you call it, but the Korean economy as with the Japanese economy, most of the Asian economies took a very sharp downturn the last year or two because of bad debts, cronyism and all that.*

PIERCE: It's interesting that you mention that. Sure, there is some of that. My philosophy had been to follow the money. Is it being invested in productive assets? My assumption is that if it is being invested in making stuff more effective and efficiently, some of those investments are going to pay off. I see two extremes. The bubble in Thailand was quite a bit different from the bubble in Japan. The bubble in Japan was a property bubble basically. You had property rates. This tight linkage meant that nobody could ever have a bad loan in Japan. So, the way you solved it was to work your way out of the box. Property values kept going up and up. Nobody ever had a bad loan because you know, however the stupid the loan was that you made, it was covered by the fact that the prices kept rising. What you saw was almost a decade-long process of a slow leak, sort of devaluing. The last time I checked the Tokyo stock market it was the only one at least last year that over a ten-year period had lost money. It's because it is getting packed, where the Korean problem, or the Thai problem, was a little different. The point is the Korean problem was a little different. It's true that the Koreans as I said earlier were probably over leveraged in the sense that there was less equity and more borrowed capital in all of these formulations. Every one of them was highly leveraged in the sense that the banks were the partners in all of this. If something is highly leveraged and it fails, you've got a problem. The bank has a problem, such as bad loans. Koreans had some tendencies like the Japanese, but it was possible to fail and people did. My sense is the Koreans were in a little bit better shape in terms of the fundamentals of what they were doing, meaning investing in productive assets. That's one of the reasons why they were not as badly off. They got hurt in a lot of places; the hot money moves and sometimes it moves indiscriminately.

When the Mexico peso crashed, third-world investments all over the world were in trouble, regardless of the fundamentals. Whether that was logical or rational or not, they were. I think you had a little bit of that with the Koreans. There were problems with it, but I still have the impression even today that they are pretty competitive in what they're doing. Some of their electronic products are at least as good as what the Japanese are making. They're making steel still considerably more cheaply than the Japanese. Their car products are not as refined and finished as the Japanese, but they haven't had as much time to develop them either. It's a mixed picture, but I still feel fairly positive about the approach that they were taking.

There's an implicit question that comes up, too and it's one to be dealt with At what point do devolving economic authority and responsibility lead you toward a democratic society? At what time, does economic devolution of authority and shared responsibility produce real economic allocation decisions? Is there a connection between that and political development? My argument was back then, yes there is. If you allow business people to make real economic decisions, sooner or later they're not going to want to be treated like political children. We'll never be able to prove whether it happened as a result

of that, but I think there is some indication that that may have been part of what happened in '87 and '88 when they did in fact make a transition to a democratic structure. I think you could certainly argue now they are definitely a democratic structure.

*Q: What piece of the economic pie were you dealing with mainly?*

PIERCE: Primarily investment. We were looking at a lot of sectors, such as steel and transportation, the big producers like Daewoo making ships and that sort of thing. They had cars that were emerging. You had electronics that I was working on. I also got involved in the banking sector and finance, banking reform and tariff reforms, and those kinds of things. We tended to shift around depending on what issues were hot. We all spent a lot of time taking visitors around.

*Q: What was your impression of the Korean banking establishment?*

PIERCE: The first impression I had was that a lot of the Korean bankers show cronyism. The flip side or a nicer way to describe that is trust. You trust somebody because of family connections or school connections or long-term experience with them. Bankers display vertical immigration and horizontal interlocking, such as with interlocking boards. You also had banks as I said who were partners in this process. They had to trust their people a lot that these allocation decisions that were being made were appropriate and were going to actually pay off. If I could describe one of the overriding impressions to me of Korea, it was that work per se was considered a high value, trust was an essential component of business; you had to have it.

Contracts were contracts and the people paid less attention to contracts than they did to the trust. I mean that was really the key thing, but implicit in that trust is a sense that not only will you deliver what you are expected to deliver, but that the other party in the process will not take undue advantage. We saw the seniors, the top levels of the Korean corporations when we'd visit these places. The income differences between the guy at the top, the plant manager, the director, whatever and the guy on the floor was not nearly as huge as an income difference in a lot of Western countries. Nobody begrudged the fact that they were wearing a nicer suit because their job involved talking to foreigners and talking to these barbarians from outside who don't understand anything; a few understood that. I remember somebody in one company had taken \$2,000,000 or \$3,000,000 for himself. It was widely publicized in Korea. The general reaction among the bankers, among the companies, among the people that I knew was: no Korean would dare to do that. He'd be dead because that was everybody's money. Not in a communist sense or communal sense that this is ours, but there was a very clear sense that people would work but they expected returns and those returns could be deferred. They had to be reinvested largely. They didn't begrudge spending money on relationships or anything else, but by God they wanted to see a return. One of the interesting parts of it -- and it connects also to the education part of it -- is that you would see these people set up plants out in the hinterland and attract workers to those plants by buying the best teachers that they could find. So, the really best teachers of the country were extremely, not only sought after, but

well paid. I mean they were like rock stars in the sense that travelers would uproot themselves to go where those teachers were because they gave their kids a better chance at the examination system. Now, did those same parents who uprooted themselves to go be in a school, did they care about their work? Sure, they cared about their work. Work was important to them, but more important was that their kid was getting this thing. These people would work incredible hours. I was amazed at what they would do, but it was part of their social compact. It was fascinating to watch. I see some of that here.

*Q: I understand that when parents take their child to school, they're asked how many hours are you going to be putting in with your child a week. I mean this is part of the educational process.*

PIERCE: The Koreans are a very male dominated society still, I'm sure. It certainly was then. People were asking the question because there were huge numbers of women in colleges and graduate schools, but very few of them wind up in the professions. What's going on here, why this tremendous investment? As far as the Koreans were concerned, this was an investment in their kids. If all the mother did was raise two or three sons and daughters who were as smart or smarter than she was, this was a huge success. Not one minute of that time was wasted because that's the kind of concept of investment that they had. I found this across the society. I found this very refreshing. Can it be tightly wound? Absolutely. Does it put pressure on kids? Yes, it does. Is it a rational response to shortages, but real opportunities? Yes, it is. It's something when you look at how successful they are when you transplant this to another culture with lots of opportunities, like this one, maybe they got some potential.

*Q: How about the problem of payoffs and that sort of thing?*

PIERCE: I certainly would not be one to say that there wasn't. There weren't payoffs, but the impression that I had is that these were folks who were reaching into the world market, to subject themselves to world market discipline. You can only afford so much of that before you become non-competitive. An executive who took a \$2,000,000 bonus for himself and didn't plow it back into the company, as I said, would be in serious trouble. The line between trust building and gift giving was not as clear as we try to make it in this country. That's partly because when the Koreans develop relationships they're very tight and intense relationships. Are there the equivalent of thugs? Yes, sure. Is bribery an issue? Sometimes it is, but my sense is that ultimately a lot of these decisions were made on the basis of trust; they were made on the basis of relationships. There were some things you couldn't buy and that's one of them. It's not that money didn't change hands. Many relationships are built at parties, and other kinds of things where boys got together and did their thing. That's endemic and to me was an expected thing. The notion that people would do something primarily for a bribe, would not work in that society, for the reasons as I was saying. Let me give you one example. This is classic Korean. You were there and you remember on the main street not too far in front of the embassy is a statute of Admiral Yi Sun-shin [ed. Korean naval commander in 16th century]?



*Q: Yes. Turtle boat.*

PIERCE: Turtle boat thing. Now, he did this twice, he did this ten years apart, but ten years later I can understand it because it's a proven technology, he knows what he's got. He's got an ironclad boat shaped like a turtle so that cannons from the Japanese opponents bounce off the thing and he goes in and rams the enemy. But imagine the first time that he did this and imagine the Korean workers working for him think that this man is brilliant, probably also sure that he's mad and yet they went ahead and did it. Not only did they build the things they manned them. This guy can be a genius. But it's probably not intuitively obvious to people who were raised in a coastal area and never saw anything like this and had no concept of how it might work. They followed him to a man; there's something very Korean about their following strong leadership. Even if it can be crazy, they'll follow. Even if they think it's crazy they'll follow it to a point. I guess my real point is: you can't bribe people to do that. They do it because they are convinced that it is the right thing to do for them or their children. There's a level of social trust that I find missing in the States, where you're told you're supposed to look out for number one and nobody else matters and all that stuff. I don't buy it. Partly I don't buy it because of my experience in Korea, because I know there's another way.

*Q: Well, then you left there in '87. Was there any major.*

PIERCE: In '85.

*Q: I mean '85, any major happening or something while you were there?*

PIERCE: In '85, yes, actually, in '85 they recruited me to go work in the political section because they had a guy who was going to leave. They had an O1 position that they were at that point filling with an O3 because it was language designated. It was the deputy political counselor and nobody would take Korean. Very few people were willing to take Korean at that point, partly because it didn't have a language time-in-class waiver the way Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Russian did, Korean did not, even though it was a two-year language. So, they recruited me and I agreed. I took nine months of Korean there in the language school in Korea and then went to work in the political section as the deputy political counselor in POL/MIL. We spent a lot of time working on political/military stuff, counter-terrorism, and a lot of preparations for the Asian games which were coming up in '86. They had won the bid for the Olympics coming up in '88. So, there were a lot of things going on. You may remember that in '86 we think it was the North Koreans who exploded a bomb at the Korean airport while the Chinese were unloading, coming out of the airport. So, this was not pretend. I mean it was a real threat. They were serious. I think there were a couple of incidents in the DMZ. I got involved in negotiations with the command involving the military. We did a lot of training with the military and with forces that came in. As you know, there are several major exercises each year where the U.S. is involved with the Koreans and in being prepared for whatever contingencies may happen. But the biggest thing that happened was from about April until about the middle of July.

*Q: Which year?*

PIERCE: '87. It was what my friends in the newspaper business called the "tear gas festival." It turned into a democratization festival. For months every night, 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 people a night on the streets of Seoul and other cities, but primarily Seoul, throwing Molotov cocktails at the police. The police responded with disabling quantities of tear gas. Massive, massive, every night. Very flashy, made the news every night worldwide because these Molotov cocktails would explode into huge flame balls. Very few people were killed, in fact only three and then by accident in each case. I'm not sure it's true, but the story was, as wild and as dangerous as it looked, there were less than 60 panes of glass in the city of Seoul broken the whole time. In fact it was very controlled. It actually looked like a giant street kabuki. It looked like a morality play played out on the street, which in fact it was because both sides were attempting to get the high moral ground; each side in some ways subtly was going to goad the other into overreacting and losing the high moral ground. The issue ostensibly was direct election of a president. Kim Dae-jung was insisting there should be a direct election of the president. On his behalf, the opposition was united on that ground. Roh Tae-woo was the designated successor. Riots ensued. They went on and on and on. People were exhausted. I can't remember which day it was, [Ambassador] Jim Lilley by this time was on board. I think he had come between Halloween and Thanksgiving of '86. We were anticipating that at some point Chun Doo-hwan would pull troops out of a command that had ostensibly belonged to the Americans and put them on the street. Up until now only police were involved in this, but they were exhausted. They'd be up until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and then they'd try to clean out every night and they were just wiped out, completely tired. We were tired, too. We were out covering this thing every night. He did, in fact, roll a couple of units out. We saw it. Ambassador Lilley went and talked to Chun Doo-hwan directly and basically had a two-hour mano-a-mano, one on one, with him and basically talked him out of it and stood him down. The essence of the conversation was, that Chun Doo-hwan believed the communists were after this. Ambassador Lilley looked at him and said something to the effect of, you know me, I've fought communists all my life, this is not how you do it; here's how you do it. We were determined that we were not going to see what happened in Gwangju happen again. They were not going to blame us for it which is what they did and what happened in 1980. Secondly, I think shortly thereafter the government announced that there would be direct elections of the president and that happened within a few days.

*Q: This is tape four, side one with David Pierce.*

PIERCE: Having split the opposition between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Young-sam, the opposition being split could not win and did not win in a free and fair election. Pretty much every observer, except the opposition, agreed it was free and fair, but once that split occurred, the Koreans knew what the outcome was going to be. As a result Roh Tae-woo was elected. A couple of months later, in early '88, I had gone by that time, but I heard the story. I think it really happened. The opposition then united and won the legislative

elections. In the first 24 hours, the newspapers were saying to the opposition, you won, congratulations you won. The opposition was saying, the government lied, the government cheated, the government stole. I don't know if they were working off their talking points as though they had lost the election. They're saying, but you won, how could, wait a minute, you won. The government lied. The shock of realizing. It was probably true also because politics in Korean terms were always stated, there was always a fight for the high moral ground. Who could claim the high moral position? The high moral position was that the government was cheating and therefore you'd never get a fair result, but when they did get to rely on it, they couldn't come off that right away and said, oh, yes, thank you very much. It was funny, but I think that only in Korea. It's not that they were not paying attention, they were. It was just that they were so used to working in this mode that it was almost inconceivable to them that from their perspective a totally corruptive government would actually let them in.

*Q: We had some of that problem in our government when particularly Republicans came in, they were so used to be in opposition, really I mean they're having a hard time sort of absorbing this in Congress.*

PIERCE: That I think was probably the most fascinating change to be a part of, to watch what was going on and have a ringside seat at that.

*Q: Just to get a glimpse of this today, we're talking about 1998 and 1999, one of our great concerns is not just an invasion by the North Vietnamese, but an absolute collapse by the North Vietnamese which is you know and refugees coming and a complete blow up of the society there. Were we concerned about that or was it just the invasion type thing or attack?*

PIERCE: I think there was a sense that the North Korean situation had hollowed out pretty badly. I remember there was a flood in Seoul that killed. A lot of these buildings were low-lying and when the river floods it takes out unfortunately, I think 20 or 30 people something like that were killed in the North. They volunteered food and medical aid as they usually do just to make a point, just to rub it in. It's not accepted. There was this shock on the other end I suspect, but they delivered the aid and sure enough the time came within a year or two when a similar kind of disaster struck up there and the South offered the same thing back. I remember the reaction of the people who took the aid up to the border. They took a lot of it to the border in trucks. Of course, remember now, when the Koreas were separated it was very much the industrial North and the agrarian South. The North had the industry and the machines and the South had the people.

*Q: I was interviewing somebody who was in those early '60s and the story around was, we got the wrong end of the stick.*

PIERCE: Well, actually, we got the right end of the stick.

*Q: Well, but as it turned out, but at that time.*

PIERCE: The people in the right system, yes. At that time it didn't look like it because you're working on per capita output and you weren't measuring potential and you weren't measuring what these folks could do with the opportunities that came. That's exactly what happened. With the opportunities they just took off and soaring and left the North Koreans way behind. In fact, backwards in many ways and the contrast couldn't have been greater, I mean in the North. The South was trying to be nice and trying to do this and not embarrass anybody. They just put the rice, blankets, small radios and so on, whatever they had and put them in trucks, just whatever they could get. They weren't trying to make a show of it. The North Koreans at the border simply couldn't believe that these weren't the best trucks in the country, just whatever they had because that's what they did two years earlier or a year earlier. It was a show quality, almost a Potemkin village kind of thing, and it really has hollowed out in the sense that they really got left behind. The Stalinist approach simply couldn't deliver the material goods the materialist ideology promised. The bottom line, it just couldn't deliver. I think the longer they hold on to this, the hollower it gets. I think there was a concern not that it would implode and produce massive numbers of refugees.

*Q: How it was.*

PIERCE: I'm talking about how people felt then.

*Q: At that time.*

PIERCE: I heard a lot of people say yes, you're going to have a lot of fighting, have a lot of physical fireworks like this. All of a sudden you're going to wake up one day and find a way to merge and make it work. I think that was overoptimistic on their part. My sense is that the Koreans are common on both sides of the border. I've talked to Korean experts, people who've spent their lives working on Korean issues and talking to North Koreans and they come back and say, they're Korean, they're just as Korean as the South. I say that because there's a story that relates to that directly. This is why I think the attitude ultimately is not fear of massive numbers of refugees because I think the South assumes that they'll be able to handle what happens. Even though the assumption is it will be nice when we are able to be one Korea again. The story relates to the high school just on the other side of Camp Casey, right outside of Dongducheon, south of Dongducheon is Camp Casey. It's a little sort of Quonset hut right outside of the high school. A pretty big high school. One of my counterparts in EPA, the Economic Planning Board, went there. I asked him one day. "How long did it take, you guys were occupied by the Japanese for two generations from essentially 1910, starting really in 1905 to 1945, two generations, Japanese names, taught Japanese in school? How long did it take your teachers to switch from Japanese into Korean as a medium instruction from when they had heard the Japanese had surrendered next door?" He said, "Five minutes." Five minutes they were into Korean. Two generations, five minutes. Now, all right, this is despite all the efforts of the Japanese to eradicate everything Korean and turn them all into good Japanese. I guess his point was really much more than just the Japanese, it was also when the time

comes we're Korean and we'll figure it out. We'll make it happen because we have the same language, we have the same parents ultimately. That was really what he was saying to me. My gut sense matches what he said. The biggest concern that we had, when we were there militarily and otherwise, was that the North would miscalculate, that the North would not realize that 30 years of digging in in multiple, multiple layers of defense would cause any kind of standard normal attack in a conventional military sense that would be close to suicide. I think there is a fear that desperation may cloud judgment and cause that. I'm sure with some of these handholding exercises, confidence-building exercises where you're trying to actually work with folks and establish some level of connections so they don't feel quite so threatened.

*Q: You were doing POL/MIL work in part of this, what was, particularly dealing with your American military counterparts, how did they view the South Korean military at this '85 to '87 period?*

PIERCE: By and large as very solid partners. I think one of our problems in trying to get to avoid another Gwangju was to get through to folks that their military brothers in arms just might have another set of orders that they're going to follow in other circumstances. If the balloon really did go up, they just might not respond to that. They just might do their own thing. I think that was a risk that we had with the mobilization of troops. In 1980 I think they were blind sighted by what happened. I think we spent a lot of time trying to make sure that it didn't happen again. I think that there was a lot of trust through all these exercises together. They were comrades in arms, they dealt with issues, we were intermingled in terms of the border, the people at the DMZ,. They were American and South Korean together. You did not get the sense that you got with others, particularly Vietnam vets, people who had come back from Vietnam and would say, I could never tell who the enemy was. I knew who my friends were. You knew exactly who your friends were and you were very confident in that. I don't think, there was that feeling that the Koreans were not only capable, but reliable and trustworthy. I know that wasn't always the sense. I'm told that in the wartime when the issue was survival, you had to worry about things being stolen, and that sort of thing. Certainly there's some of that. Anytime you put assets out there that are not guarded carefully. We have locks even in locker rooms right, for the same reason? But, I did get a sense that there was a pretty strong sense of respect for capability and reliability under fire and maybe a little bit optimistic under some circumstances.

*Q: You left there in '87, where to?*

PIERCE: Sudan.

*Q: Sudan.*

PIERCE: Khartoum, Sudan. They needed a refugee coordinator because of a massive refugee population of Ethiopians in Sudan and an equally massive, another million of those and another million internally displaced Sudanese.

*Q: Yes, it's one of the great disasters of our century there.*

PIERCE: Unfortunately, yes.

*Q: I was wondering this might be a good place to stop, what do you think?*

PIERCE: We can stop here if you want.

*Q: Well, we have a little time, why don't we talk about the Sudan? You were in the Sudan from '87 to when?*

PIERCE: I left Korea in December of '87 for home leave.

*Q: So, '88?*

PIERCE: I got there in February of '88.

*Q: You left when?*

PIERCE: Until July of '89. It was a year and a half.

*Q: Let's talk about, when you went there, I mean this is completely out of your area and all that, wasn't it?*

PIERCE: Well, not exactly, you remember I'd done work on refugees for two years in Orange County.

*Q: Oh, no, I know that. I'm talking about the Arab world and all that.*

PIERCE: Yes and no. It had been a British colony so some of the structures were recognizable in the sense of police and government bureaucracy. While it was an Arab speaking country, I didn't have Arabic. People that I needed to deal with spoke English and it was an ethnically and racially divided society, but there were a few blacks, Southern Sudanese were black.

*Q: In Khartoum?*

PIERCE: In Khartoum.

*Q: When you arrived, we had had relations and had not had relations. What was our diplomatic status?*

PIERCE: The government was run at that time for all but four of the days when I was there, the last four days was when Bashir's coup occurred. The government was run by

Swar al-Dahab. Swar had taken over after '85 when Nimeiry had fallen. In fact his fall was related to a number of things. One of the things that his fall was related to, I was told, was the movement of Falashas, the Ethiopian black Jews through Sudan through Khartoum to Israel. I'm told that my predecessor twice removed had been involved in that and that when that became public that that was one of the things that helped bring the Nimeiry down. You know, people don't like refugees. I mean we tend to think of them in humanitarian terms, places like Kosovo. As humanitarians we look at it as: isn't that terrible, what's happened to those poor people? We forget that there's a political component. A refugee is a refugee because there's a political issue. There may be multiple political issues or ethnic or both. This was true in Sudan. The refugees who were there were from Ethiopia. This was the same country that a couple of years earlier had had that massive losses of people. Interestingly enough, the losses were less from food than they were from water borne or cholera kinds of things, and even more so from measles. The political situation there was somewhat tenuous, but we had decent relations with the government. I had decent relations with the refugee people in that government, but they were not terribly inclined to facilitate much of anything that we wanted to do, like provide food assistance to those people in the South to keep them from moving on. We were, in fact, also providing food assistance into Ethiopia for the humanitarian arms of the Peoples Liberation Front and another arm of the Peoples Liberation Front, people that eventually took over Ethiopia. But there was a humanitarian operation designed to prevent another outflow. That's what we were trying to do: keep people where they were rather than have them pick up and move. This was a case where food was being used as a weapon inside Ethiopia. It was being used as a weapon in the Sudan. The government's policy to put it as gently as I can, was that if any of these folks in the rebel-held areas wanted to eat, that was their problem. There were other people who called it genocide or slow-motion genocide. My inclination was in that direction that this was not passive, but an active decision on their part to use food as a weapon of starvation. They started the food air bridge into Southern Sudan out of Kenya and in some cases out of parts of Sudan. We made many attempts to move stuff by barge and by train and suffered one frustration after another, I think deliberate. That's my impression. You also had an resurgent or a growing power of a fellow named Hassan Turabi who was the head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan. He was a visionary, an extremely talented man, equally at home in English, Arabic, and French, but very much of a pan-Arabist, pan-Islamist. The center of the Islamic world was going to be in his area. I'm paraphrasing what he thought, but he basically he was the power behind the effort that eventually was successful, bringing him to full power.

*Q: Who was our ambassador in the Sudan at the time?*

PIERCE: Our ambassador was Norman Anderson, the DCM was Dane Smith when I was there. Danny has since gone on, he is now the ambassador in Senegal, Accra.

*Q: Your job was what, to help coordinate or do something about refugees?*

PIERCE: Everything from reporting to resettlement. I supervised the voluntary agencies

that did a lot of the resettlement interviews. I worked with the government to get these people exit permits, which was no easy task. It was hugely complicated. They really didn't want to let them out.

*Q: Where were they going?*

PIERCE: The ones that we were resettling went to the U.S. I did a lot of reporting and made efforts to try to coordinate with voluntary agencies, the other governments, the donor groups. We would meet every couple of weeks to review the bidding and see who was doing what, and try to make sure we coordinated everything with the UN agencies that were there. UNDP was taking the lead in trying to get food into some of these places inside the Sudan, not with much success, and by taking huge risks, in fact, but they were continuing to try.

*Q: I take it you really couldn't get down to the rebel area, could you?*

PIERCE: You could fly. I remember taking a congressional delegation South, but that was a war zone at that point. There were in fact some refugees in the country from Uganda, but the situation in the Southern Sudan got so bad and the situation in Uganda actually improved a little bit, that the UN effected a repatriation, a small one, I don't know, 20,000 people or something like that, by simply driving trucks into the camps and saying, who wants to go home? They'd load all these trucks and drive over the border because it was getting dicier and dicier with the fighting moving in and out of Southern Sudan. The folks in the camps knew that and eventually they just jumped on board. Within a couple of weeks they'd gotten pretty much everybody back. Yes, there were some refugees from Uganda. The bulk of them were from Ethiopia.

*Q: What was the war about?*

PIERCE: It was essentially a war of cultures. Sudan has got all kinds of different languages. It's like a lot of patchwork quilts, but there are two dominant categories into which you can put people: Arab and black, basically. Arab means Arab-speaking. I'm not talking about huge changes in skin color. The Sudanese, even the Arabs, were dark-skinned anyway. Many of the blacks were almost blue black. There's a professional basketball player who is seven foot seven or something, a huge guy. There are a lot of folks like that, tall and thin. They're physically striking, both sets of people. The Sudanese are very striking people as well. There's really a divide and the divide actually occurs. If you follow the White Nile down, which is the one that goes North and South, it goes from the South to the North in Uganda and about the point where it opens up, that little nub sticks over into Ethiopia there's a vast sort of swampy area (not unlike the Everglades, maybe not quite as swampy), called the soup. It is also malaria-infested and it's a natural barrier that has stopped just about everybody, whoever tried to invade the place, including the Arabs. It stopped the Greeks, it stopped the Romans, and it stopped the Egyptians, pretty much everybody because they couldn't deal with the fauna basically. Many of the blacks in the area either had sickle-cell anemia or malaria, to which they



have been exposed to from birth; it hurts them, but doesn't kill them. You have very different cultures involved in these two places, the North around Khartoum where it's windswept, it's barren, it's dry, and in the South where there is lots of water. It's fascinating to fly from Khartoum to Kenya and watch it get greener and greener as you go, even though it's still pretty flat. It's all pretty flat, but it just gets greener and greener. By the time you get to Kenya it's lush and then you start getting to the mountains. Ethiopia is the mountains, has a huge set of mountains; it's a source of the Blue Nile. The war was essentially about two very different sets of people that were stitched together by the British in a colony and haven't really enjoyed being part of each other ever since. They were separated de facto. There is a very clear geographic separation which sets in motion a cultural separation of kinds of people who live there. The people in the South are animists, they're cattle herders, but primarily animists, some Christians. In the Sudan they're mostly Arab, mostly Muslims It's essentially a war of separation.

*Q: I mean the North wants to keep the Northern part of Sudan, I mean, why don't they just write off this?*

PIERCE: Look at how hard it was to write off any part of the former Yugoslavia. With folks like Sarabi in power, your job is to civilize or Islamicize everybody, spread the word, turn them all into good Muslims. To let them go is to accept defeat against that principle. Would it be politically smart to do let them go? I mean the place would be as isolated and as unsustainable as in the sense of some of the other interior colonies. There is a complication, however, and that is, that there is oil down there. There is no oil in the North, but there's oil in the South, not huge amounts, but oil that cannot be exploited without a pipeline and nobody's going to build a pipeline in a war zone because it is too vulnerable. Unless and until they work out a modus vivendi that oil is going to sit in the ground and given today's prices it might not be commercially feasible now anyway. At some point it will become feasible and hopefully they will have figured out some way to make this work. There is oil, but I don't think it's primarily oil that's driving this. It's cultural. They don't want to let go of their patrimony.

*Q: Why don't we stop at this point, David? We'll pick this up. We've gotten you to the Sudan, where you were from '88 to '89 dealing with refugees and you've talked about why the war is going on and all. What I'd like to talk to you about is dealing with the Sudanese government, dealing with the non-governmental agencies, why isn't the media in there showing pictures and all as much, sort of drove our policy almost at the same time in Somalia and all that. What was the American response to this thing and we'll pick it up at that point.*

PIERCE: Okay.

*Q: It is the 29th of June, 1999. David, we're in the Sudan, '88 to '89 as mentioned before we've talked about why the war was going on and all. Could you talk a bit about our embassy, our ambassador and how you fit into that and then we'll move on?*

PIERCE: Okay, the refugee business was one of the main pieces of why we were there. The sort of refugee/ humanitarian issues. The ambassador was G. Norman Anderson. The DCM was Dane Smith. Dane has since gone on to be ambassador. I think he's just finishing up a stint in Dakar. Ambassador Anderson I've seen in the hall a couple of times and I think he was working on Bosnia and for all I know may have been working on Kosovo as well. The ambassador was a very interesting and capable, I would use the word gentle diplomat. He was not somebody who relied on bluster, quite to the contrary. He was very low key, but no less direct for that. He wasn't confrontational. He knew how to phrase things, to understand where people were coming from and played them back to get the most mileage out of it. We were a part of the embassy as is true in any refugee resettlement operation. The refugee coordinator is part of the embassy family in a sense of what used to be the FAS arrangement, now ICASS , but in fact the refugee function is funded under a different appropriation. In fact I was in effect an agency head as well even though I came out of the State Department. There's another pot of money that funds the refugee function. We were doing everything from trying to interview and determine who could be resettled in the U.S. from a pool of approximately 1,000,000 Ethiopians and Eritrean refugees that were in Sudan. There weren't that many because there weren't that many family connections. In our immigration law, the refugee arrangement rules and regulations provide a benefit for a family with close connections and some primary sort of category. One refugee would have been at risk under almost any circumstance. But resettlement was the least of the issues that we had in front of us. One was the whole structure of international refugee assistance to the Sudan. It was a good part of the Eastern Sudan toward the Ethiopian border, paid for by UNHCR. There was an awful lot of money that went into those operations from the UN, the UN High Commission for Refugees and the displaced Southern Sudanese that I've talked about before.

*Q: Were there two distinct policies from our point of view, the refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea, too?*

PIERCE: Yes.

*Q: And then the Southern Sudanese, do they mix or were they quite separate?*

PIERCE: Quite separate, two completely different sets of populations. Not just because of the geographic fact. A refugee essentially is somebody who crosses an international border for political reasons, out of political fear or a fear of being killed for political or religious or similar reasons. So, you had this large displacement westward from in effect the fighting that was going in on Eritrea and Ethiopia. The displaced Sudanese were essentially Southern Sudanese who had fled the fighting in the South and who were seeking haven wherever they could get it. The refugees, the ones from Ethiopia and Eritrea who had crossed international boundaries, were subject to international attention and international funding through the UN High Commission for Refugees. The displaced Southern Sudanese of which there are about the same number approximately, were also of interest to the UN, but it was UNDP, the UN Development Program that took the lead in terms of the UN system being interested in these internally displaced. So, yes, there

was a different set of policies. These populations did not mix. The internally displaced were essentially crowded around water taps or water sources and whatever shanty arrangements they could come up with.

*Q: In the first place in both areas where they were, I was thinking the Sudan as being a big desert, but of course it's not, the Southern part is kind of swampy and all that. Where the refugees were, were they in, the Sudanese refugees, were they.*

PIERCE: The displaced.

*Q: Displaced. Were they, had they moved up closer to Khartoum in that area?*

PIERCE: You found them in several settlements, but there was a huge bulk of them in Khartoum itself. As I mentioned before, part of the reason was there was a lot of land, a lot of things that were sort of half developed because the Arab-speaking Sudanese were off working someplace in the Gulf states or wherever and leaving sort of half built houses including water taps sort of sitting there. This is an invitation basically if there's nobody there to police it, people will settle anywhere they can get near water. They periodically would roll in and push them out and keep trying to push them outside with some success, but usually they'd come back. The bulk of the displaced Southerners that we saw, the single largest clump of them, were in Khartoum.

*Q: How did we, did we deal with this particular problem?*

PIERCE: Mostly with reporting and trying to coordinate such assets as we could bring to bear within the country team, within the various countries. There was a humanitarian coordination committee if you want to call it that chaired by the UNDP. The donor countries, the so-called donor countries, the Western countries, Australia and so on and others who were there would meet periodically as well just to try to make sure we weren't duplicating each other's efforts. The biggest effort that I was involved in with respect to the displaced Southerners was what eventually turned into Operation Lifeline when the AID emergency office got seriously involved in this. It was as a result of emerging food shortages, fairly serious food shortages, stimulated not only by the fighting and a drought, but also by deliberate policies by the combatants, particularly the government of Khartoum, to deny food to the South. This was a country that received enormous amounts of food aid and exported enormous amounts of food simultaneously. When you look South of Khartoum on the map and you see the part where the White Nile goes almost due South and the Blue Nile goes sort of Southeast, it's up there. In between those two points, it's very flat, it's not hilly at all. It's a very slow gradient down toward Khartoum, the river runs in that direction, in this case North, sort of northish. In between those two rivers is a project set up by the British around the turn of the century. At the time we were there it was the biggest single agricultural operation under a single ownership in the world, and that includes some pretty big collective operations. It wasn't in fact farmed by a single entity, but it was owned by a single entity.

*Q: Which was the government?*

PIERCE: The government was a parastatal basically, but the government ran it. It was organized by the British essentially to grow cotton, and other things. They still do grow cotton and peanuts and a couple of other things. It was irrigated, taking advantage of this very gentle slope and the fact that there was a constant supply of water from the White Nile. If you think of the Southern part of Sudan especially where the Nile bends, where that bend from Ethiopia comes out, that's the area of the Sudd. Think of it as a gigantic marshy sponge that gradually gives up its water as more comes in from Lake Victoria. There's a steady supply of water there. The Blue Nile tends to be pretty dry, mostly arid and then when it rains in July and August in the highlands of Ethiopia it all comes pouring down, volumes of water. The basis of the irrigation supply is a steady flow.

*Q: How did that fit in? I mean you say that Sudan imports and exports food and the imports that come in are essentially gifts?*

PIERCE: The gifts tend to be things, like wheat, that are not grown there. The exports tend to be things like sorghum and fruit, grapefruit and other things. They have wonderful fruit.

*Q: Did this make sense, I mean in the economy?*

PIERCE: Not to my perspective because a lot of Sudanese ate sorghum. Sorghum was a staple of the diet, but it was also a cash crop. Sorghum has the advantage of growing in relatively dry climates which means it doesn't have to be water-fed or irrigated. It grew in fairly wide areas. It was somewhat susceptible to drought. If there was no rain it wouldn't grow. It needed some, a little, not much. The sorghum growing areas, again, were places north of the Sudd. The people who lived there were the Southern blacks and the Southern Sudanese. The two are pretty much interchangeable; a lot more like the cattle herders and pastoralists of Kenya than they are the agriculturalists of the North. It's not only a cultural difference, but sort of a lifestyle difference.

*Q: Like a messiah I guess?*

PIERCE: They tend to be cattle oriented, but they tended other animals. The Sudd is not real good for growing things. To the extent that people were dependent on food, that people were pressured by some of the fighting, or to the extent that cattle were in short supply, the people had to switch to grains to survive. Then grains could become an issue of survival or a weapon that could be used against the other side by denying it. There was a lot of that going on.

*Q: What about dealing with the Sudanese government because it would strike me that you have a government here, which is carrying on essentially a food war. We're supplying food to the victims of the war they're doing.*

PIERCE: Which we eventually did with Operation Lifeline. We couldn't move food by rail and we couldn't move it by boat, which would have been two ways.

*Q: What was the reaction of the Sudanese because they both have this sort of rescue operation going on and at the same time it would seem they don't want it.*

PIERCE: Let me back up and show the contrast with the refugees because it's worth explaining it.

*Q: No, not the displaced, but the refugees.*

PIERCE: No, I understand, but here's the analogy. Operations in Eastern Sudan with the refugees, these international displaced people, bought an awful lot of money. In other words, you were applying, in effect, first-world standard relief to at best a fourth-world situation. There was some argument about whether this was appropriate. You are giving gold-plated assistance as it were, sending in all these professionals, providing their housing and all the money that goes with it, Toyota Land Cruisers all over the place. Was this situation not attracting people? Could one say it constituted medical treatment?

*Q: Yes, we're talking about the issue of economic versus political.*

PIERCE: Well, I interviewed a lot of these folks who were out applying for refugee status. There was no question in my mind that they were genuine refugees, that there was a heavy political content to it. I would not want to suggest that there's such a thing as an immaculate motive. Motives are complex; they can include a number of factors, political and economic. The debate was over whether the level of assistance was so extensive and expensive that it didn't -- at least at some level -- encourage people to take advantage of it. This is a long way getting around to the point that the Sudanese officials in the Eastern Sudan had a direct interest in this assistance, because a fair amount of that money wound up in their hands either directly or indirectly. Directly in terms of buying staff and housing and facilities and equipment and all these things, or indirectly in terms of money spent to acquire things that they got a piece of the action. It also doesn't detract from the humanitarian nature of the assistance to recognize that local officials just might be motivated by something in addition to the purest of humanitarian motives, things like whether they eat that night or that week, whether they have decent housing. So, that if you're thinking with the blinders on in terms of humanitarian assistance, it's worth considering what it costs in terms of support and cooperation involvement for the local government to be involved with you in doing X, Y and Z to protect refugees. What I'm saying is for the Eastern Sudanese, there was a lot of money in this, a lot of gains. What were the gains for the officials with respect to the displaced Southern Sudanese? The answer is very little. That's part of the problem: they didn't see themselves as at war with the Ethiopians. They were there, but they weren't at war with them. These were not people that they thought were ever going to be hostile to Khartoum as far as the refugees were concerned. As far as the Southern Sudanese were concerned, any one of these folks could be a fighter or an enemy at some point. Not only did they see no policy interest

served by food going their way, they saw no personal interest as well because there was no mechanism by which you could build up a huge, local bureaucracy in Southern Sudan because that kind of a bureaucracy would inevitably have been hostile to the Southern Sudanese. The international money was concentrated in food and those kinds of things, paying to get the train moving/ The Sudanese were masters at talking cooperation; they wanted to look good. They wanted to look like they were not interfering. It became fairly obvious after a year or so of this that it wasn't accidental, that this was a systematic policy. Did they gain much by stopping the flow? No, but they wouldn't have gained much by letting it go. From their perspective it was better to stop the flow, I suspect. Nobody ever actually told me that, but I think you can read between the lines. It was better from their perspective to let that food not get down there. Food after all is fungible. The basic rule of food emergencies is that those who have guns eat first and last and everybody else takes what they can get. More food in the South was not what they wanted.

*Q: Now, who was setting this high standard of refugee support in the refugees?*

PIERCE: These were internationally recognized refugees by the UNHCR. There is a standard that they attempt to achieve in those places. Again, we're not talking about emergency. They just come across and they're here instantly because that's a different situation. There you're dealing with immediate survival issues, things like clean water, rehydration salts, measles vaccines, the things that keep large numbers of people alive in the short run. These folks had been here for some time. There had been a big push for them in the middle '80s. This was an established built up camp. The longer you have the time to do this, the more you're going to try to upgrade it and bring it up to the international standards. It was not a minimalist operation.

*Q: Was this developing into a political entity?*

PIERCE: Oh, I think so.

*Q: I mean at the time was that a concern? I mean you were saying, I mean, you know, these were people coming.*

PIERCE: The governor of this province had far more money at his disposal than any other governor of any other province in the eastern part of Sudan because of this presence. Now, it's not true that the UNHCR operated as his staff, but neither did they cross what he wanted basically. There was a cooperative relationship. He was in charge, but there was a lot of money coming in, money and power, coming his way.

*Q: Did you find as you were dealing with this, I mean one of the things about the Foreign Service is that you come in and you do a job and you go so that you don't take in a way the careerist attitude towards say an emergency operation like this. Were you seeing within American non-governmental agencies and other countries' governmental, non-governmental agencies, a commitment, almost a career opportunity that they didn't want*

*to see being taken care of and depart?*

PIERCE: I think there may be some of that. I don't think that was the primary motivation of the international community. Remember the folks who were involved with UNHCR and ICRC for that matter all come out in Geneva. The standard model that they're working from is not whether relief started at the end of World War II, but where it ended up. Given their druthers they will also try to achieve what amounts to European standards of health, sanitation, and so on. These standards are not cheap. I'm not suggesting we should have one standard for Africans and another for Asians, no. I don't think it's as much careerist in terms of empire building themselves; as far as the Sudanese partners were concerned in this, absolutely, but not so much on the international side. I think there is a consciousness of an international standard they want to reach. That standard is not minimalist except in the sort of short-term crisis where the issue is survival and then it's whatever you have to do to keep people alive. That's a very different dynamic than the more stable, longer term populations of refugees. There was always the question of when can they go back. Obviously that eventually got settled on a battlefield, but certainly not while I was there.

*Q: What was the American role because this was still at the end of the Reagan administration and you had major elements in the United States which were not very sympathetic to the UN in any form. I mean was this causing a problem for our playing in this particular game?*

PIERCE: No, not exactly. The UN as a whole and some of its bodies have not been fans of a number of people in the Congress on both sides of the aisle, but refugees are special. The refugee bureau is now called PRM, Population Refugees and Migration. Every year the refugee bureau got—from a special appropriation—pretty much more money than it asked for from Congress. I think the reason is that refugees hold a very special, psychological place in the American consciousness. You can rephrase Kennedy's book, A Nation of Immigrants to very easily say a Nation of Refugees. I mean you go back and look at what we were all taught as some of the defining values of American consciousness: they have to do with refuge from political or religious or other kinds of threats.

*Q: Potato famine.*

PIERCE: We haven't always lived up to this as obviously our history is something substantially less than perfect. The concept that we should be interested in refugees, that Refugees-R-Us to pillage the store title with a backward R. That is who we are in many ways: a bunch of refugees. It's not just different nationalities. We are, in many ways, people who consciously left another place. It's not everybody's story, but that's a big part of it. It's a big part of the American consciousness and it leads to American willingness, I think. When people start talking about refugees, when you see visuals of refugee people suffering, whether it's in Kosovo, or little children with flies all over their faces in Africa, or wherever, we react and we respond. We respond with money and we respond with

people and attention. That's the reality. I don't detect much difference between administrations in this regard. I see this as pretty much a constant, whether they're Republicans or Democrats or running the White House or the Congress, they're pretty much on the same wavelength.

*Q: Did you find that the various non-governmental organizations were working in close coordination with the UN High Commission on Refugees or was there competition? What was your impression?*

PIERCE: You have a different range of American and other NGOs. Some of the non-governmental organizations like OXFAM specialize in clean water and they're not particularly religiously oriented. Others are oriented around specific missions. You have a couple of them American Rescue Committee, ARC, and IRC, International Refugee Committee who are specifically aimed at refugees. There was less interest among American NGOs in the displaced persons than there was with refugees. The cynics will say that's because the refugees were where the money was. I don't think that's the total reason. I think that may explain some of it. Many of them worked under contract with UNHCR taking on the role like AID of being a contract supervisor wanting to get X, Y and Z service done and they contract with one or more voluntary agencies to perform the service. We did the same thing on the refugee resettlement. We didn't do the bulk of the refugee resettlement process; we used voluntary agency contractors to do that which I supervised. That's what refugee coordinators do all over the world.

*Q: From your point of view, how much resettlement were you doing? I mean was this making any difference?*

PIERCE: On an order of magnitude, they had a million refugees approximately and we had limits of approximately 2,000 to possibly as high as 4,000 or 3,500 in a year that could be resettled. The total for all of Africa was about 5,000. Compare that to my next assignment where I went to Southeast Asia out of Bangkok. In the orderly departure program alone we were interviewing, when I got there, 3,500 people a month. Within a year we were up to 10,000, then over 10,000 a month. The scare was quite different, but then the degree of American involvement in the situation was hugely different as well. We represented half or more of all the refugees resettling in the U.S. coming out Sudan from Ethiopia.

*Q: Where were they going? I mean, I noticed we're within two blocks of a significant number for the area of people from the horn of Africa. I'm not sure if they're Sudanese or, I mean whether they're Ethiopian or what.*

PIERCE: The cynical answer is they all become Washington taxi drivers. I think that's really the truth. Washington has become something of a settlement point, in addition to New York for obvious historical reasons and others. Washington has become that in part because voluntary agencies are here and part because there is a phenomenon in both refugee and migration processes of "anchor relatives." All you need is one. Once that



anchor relative is there then that becomes the connection by which dozens or more either then are authorized to come or find their way there, whether they're authorized or not. That's true across the board. I think you did have a number of the voluntary agencies involved in resettlement, either in New York or here, that had quarters or big operations here. With African refugees this is pretty much the first stop.

*Q: I noticed that they're heavily concentrated. It seems like a felicitous combination of going to the coffee shops and the places that, well, that serve coffee and often mix with pastry and with books or something like that. Both the men and the women seem to be serving there and often partaking, I mean sitting at tables, too, right in our area.*

PIERCE: I have spent over 25 years in Washington as a kid, because my grandparents lived up on Capitol Hill. So I saw Washington much earlier than most Foreign Service people do. But it changed enormously from the time I joined the Service in late '73 until now. I'd have to say it's now much more cosmopolitan. There's virtually no national food you can't find produced in this region, and usually in multiple places. Part of that is the immigration, and part of it is a refugee flow. We've had lots of refugees all over the country. I think if you ask the question in California, for example, or even some parts of the East Coast, 10 or 15 years ago: who was it that was running the Dunkin Donuts shops? The answer would be Cambodians. Where did that come from? Well, leftover from the Vietnam War, Cambodia and all that. But, who is in those shops now? Well, another set of people.

*Q: The Indians mainly.*

PIERCE: Indians, South Asians. Again, it's a major relative phenomenon. One person gets into an industry in an area, figures out how to make it work and when he or she does, Uncle Vito—to use the Eastern Europe and Italian model—Uncle Vito gets in and pretty soon Uncle Vito brings in his cousin. It takes a while because he's got to get the ropes and he's got to get good enough to be both a language and a business cultural interpreter for the folks that come. Once that bridge has been established, that's the vehicle by which lots of other people can come and successfully join the family.

*Q: Did you feel you were tapping into this on the ones that you did do?*

PIERCE: Well, as I said, the refugee structures, in terms of resettlement, gave priority to people who had immediate relatives in the States, very much like immigration rules did and do. Those who have close relatives here are a leg up and it's not just family unification, it's also the fact that if you've got close relatives, the closer they are, the more likely they are to contribute significantly to the upkeep of folks, the less likely these folks are to be permanent public charges. That's the logic of it. We looked hard to try to find the people who were really badly damaged and abused, who were tortured and who we thought would have a shot at making it in the U.S. without family members, not as easy as it sounds. This is a tough road actually, without interpreters, but we weren't dealing with many that they would have overwhelmed the voluntary agencies on this end that

were receiving them.

*Q: What about the other countries involved? Were you one of essentially of a team from other countries?*

PIERCE: We were, but the U.S. traditionally has been the largest resettler of refugees. That's sort of the third choice, if you list the three options for a large refugee population. Option one is that they should be able to go back to conditions of safety. What one hopes is happening in Kosovo now—and it may not be quite as safe as one would like—is to go back to where they were, and some kind of reasonable arrangement. Option two would be resettlement where they landed across the border, in this case, or wherever. Option three is that they are resettled in some third country. The third is the most expensive and the most difficult and the hardest to pull off. It's the least of those three priorities.

*Q: What was your impression at this point of the personnel of the UN High Commission for Refugees?*

PIERCE: Pretty good people. The deputy director has been known in other circles as one of the defenders of Steven Biko in South Africa. He was an Indian who was, in effect, in exile in South Africa, with South Asian background, but South African born. An interesting collection of people from all over the world. It looked like a little UN in some ways. Pretty competent, pretty capable, I would say. The folks in leadership were often people who themselves had been refugees or had been exposed to that situation and who were pretty sensitive to those kinds of issues. I was pretty impressed with them.

Even more impressive though, were the ICRC people. Across the world the U.S. tends to operate the heaviest. We tend to bring the most stuff with us, as it were. This was true in World War II. We needed two or three times what the Germans needed to fight on, and it's true in a civilian sense as well. The UN tended to be almost as heavy as we were in terms of what they were bringing, not quite, but pretty close. The ICRC, the International Committee for the Red Cross, tended not to be heavy at all. They tended to move a lot lighter. They tend to be a lot closer to OXFAM. They would have offices, but they were usually converted residences that they squirreled out a little space here and there; they tended to operate pretty cheaply. They had a lot of credibility. The ICRC, the International Committee for the Red Cross, and the International Red Crescent Society, which essentially merged, they're the same thing. They received a lot of respect as a neutral party. Obviously they derived some powers from international conventions: access to prisoners and finding relatives, that they do as a matter of international agreement. But they also had probably more credibility than anybody else as completely neutral with interest solely in humanitarian things. They often were the point of the spear in terms of getting things done. In flagging problems and trying to respond to them, they're not afraid to go into war zones. We tended to work very closely with them if we needed to get into war zones because they knew the territory better than anybody else and they had the credibility to pull it off.

Let me just say before I forget, I wanted to make a point and I wasn't trying to be terribly cynical, but realistic in terms of saying why there was less attention, why the government wasn't terribly interested in the Southern Sudanese compared to the East, where the refugees were. They were also not terribly interested in resettlement to a third country. They didn't want to start a flood. They didn't want to start an attraction. But, also, there was very little money going to them. What did these people get out of this? There was a sensitivity to some things that had happened a few years earlier with respect to allegedly Mossad and others with the Falashas.

*Q: Mossad is the Israeli intelligence service.*

PIERCE: Which was involved, I am told, in smuggling the Falashas Jews, the black Ethiopian Jews, from Sudan into Israel.

*Q: It was with the collusion of the government that it became public and that was the problem.*

PIERCE: That's my understanding. There was a lot of money floating around. One of my predecessors—I can't remember his name—was allegedly involved in this. I don't know the whole story. There was a little residual suspicion on the part of the government in power. This probably was the straw that broke the camel's back when they found out that the government was involved in smuggling Jews out of Sudan to Israel. The government didn't stay in power much longer after that. The government that I was dealing with was pretty suspicious of everybody that we took out and they were susceptible. They were afraid of being charged with smuggling Falashas out and sending them to Israel. You had to be very careful and clear on where they were going to the point of telling them where they were going in the States, who their sponsors were, what agency is going to meet them. You wouldn't think that they would care that much, but the sensitivity was there from before and they were, I think, trying to protect themselves from a repeat of what had happened to their predecessor.

*Q: Let's talk about the displaced people because this is really a sensitive issue I would think for the government. Essentially in one way your aiding their enemy in Operation Lifeline, could you tell how, what we were doing?*

PIERCE: It's been a while since I've thought about it and I'm not entirely clear on all of it, but I do remember working pretty carefully with AID, with the OFDA people, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The names of a couple of the folks that I worked with will come to me shortly. The operation there wasn't terribly interested in this situation and they were more interested in the folks who were nearby. They were doing some projects, but as the situation got worse in the South and you had real starvation emerging and people dying of this, the emergency response people in AID, the Foreign Disaster Assistance Office got engaged. They have the ability to jump in and move pretty fast when they wanted to. They got some congressmen interested in it and I tended to

work pretty closely with them. Because they had the combination of money and Washington presence and they were interested, they tended to drive this train. They wanted to make it happen. We spent some time doing what we could to help reassure the government that we were not trying to feed their enemies. There was some press coverage. There were some photographers who got in there and showed the standard kid that looks like a collection of ribs, really horrific kinds of starvation things. That got people's attention. The Sudanese government decided that they didn't want that publicity but they were willing to go along with it.

The Sudanese government managed to run relief flights through a couple of areas, Lao was one. Another area, I can't remember, is not on that particular map, but it's South, substantially south of Khartoum. They staged the relief flights through Sudan. Some of the food that went turned out to be stuff that I suspect had come in under other auspices. There was food from U.S. sources, there was food from the World Food Program. But you know, food is fungible, it can come from different sources. I think there was enough money in this, enough financial reason for them to be willing to go along with it. Some of the food got as far as some of their settlement areas and was dropped off.

ICRC was careful, and others were careful, to target not a complete balance, you know, one city, one settlement that tended to side with the rebels and one settlement that tended to side with the government. It was a fairly generalized emergency, food emergency. People were dying in lots of places. They were able to get some semblance of a balance again so that the government was willing to let this happen. As you may have heard and I heard recently, the flights tend to now be coming out of Kenya. Some of that was happening, but most of it was coming from the north through Khartoum and flying south.

One of the more memorable trips I took was with four congressmen including Congressman Ackerman and the late, who was the guy from Texas, Mickey Leland, to look at this food distribution. Congressman Ackerman was not a fan until he got there. When he saw what they were doing and how hard we were working and how many people we were reaching he became a serious fan of the operation and one of the big supporters from the Hill. He was really, I think, taken with what he saw. I think it was kind of a lucky combination that people on the government side were also hurting. I think that was part of their calculus as well. The fighting has always struck me as ebbing and flowing with the seasons. When the roads become impassable, then the fighting slows down; and when it dries up and they can move their stuff around, they fight more. The food cycles tend to move with the ebb and flow of the fighting as well.

*Q: At that point were we looking and seeing any end to the fighting?*

PIERCE: No. There were efforts underway to try to get them to talk and work out solutions. As far as I can tell, it's been going on ever since 1956, but not a whole lot of it., You get cease-fires and you get this and that, but it doesn't take very long before they're back at it. You get a change in the cast of characters and people siding with one faction, going this way or that way. Jimmy Carter came out at one point and tried to intervene and

broker a solution. There are international groups. There are processes even going on today to try to bring this to an end, but I don't see much possibility that they'll ever succeed any better than they have for the last 34 years.

*Q: After this in '89 you left there? Where did you go?*

PIERCE: I came back to Washington. I was here as for a promotion panel for a month, but I didn't get home leave. I went straight to Bangkok as a refugee coordinator.

*Q: So, you pretty well turned yourself into a refugee man by this time?*

PIERCE: For good or ill, yes. Yes. I say that because historically those who spend more than one tour in the refugee business—otherwise known in some circles as do-gooders or humanitarian workers—are not regarded as performing standard Foreign Service, sort of classical Foreign Service work. It may be in fact what we're doing, but it's not regarded as mainstream Foreign Service work.

*Q: When I came in in 1955 my first designation was a refugee relief officer. I was told, "By all and sundry, get the hell out of there on your next assignment, don't do that ever again."*

PIERCE: You've had a number of people who've developed some real expertise here. Despite all the talk about global issues being important and everything else, this has not shown up in the way the Department has treated its people.

*Q: No, not at all.*

PIERCE: It's probably a cultural thing in the Department itself. I'm not alone. There are a lot of us who are in that situation.

*Q: I think all of us who can look at it with a certain amount of objectivity realize this is one of the major things we do.*

PIERCE: The irony is that our military friends have realized this for some time. You may recall after the Gulf War, within two weeks after the shooting stopped, you went from images of guys sitting on their helicopters or tanks or whatever and saying, we just did our job, we just did what we were trained for and we're really proud we did our job. Two weeks later they're out slinging food, humanitarian rations, building settlements, building shelters on the hill slopes for Kurds in Iraq and scratching their heads and saying, I didn't join the army to be a Peace Corps volunteer, I don't know what I'm doing here. The brass has figured it out, you look at the hot actions charts. I was on a group called the Capstone Course in '94 with a bunch of brand-new brigadier generals from all the services and when we went to Europe virtually in every command brief we had, the first chart they threw up on the wall was all their hot spots, all the issues that they were following and 95% of them were contingencies short of war which turned out to be political refugee

military kinds of actions or activities, peacekeeping, peace-making humanitarian interventions of one kind or another and that's the business of the '90s. That's what we do, by and large, internationally.

We don't institutionally maintain the capacity to not only do the work, but lead it. We were ceding the political insights and the other things that we allegedly have to bring to the table to other players because we will never have the resources the DOD has to throw at this no matter how generous Congress is with refugee money or any other kinds of stuff. DOD can put 10, 20, 50 times the number of people, bodies, bureaucrats and everything else on it. You reach a point where no matter how much an expert you are on an issue, you're not going to be able to lead unless you have a piece of that operation. Unfortunately the Department, in my humble opinion, is shooting itself in the foot. By unilaterally disarming, you know, getting rid of the people, it treats them as though this isn't real Foreign Service work. Excuse me. It's intensely political. I think that's the other point to remember about refugees. What made them refugees is political, not economic, primarily. Yes, there may be an economic motive, but it's primarily because somebody is mad at them for their political views or their ethnic identity or their religious beliefs or some combination of those things. We forget that if it's treated as humanitarian, almost consular work for the rest of the world, in fact it can be the stuff of wars as we found in Kosovo. Sending refugees across the border can be an aggressive act, an act of political aggression. It's not rolling the tanks, but it's almost as disruptive.

*Q: Well, one of our major focal points for the past 50 years has been the Palestinian program, which is refugees.*

PIERCE: Which brings up another point that you don't solve one refugee problem by creating another. Anyway. that's my opinion.

*Q: Okay.*

PIERCE: This is all relative because it does affect how you think about this. If you think about what's happening, isn't one of the things that's happened in Kosovo is that these refugees have come back. Isn't a new set of refugees being created?

*Q: Oh, yes. We've got a more, a concentrated Yugoslavia, a concentrated Serbia with some very unhappy people.*

PIERCE: These things can lead to more than just complaints.

*Q: We're building a time bomb. Anyway, let's go on to Bangkok. '89 to when?*

PIERCE: '92.

*Q: All right, what was your job?*

PIERCE: I was the refugee coordinator, refugee migration coordinator in Bangkok. The job had substantial regional implications because I was running a total of seven different refugee programs. The biggest one was the early departure program for Vietnam.

*Q: Could you talk about what were the refugee pressures at this time '89 to '92?*

PIERCE: There were really several different sets of refugees. The first, one of the sets of refugees you had and I'll just sort of work maybe small to large sort of the West to East of Thailand. On the west side of Thailand on the Burmese border you had several thousand Burmese students who had fled the uprising and fighting in Rangoon in connection with the military takeover there after the election that was annulled by the military. This was a small group, but it was a rather unhappy group in the sense that they felt that they were at risk of being overrun by Burmese at any time. The Thai didn't really want them. They were not protected in the sense that UNHCR—although sort of interested in them—, didn't really document their refugee status. They were less interested in them as a group. That was one of the smaller things, but it was one of the things we were concerned about.

You had a couple of different sets of Lao refugees, lowland Lao and highland Lao to put it in the crudest difference of terms. One set had sided with the U.S. during the Indochinese war, the complex of wars that was going on in Laos and Vietnam and Cambodia. It was a quite different set of problems to deal with the lowland Lao who were also in refugee camps in the Thai side of the border.

You had a string of refugee camps of Cambodians. Everything from nationalist groups to a couple of Khmer Rouge dominated camps, the refugees of which had been driven out of Cambodia when the Vietnamese came in to chase after the Khmer Rouge. There was fighting going on when I got there and there were people who were lobbing shells into various camps. This is another commonality of refugee experience. It's difficult to separate them. Refugee camps are not intended to be havens for fighters and yet fighters tend to go where their families are. If camps are located within easy walking distance of the border, they're going to attract people who were not only there to be with their wives and children, but also people who may be running guns, may be plotting expeditions, and this sort of thing. It's a generic risk of any refugee camp close to the border. There was certainly more than a little of that. You had people making incursions on the border back and forth, with land mines all over the place. You had several voluntary agencies that were teaching people, mostly folks who had had limbs blown off how to build. . .

*Q: Prosthesis.*

PIERCE: Prosthesis, yes. You look around and it boggles the mind how many people had been affected this way. So you had not only mine victims, you had people who were moving back and forth, you had attacks by air, not by airplanes, but artillery shells and mortars and this kind of thing, hand grenades lobbing in and weapons moving in and out. The Thai very unhappy about all of these people being there. One level of aid that didn't

mind having this buffer zone. It was classic Thai to have a buffer zone of the enemies, not the people next door, in-between you and them, so if they come at you they have to go through them first. You had in the Gulf of Thailand. Thai pirates preyed on anybody venturing into the Gulf, particularly boats of refugees who were regularly attacked and stripped of all their wealth, men shot and women run off and raped, and the rest of it.

Part of the program involved efforts by one of the refugee coordinators who had a couple of DEA people working for him helping train local Thai police on how to deal with these people, to manage piracy programs. We had concerns, asylum concerns because part of the reason that the Thai were willing to accept refugees depended on the willingness of third countries to take them off their hands. There is a built-in problem the more a refugee takes off to a third country. They might see the prize as a green card.

Running refugee camps involved a mix of motives between the political and the economic. There's a mix in many cases. Your behavior may be affecting that. I've left out the biggest programs that we've had. I've already hit two nationalities and there were three of them in Vietnam. One of them was the sort of basic orderly departure program. There were several hundred thousand people in camps all over, not a million, maybe 750,000 or something like that in camps in Hong Kong and in Indonesia and in Thailand. These were boat people who had come earlier and who were waiting to be resettled. There was a significant resettlement program to take them to other countries. There was a similar problem to try to stem the boat flows out of Vietnam by having an orderly departure instead of a disorderly flight to the sea on boats.

*Q: This is tape five, side one with David Pierce.*

PIERCE: I was saying that part of the objective of both the early departure program and the resettlement from Thailand was to try to avoid uncontrolled departures. Floods of people tend to destabilize everything and can lead to very serious abuses. There was one set of people we were interviewing, some of whom had relatives in the States and some who did not, but had some claim under our priority system to refugee admissions. In addition when I got there, there were two other groups. One that we were just starting to deal with which was Amerasians, people of mixed American and Vietnamese parentage. These were embarrassments to the Vietnamese. These were people who were basically discriminated against in Vietnamese society because they looked like, and were a reminder of, something they didn't want to remember. They really didn't have a home. That was part of our second leg of the three-legged stool: an ordered departure program for Amerasians, people of mixed parentage.

The third leg was reenters, people who had been in the South Vietnamese military forces who were thrown into reeducation camps by the Vietnamese starting the day they occupied Saigon. Some of them had served a couple of years, three, four, or five, whatever. Bob Funseth, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Refugee Bureau, had negotiated a framework agreement for the first time in the spring of 1989. For the first time, we weren't going to let these Vietnamese people come back. When I went out there,



one of my objectives was to flush out that agreement and get it going. It was between the Amerasians and the reenters. That's what pushed the numbers from 3,000 to about 10,000 a month in terms of interviews. It got us from about 2,000 departures a month to about 7,500. A massive operation on any standard.

*Q: Where were they going?*

PIERCE: The folks in Southern California will say only to Southern California and that certainly was the biggest destination, but they were going all over the U.S. Many of them would end up in Southern California or in California because the unemployment rate was lower there. But a number of countries were taking refugees for resettlement. We, of course, were the biggest one that were doing it by far. The numbers we were taking dwarfed all the others combined. But then of course we were directly involved in the Vietnam War. So, this was considered one of the legacies, one of the residues that needed to be cleaned up.

*Q: Could you talk about how you operated dealing with the Vietnamese government and how this program worked during your '89 to '92 period?*

PIERCE: For most of that period, I was the senior official going into Vietnam. It was a time before we recognized Vietnam. They were quite anxious to normalize relations and the orderly departure program was the closest thing they had. They were no less tough negotiators. They certainly had their own views and pursued their own activities and interests and were not prepared to give away anything they didn't really want to give away. But we had a pretty lively interaction both in the negotiating sense and in an operational sense. At any one time we had eight, ten or twelve people in Vietnam, in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) doing interviews. Roughly half were INS immigration service people and half American consular officers and voluntary agency people. The international organization for immigration did a lot of the medical screening and a lot of the processing work there.

You had the International Catholic Migration Commission which was our primary contractor on ODP, both in Vietnam, and particularly in Thailand, which is where they did a lot of the physical processing. The departures were all staged through Thailand, so we had a pretty big operation. The Vietnamese were—what can I say?—they were on their best behavior. They were trying to make this thing work. They wanted this to lead as quickly as possible to deeper relations. How quickly can we get there and really normalize this whole relationship? That of course, has since happened, but that was the issue that was driving them. It was very clear that the Vietnamese were of two minds on this. There were tensions between the interior ministry and the foreign ministry, not unheard of in any other country, of course. This is fairly common. There were plenty of people who were involved in the war earlier who had now been reinvented into some other function and who were now trying to make this process work.

*Q: Sometimes you run across some very hard-nosed people who after a war will say,*

*okay these were all war criminals because they were on the other side, take and get rid of them, we just don't want this trash. I mean were you getting into the sort of the emotions or was this sort of here's the problem, how do we deal with it?*

PIERCE: I think they had their agenda as to who they wanted to see go first and we had our own perception. Our perception was that those who had been locked up the longest should be the first to go. Their perception was that those who signed up to go first should be the first to go. We had constant battles of who that should be. Now, obviously, some of that overlapped and that was the easy part. It was the other part, trying to figure out how to make that happen so that it went as smoothly as possible. Basically since people from Congress were willing to fund this process, we made the decision to try to accelerate the process as quickly as possible. Rather than haggle and fight over every day and every little inch about whether somebody was two and a half years or four and a half years, three and a half years we just tried to move as many as possible as quickly as possible. That seemed to meet everybody's interest.

*Q: I would have thought you would have been absolutely deluged particularly from Congress, through Congress but just straightforward with the people saying, you've got to get my cousin out, my sister's there. I mean you must have had huge lists of people to try to get out.*

PIERCE: We wrote to lots of congressmen, oh yes. I think the answer is to show people that you were accelerating the process. You can't really respond to every individual case. I think everybody understood that trying to get specific individuals out and push them to the head of the list would have been counterproductive because we would spend all of our time doing that and not actually moving people. It was a real tradeoff in terms of saying, we can't guarantee you when this is going to happen, but let me show you where we're headed and how we're going to try to solve this whole thing within the next couple of years. That was the tactic we were taking and that seemed to work, that seemed to satisfy most people.

*Q: How did our people in Saigon operate? I speak as a former consul general in Saigon back in '69 to '70.*

PIERCE: I can't remember the name of the hotel. We worked out of the foreign ministry building, the back part of the foreign ministry building, which they converted into a full-time ODP interview area. We lived in hotels. There was a hotel by the river that some of us were in. Does Majestic sound right?

*Q: Majestic, yes.*

PIERCE: I think Majestic is the word that I'm thinking of. The Majestic was the one I think we stayed in most of the time. It wasn't a completely Spartan existence, but it didn't have all of the distractions that a place like Bangkok has. It was a lot quieter in that sense. The big thing to do on Sunday afternoon was to walk around and watch the kids on their

motorcycles parade around the square. It was touching in a way, you know, the markets were just beginning to develop and the Vietnamese and their collective political leadership were trying to figure out how to deal with sort of freer market enterprise. There were signs of construction. I think this was fairly impressive. Both there and in Hanoi where I went, you saw signs of construction. Not big stuff, not the cranes, but you know, piles of sand and bricks. People were obviously investing in a small scale. I think they had made a decision just before we got there. It was fascinating for the Congress to hear this because they had essentially priced rice, put a real price on rice. Until that point they were sort of giving it away and paying people in kind. Rice essentially had no value. Some people were using it to line fields with, throwing it away basically. Once they put a real price on it suddenly they had a surplus. The Thais got real nervous because all of a sudden in one year they were a major exporter of rice. It was those kinds of changes that they were in the middle of, producing a feisty atmosphere, in a way. They were discovering new things. They were certainly amenable to us.

One of the strongest memories I have—I believe we were in Hanoi at the time for negotiations—and there was this famous noodle and fried-fish dish that they had. It's just a hole-in-the-wall wooden thing upstairs. We're in these petty cabs going there, going slowly down the road, three or four of us. It was the night that we started the bombing operations in Kuwait against the Iraqis, I guess the takeoff for Desert Storm. I thought, oh, I'm really going to get it here because the last time they were really going to give us a hard time. Those crazy Americans out bombing again. The last time we had dropped that kind of ordinance on anybody was the 1972 Christmas bombing of Hanoi, as I remember. So, I figure we're really going to hear about it. We're going along this road and a bunch of, 20-something aged Vietnamese men looked at us with a quizzical eye and said, "Russian?" Ruski or whatever it was they said. We said, "No, American." I'm in Hanoi now, we're dropping bombs on Kuwait and they looked at me, big grin, and said, "American, number one."

I said, "What's going on here, what is happening here?" This was not the response we were expecting. What was even more interesting was that night over a very unpretentious meal we had this discussion with several people in the foreign ministry, including the hardliners, and some from the ministry of the interior. I have a very strong recollection of their saying to me, "You know, we think what you're doing in Kuwait is absolutely right. We think it's terrible that it's acceptable that one country should come in and invade another. We're glad that you're doing this to stop that stuff because it shouldn't be happening." I understand from their perspective this was a civil war in Vietnam and our perspective was this was an international violation, but still it was really a trip to be there. This took place not that long after, essentially 12 or 13 years later.

*Q: Well, I mean all the people you're talking to went through that.*

PIERCE: All the people we were talking to were a part of that. It was a very interesting change. A lot has happened. It was a marker for me of the change in atmospherics.

*Q: Were you aware of a split between the older generation at the top, hard lined communists who really didn't like to see things changing? The big pressure was economic and also political power, but between state-controlled economy and the natural proclivity of the Vietnamese to set up small noodle shops, etc. They're very good merchants.*

PIERCE: There were certain disagreements that I could detect in different approaches between the minister of interior—who in my humble opinion tended to be a little more suspicious of people—and the foreign ministry which tended to be a little less suspicious of foreigners/ This is not uncommon in any other country. The sense that I had was that the collective leadership had made a decision that they were going to move toward economic openness but that they intended to maintain political control. The assumption was that they were working from was that they would be able to do this in their lifetime. But their children would not have the tight political control that they have. The children would have to make it on their own, but that they felt that order and structure were important in a political sense. They were certainly willing to open up on the economic sense.

Now, I know that after I was gone in '92 there was some backing and forthing and they pulled back some of this stuff. But this was a time when they were in fact trying to open the doors that were encouraging. We would see more and more signs of some Americans of Vietnamese background and others coming in and being involved sort of tenuously in the economy. You'd run into people in shops and you'd say, oh, while I was in Orange County or I was here or I was there. It was fascinating. It was gingerly, you know, it was not "jump in with both feet and throw away political controls," no, but it was a very clear direction and it was an integrated direction. It was pretty clear to me that they had made a conscious, generally agreed-upon approach. I had a number of discussions with the guy who was involved in the tunnels, particularly involved with Amerasians. He couldn't have been more gracious in terms of the way he approached us. This is a guy about as hard-lined as they come. Yet they were focused on the future: "let's clean up the past, but let's really concentrate on what we're going to make the future look like." He was certainly an older guy, not a young guy at all. I guess my impression was that it was more than just a charm offensive.

*Q: Well, things were changing, this wasn't a facade.*

PIERCE: Things were changing. They didn't feel threatened by this economic freedom, at least to a point. Then when it got to a point, they got maybe a little scared and pulled back. It wasn't hard-lined dictatorship, at least that was my sense. It was much more of a collective "let's see if we can make this work."

*Q: You mentioned the Amerasian kids. How were they identified and how did you deal with that problem?*

PIERCE: Not an easy problem. When I first got there, there were thousands of them

waiting outside. The visuals are pretty clear, particularly kids of Vietnamese mothers and African American fathers were pretty obvious when you could look in their faces and you could see the fathers. As we took the more obvious ones, and interviewed people, we tried to get their stories out. Of course, by and large, these are people who had been persecuted, who were an embarrassment. They were hidden away, they weren't what people wanted to remember about the situation.

However, when the Amerasian program started, they suddenly became a meal ticket, a ticket to a green card. Consequently there was a potential always in that program for fraud. Just as there was following the French Indochinese involvement with an effort to resettle IndoFrench basically. In everything from cosmetic makeovers. There's always been a risk of fraud in that. I'm not suggesting that that's the norm, but I am suggesting that it's a piece of it you've always got to be concerned with. You asked how did we deal with the interview process of Amerasians. We tried to get people to tell us the stories, to ask does this make sense? Are the relationships that they claim actually there or are they manufactured for the purpose of the interview?

*Q: Would you get a mother, I mean would a mother come along because?*

PIERCE: Oh, you might have 15 people in the room who were all allegedly relatives of this Amerasian and you get some pretty complicated stories. Our interviewers got pretty good at sorting them out. I won't say we're perfect, nobody is, but we attempted to carry out the responsibilities that the law imposed on us to make a rational, reasonable judgment to whether these folks were telling us the truth.

*Q: Well, the Vietnamese government was behind this program?*

PIERCE: The Vietnamese government was not only interested in seeing this succeed. One of the things that we built was an Amerasian transit center in Saigon. I can't remember which piece of ground, what that ground had been before, but they built basically a set of dormitories for a couple of thousand people to wait through the processing rather than be on the streets. This was obviously in their interests that we should do this, They were quite cooperative and helpful in making this happen. We supplied the money, but they did a lot of work on it and they worked with us. It was a joint effort and we were both pretty proud of what happened. There was always a concern when you have shared management about who's actually responsible. However, these were operational things that can be managed and dealt with and were. Some of the framework was really pretty cooperative.

*Q: Some of the things you're saying about this joint operation was the sort of thing I got involved in back during the Vietnamese War with the South Vietnamese government. We were doing an awful lot of things together with both sides coming at it from a different angle. There was a lot of expertise in doing this.*

PIERCE: The trick is: can you identify what the other parties' interests are, what do they

really need? What do you have that doesn't cost you much that they really need? There's nothing strange about this. This is classic diplomatic practice and we did a lot of it. But again I think we were dealing from a situation where both parties were motivated to make it work.

*Q: Did you get involved at all or cross paths with the missing-in-action operation that we were doing looking for dead servicemen?*

PIERCE: We certainly talked with them and worked with them. They eventually opened an office in Hanoi, close to the time that I left, I think in the last few months that I was there, they were there. That as you know then became a fairly big operation rather quickly. Again the Vietnamese were motivated to work with it and make it happen. There were some remains found while I was there. I didn't handle it, they flew people in to handle it. Although we had no official relations with the Vietnamese government, we had the equivalent of a significant embassy/INS operation in Vietnam virtually every working day of the year.

*Q: How about your officers who came in, both INS and consular officers? Did they stay a fairly long time?*

PIERCE: A couple did. Some of the older ones, the more senior ones, had served in Vietnam and had Vietnamese. The younger ones got Vietnamese, acquired it through training, but had not been old enough to serve in Vietnam.

*Q: I was wondering were there any marriages or anything out of that operation?*

PIERCE: Not that I remember. I think there might have been one in the voluntary agency community.

*Q: Was there any sign of, it was still during this time of the Soviet, not Russian, Soviet presence. I mean were you aware or was this almost a thing of the past by this time?*

PIERCE: There were still a lot of signs of the Russian or Soviet connection there, everything from inlaid mother-of-pearl icons to nesting dolls and other kinds of tourist things that people had. One of my stronger memories—I think it was in Hanoi—one of the first nights, the interior ministry people invited us to a show. The show was all Vietnamese in the hotel, and all but two of the songs were Russian. Clearly they had done this before for the Russians and they attempted at the end of the show to do “Home on the Range” and “You are my Sunshine” for the Americans in the crowd, which was all of us, which was nice. It was touching. But, you know, it was fascinating to watch Vietnamese, North Vietnamese performers doing Russian stuff and then watch them visibly shift to an American theme. Of course they hadn't done for a while, if they'd ever done it before. Clearly, if not the orbit, then the focus of their external attention was changing. I got there in '89 and you recall what happened in '89, Cape Town, and a few other things.

*Q: Yes, well, by '92 there was no more a Soviet Union.*

PIERCE: Right. There were books about the Hermitage, lots of things. It was clear that they were in a transition, that they were trying to move in a very different direction from where they had been.

*Q: Did you have any feel for relations with the People's Republic of China?*

PIERCE: Very little. But the South Koreans looked at China in historic terms as the older brother, those guys really running the show now. The Vietnamese people were not unlike people in Barbados: more British than the British. The Vietnamese were better Mandarins and more scholarly and more Buddhist. I certainly got a sense that they did not regard the Chinese in any stage in their history as their tutors; they were better than that. It's just a feel that I got from it, but it didn't come across as hostility. It's just, hey, we're us. And that's them. We don't really have much to do with them, even though in structuring and a lot of other ways it's a Semitic society, despite the fact that it's got a Western alphabet and language structure. I listened to it and it's clearly strong in its instructions. It's sound bits the same way the Chinese, Thai, and other languages of the Chinese origin are.

*Q: Did you pick up any of the North/South bit within Vietnam?*

PIERCE: Oh, all the time.

*Q: I mean this didn't start in our time?*

PIERCE: No. But I think you certainly had different perspectives; it was not something much different than a Texan and from a Bostonian, in the sense. I think whatever was there in the past was regarded as variations on a theme, not a major cause of separation. To the extent that the Vietnamese believe this, it's all one Vietnam.

*Q: Did you have, were you aware of was there any movement within the American, I would say conservative community or within the American Vietnamese community that was sort of opposed to having any business at all to deal with the Vietnamese or were you on the side of the angels and so this didn't occur?*

PIERCE: I certainly heard some of that when we came back and we'd go to Vietnamese restaurants. We'd see Vietnamese people exceedingly happy that people were getting out. Most of them had relatives or friends or both that were affected by the order and departure programs, and obviously the more people the happier they were. Every fourth or fifth store in Orange County was shipping stuff back to Vietnam. So, there was economic or resource involvement of families.

I think the only thing that I detected in terms of bristling was that if you used the word Ho Chi Minh City in the presence of people who had been driven out of South Vietnam they would be very upset. They would insist it was Saigon. There was visceral anger at that or

denial that that's what it was. Clearly there was suspicion about whether this transformation was genuine or not. People who have had relatives locked up for a decade or more are entitled to be suspicious. Are they really going to let them out?

*Q: What did you call Ho Chi Minh City and Saigon? How did that work out? Did people trip over that?*

PIERCE: When we were there it was interchangeable, except in official communications. We had no official relations, but when we would talk to them we were trying to use what they wanted us to use. As far as we were concerned it was their city, they get to call it whatever they want. We didn't make an issue of it. Clearly when you're talking to an American Vietnamese, I mean there's a political issue.

*Q: Was there much interest when you came back to Bangkok in what you were doing or in a way was Vietnam sort of off the map as far as political reporting and all that was going?*

PIERCE: We weren't in the political reporting business. We did do some stuff particularly on the economic side, observations that anybody who walked in there could have made. We were not there as political reporting officers and if we had tried to do that it would have probably compromised what we were doing, but certainly the economic side was of considerable interest because people were trying to figure out what was going on. The Thai also had a very strong interest that these numbers in Vietnam go up and go up as fast as possible. One Vietnamese who went directly to the States or Australia or some other place was one that wasn't going to come to their shores. Thailand was sitting with a residual population of 100,000 that they didn't want anyway. The sooner we could induce them to go back the better. They didn't care where they went as long as they didn't stay in Thailand. Yes, the Thai were interested in that. One of the things that we did, instead of me and our group going in and negotiating, occasionally we brought the Vietnamese out; we paid for them to come out to Bangkok. That was deliberate on our part because we wanted them—without ever saying a word—to make some mental comparisons. It was a useful exercise, because we had a number of them say, "You know before this war started, Saigon and Hanoi were both the real gems of Southeast Asia and now we're back, we're going to look at that."

*Q: Did they make any vows or tell you that they wouldn't make the same mistake about traffic?*

PIERCE: Actually because people were complaining that it took an hour to get from here to there, that we could have walked it twice as fast, they said, "Yes, we want some of that traffic pollution and congestion." Joking, but somewhat serious, saying, you know, we wish we had to deal with those problems, but we're not there yet.

*Q: Were you picking up the feeling though as you did this and moving toward the election of '92 and all the recognition was just a matter of it was going to happen between the two*



*countries?*

PIERCE: I think we assumed that. The question of when that was politically feasible in the U.S. was out of my bailiwick. That decision was obviously going to be made by political folks. But I certainly think on the grander scheme of things what we were doing was helping to find points of mutual interest and responsibility, establishing working relationships where we would make promises and deliver on them. I think confidence-building measures are always useful in that kind of situation. I don't think we brought it about. That again was something else, but I don't think we got in the way either.

*Q: Things were just all coming together.*

PIERCE: Frankly, I think the collapse of international communism as an aggressive threat wouldn't have been possible five or ten years earlier. It was no longer, whether it was accurate or not is immaterial, but there was a perception that that was sort of still a threat.

*Q: How about Cameron Bay? I mean we'd had quite a complex there and then the Soviets used it for their fleet?*

PIERCE: I never got there. I know that there was some discussion with the Vietnamese about offering to rent it to us for something at some point.

*Q: To take the place of the Philippines.*

PIERCE: Exactly. They saw an opportunity. I think the emotional baggage probably was a little too heavy. I remember it being bandied about, and even then they were starting to get people, Americans, who fought in Vietnam to come back and look at where they fought. I won't say the Vietnamese were welcomed them with open arms, but they certainly weren't hostile. They treated them, I think, the way civil war veterans were treated 15 years after the fact when they were all building monuments to each side.

*Q: Yes, comradeship. What about this flight, was there any talk about bringing in charter planes into Hanoi actually to Saigon rather than going up through Bangkok and going straight back to the States?*

PIERCE: I seem to remember some rough talk of that, but there was never as I remember any direct efforts to take people out directly. Now some of the Amerasians did go to the Philippines. I think there were other connections. Part of the problem was that Air Vietnam was still flying Soviet equipment, some of which was pretty unreliable, not maintained to the standards that we would recognize. They weren't crashing them as the Burmese were. They were regarded as unsafe and we really didn't want to use them for the orderly departure process. We didn't want to take that risk of losing a planeload or two. The French and the Thai airways and others who were flying in there to Western standards were very happy that we were running through there. I'm going to need to stop.

*Q: Yes, this is a good time to stop at this point and we're up now to '92 and whither, I like to put it at the end.*

PIERCE: Senior Seminar.

*Q: Senior Seminar. All right, we'll pick this up in '92 when you're off to the Senior Seminar.*

\*\*\*

*Today is October 8, 1999, David, Senior Seminar?*

PIERCE: The Senior Seminar.

*Q: You were there from '92 to '93? How did you find that? I was class of '17. What were you?*

PIERCE: '35, almost, a little more than double that and their current class of '42. I just sat in on something this morning over there. It's a good program. It's got potential to be a lot more than it often is, in my humble opinion. My personal feeling is that it's too late to teach some of the stuff, like management. The Department has since gone into a management program to define management capabilities and build a platform. But when I took it even then management leadership training and that kind of thing were not really highly regarded. You have to be a little concerned when you hear for the first six weeks of an endeavor, "Well, this is the best and the brightest and this is where the best and the brightest go."

Unfortunately the Seminar in my judgment—with all the good things about it—suffers from not having the kind of training it should have all the way through the years. Training, as you know, is generally disregarded in the State Department. It comes too late. Contrast with the Capstone course which I took in '94. It's only six weeks, during which the military tries—as they usually do—to feed people with a firehouse. You know, they dump stuff all over you, all this information, and hope you survive it. It's a much faster pace, but you're not trying to teach people new tricks. What you're trying to do is to turn them from being technical professional specialists into broader gauged stinkers.

*Q: Capstone for flag officers.*

PIERCE: Capstone is what you do with baby brigadiers, brand new one stars, basically. The Senior Seminar could be like that. I think somewhere in the middle would probably be better. I think the pace in the Senior Seminar is very extensive. You've got a lot of time to think and talk. It's very much driven by the interests and desire and the drive of the people involved. All of that is okay, but I'm not sure it is what the Department needs. It needs, for the next century, to train its people to reach the top of the peak, as in Capstone. What should have been a lifetime of training is not. Now, with that said, it's a

great year, it's a fun year, you do a lots of neat stuff and you get to interact with issues and things that you don't normally do.

*Q: Well, I thought particularly the exposure to the United States, getting around and talking to people in the United States was particularly good. I mean when I did it they weren't even talking about management. This was back in '74 or '75, but we did get around, particularly since most of us had been immersed, myself I spent almost my entire career abroad. It was good to get out and talk and see the inner city of Detroit and things of that nature.*

PIERCE: I think that's valuable, but less of value now given the fact that you've got hundreds of people who have spent a year or two in the Pierson programs. Many of them have not just gone up to the Hill to work for congressmen, but have been plugged in to local and state governments. I also think there are other ways to do that. If it were the only rationale then I think you would not stand or fall on that.

The other part of the problem is the division between state and local outside the Beltway and inside the Beltway. The fact is when you go overseas, and you are receiving visitors from places, it's not just federal officials who are traveling. You've got a lot of American citizens moving around at all levels, young and old and everything in-between. Increasingly you've got a whole bunch of state and local mayors, governors, and the rest of the legislatures coming out. I saw that in Korea, Thailand, and South Africa. I didn't see much in the Sudan. I wonder why that was. I don't wonder, I mean.

What I'm getting at is the notion that there's the U.S., and then there's every place else, is breaking down, in part, because of the trade and investment flows. You have states aggressively going after investment flows in ways that put international companies on the same par regarding degree and intensity of commitment and involvement. Across the Internet, there's more communication, more interaction than before. It's not that I don't think it's a good idea, it is. But the military does not try to do that with their Capstone. They're trying to show the generals in this specialty, submarines, the jewels of the crown, the rest of the crown, as it were. They're not really trying to get people to understand the relationship between domestic and foreign policy. That's an area where I think they should focus.

*Q: Supposedly the War College would do that.*

PIERCE: Increasingly you find that our challenges are not battles like Kuwait, but peace keeping, messy peace-keeping interactions that involve reserves or the National Guard and have humanitarian, military and diplomatic components. I think we need to rethink not just the Senior Seminar, but the whole training. What they've done is a good step, but I think we need to do a lot more in part to retain people and in part to train people from inside and make sure that they're up to this.

*Q: You left in what, it would be '93?*

PIERCE: I left in '93.

*Q: And then what?*

PIERCE: Let me talk a little bit about this. We were exposed to one of the new economic policy gurus of the Clinton administration, the incoming Clinton administration. We got one-on-one interviews with pretty much all of them over a couple of days up in the Old Executive Office Building and Treasury. Meeting all of the new economic policy makers was a lot of fun. I should have been more alert to it although I wasn't.

One of the things that strikes me now in retrospect and bothered us a little bit was a meeting with I think it was Alice Rivlin. Alice's parting words to us as she walked out the door, were, "You know, you people don't get it." She said to the Senior Seminar (of which less than half are State Department people), "You know, you people at the State Department, how come you have a majority of white males in this group? You guys get with it, you got to get with the diversity program."

Of course, part of it was the fact that she didn't understand, she didn't read enough of the briefing papers to understand that we were several agencies and not just State. But the other part of it was the assumption that she could look out over the room and, without asking questions, without knowing what was going on, make rational decisions about the composition of the group, what we thought, or how we acted simply by the way we looked.

*Q: She was director of the budget, wasn't it, OMB?*

PIERCE: She had been, that's right, but she had been at CBO before.

*Q: Congressional Budget Office.*

PIERCE: Congressional Budget Office, that's right. She was brought in to OMB. I've talked a little bit about my background in cross-cultural ethnic relations and putting out fires and helping in building communities. I was the guy who organized the program in Los Angeles, the first time the Seminar had ever been in Los Angeles. We went in six months after the riots. You remember the riots in South Central and all of that? In four days we hit every level, business, newspapers, different ethnic and other approaches that cut at that city. But the heart of what we did was a mile from Ground Zero, Florence and Normandy in Los Angeles. I set up groups of five to go to each of the six different ethnic neighborhoods, within that mile radius. The point I wanted to get them to understand was the incredible diversity that had developed in Los Angeles in the last decade really. We then brought those folks together with some other community leaders and mixed and matched so that at every table we had for the lunch discussion one person who had seen the community and one that had seen another community, and so on. They watched and talked and shared what they had learned with each other. It was a fascinating experience.

It was like taking the six blind men that are feeling different parts of the elephant and putting them at a table. They're still blind, but they can describe. They're now sitting around trying to figure out what is this beast that they have encountered. It was fascinating to watch. What emerged was really a lot of insight into the dynamics of the city, and into what happens in a truly multiracial and multiethnic society that's just gone through an awful lot of trauma. It was electrifying to a whole lot of people. Talk about exposure to the domestic U.S. now. We do this overseas. We understand this, but we don't think often about how this plays out at home. My intent was to get them plugged in as deeply as I could. Now because I had trained in the '70s I had a lot of contacts. I knew how to set it up and I was able to do it. It was truly electrifying. It was the seminal experience of that Seminar and it changed everybody.

Unfortunately at the same time while I was in Los Angeles, something else started that has put me on a seven-year odyssey. Again it was related to the question of diversity. While I was gone, I was on a short list to be selected as DCM to Helsinki. We traveled to LA, then Mexico and Texas, and came back. I called the ambassador, Ambassador [John H.] Kelly, in Helsinki, to see if he had made a decision. He said, "Well, a funny thing about that. I had picked you from the short list, but then I got a call from Mary Ryan telling me that you'd already been assigned and wouldn't I like to have her former DCM as my DCM. So, I said, okay, I've just heard this from Mary Ryan and this is a funny way to run a railroad. I'll be glad to take her, but I'll be equally glad to take Pierce, but do something. Get off the dime, assign somebody."

In the first cable when he had selected me, he had actually formally selected me. He read me pieces of that, but not all of it, This is really important later on, and you'll see why. He read the piece where he goes on and on and on about my background and why I was his choice, why he wanted me and how good I would be for him. The problem was that this woman wasn't on the short list. She had, in fact, already been assigned as the DCM in Yaoundé. I heard about this. I went and saw Mary Ryan. I saw Peter Burly, I saw Johnny Young and they all told me that Kelly said in his cables that from the beginning he had preferred her, that he preferred her and that he really didn't prefer me. I said, "But that's not what he read to me. That's not what he just told me on the phone." They said, "Well, he's lying to you, that's not what he said." I said, "Well, let's pull the cables, let's look at it. He gave me the cable numbers." They wouldn't do it. They're director general cables, director general channel cables. So, the upshot was, this was the first of seven incidents. I found out five years later that the cables which they withheld from me said the following: They said, "all I've told you which is I like this guy, he's the best, this is why he's going to be good for me and this is why I look forward to him being assigned." The next paragraph said, however, "I'm really upset. I wanted a woman or minority DCM and you didn't give me that option, because you sent me a list of four white males." Remember the timing: December of 1992. Clinton has been elected. Clinton is running a platform of "let's make the government look like America," and a whole bunch of people including the folks that I mentioned are all scrambling to get their places in the new administration and they all succeeded. So, everybody is trying to line up behind the

diversity bandwagon.

What happened was, when that cable hit Washington, Mary Ryan saw it. Now Mary Ryan was not supposed to see it, because it was a DG channel message. Mary was the PDAS in Europe, the EUR bureau. But she and Johnny Young were old friends. They used to work in personnel together. She finds out about it. She and Johnny talk about it. Johnny is the head of personnel assignments. She calls Kelly and says, “you know this guy is not available, but you can have her

I hadn’t been assigned to anything. I hadn’t been proposed for anything. So, he comes back and sends the cable, that second cable. It says, you know “I’m really pissed off.” He didn’t use those words. But I’m really angry that I wasn’t given the opportunity to have a woman or minority. But he did say what I said, “equally happy to have either one.”

On the basis of that, Peter Burly sends a memo around to the DCM committee members telling them that Kelly has sent the director general a message choosing this other person as his DCM and would you approve it by phone and he did. They never saw the paperwork, they never saw the cables. Now, that memo based on what I discovered five years later having been withheld from me is a bald-faced lie. There’s no nicer way to describe it. Mary Ryan herself was a member of a class-action case against the Department, the women’s class action. Mary Ryan now wants women as DCMs in Europe, and that’s what she was doing, that’s what she was helping to happen. You can reconstruct the conversation, I’m pretty sure it went something like this. She goes down and she says to Johnny, “here we’ve got a guy who wants a woman and you didn’t give him the opportunity, make it happen.” So, they did. There’s only a slight problem with that: it’s against the law. It is a gross violation of our own procedures, the published procedures on how to do this. If the four white males were not acceptable, Kelly cannot come back and say what he said, “You sent me four white males.” He can come back and say, “hey, none of these guys is qualified, send me another list.” That’s not what he did. Those are the published procedures. In their haste to do this thing they took my race and my gender, the fact that I would not help their diversity statistics, and knocked me out of a job. I stayed assigned to the Senior Seminar. I was not formally reassigned to the Senior Seminar until December of 1994.

*Q: Good God!*

PIERCE: If I had wanted to play the system right, I mean if I had wanted to be obnoxious about it, I would have simply stayed at the Senior Seminar and let them send me the paycheck. Pru Bushnell asked me to help her out because she was having a big problem with Sudan. I had done a presentation on Sudan to the Seminar. Having served there, I knew something about it. I described the situation that Sudan is slow-motion genocide, which it is, and it impressed her. She was going to be the DAS, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the African Bureau. She had a problem because the person who had been the Sudan coordinator got sick all of a sudden and she couldn’t get John Burrows on board fast enough so she asked me to help her and cover it for six weeks and set up something.

We had to do a thing in Geneva to set up a conference of donors because we were trying to get all the donors together on coordinating Sudan policy because they were being their usual obnoxious, obstructive selves in trying to do everything to stop the flows of food and medicine into Southern Sudan. Nothing new from when I was there. It's the same stuff. They continue to do it today. Sorry if that sounds too outspoken.

*Q: No, no, no.*

PIERCE: That is the reality. Pru Bushnell asked me to do that. I did it and I took John Burrows. I did all the organizing. John didn't know anything about it when he got to Geneva, but he was the head of the delegation. By the end of the week he knew everything about it. We came on a plane back to Washington, got here Saturday night or Sunday morning, it must have been Saturday night. Sunday afternoon we got the word that the 18 soldiers were killed in Somalia. David Chin asked me to come in and help him cover. He did the day shift and I did the night shift. We did four weeks of a task force in the Op Center.

*Q: Could you explain what the situation is, because somebody reading this will read this much later and could you tell what the situation was in Somalia?*

PIERCE: I'll do that in just a second, let me just finish the time frame so you know what I was doing. The point is I'm still officially assigned to the Senior Seminar although informally I'm working flat out for the Africa Bureau, first on Sudan and then on Somalia. I did that for several months, helping out David Chin who had been the Director of EAF the East African Affairs. Then when Haiti blew up I got tagged to the Haiti task force. I was the director of that task force for both ARA, what was then ARA and RB, the Refugee Bureau, yet still assigned to the Senior Seminar a year later.

Then they had a problem in EPS [Economic Policy Staff] with the leadership. They had both the deputy and director leave on them. They asked me to do that and four or five months into that job they finally retroactively assigned me to the Africa Bureau. Five minutes after they did that they then assigned me to go to Cape Town the following summer. In the meantime what happened to me on the Helsinki job happened six more times where I had people tell me flat out in plain English, "we want to have you, we'd love to have you, but we have to have a woman, we basically have to have a woman and you don't help our diversity sum." After seven of those incidents, I filed an EEO complaint in February of '94 because it wasn't getting any better, it was getting worse.

*Q: EEO being?*

PIERCE: Equal Employment Opportunity. Two months after I filed it, I filed the complaint after an open-forum meeting, an open-house meeting in which the director general said, "you know, in fact, there's no other way to get where we want to go—which is to have a Department that looks like America—unless we do this with preferences for everybody, in effect, but white males. That's what the legal advisor to the Department

said, and it was quoted in States Magazine, that called for quotas. It said, “he didn’t say quotas.” He said, “well, I don’t believe in quotas because if they’re rigid kinds of things. You know, it simply won’t do for me to walk into any office in this building and not see at least two people who look like me.” He was black. You had this in-your-face, very strong statement. The director general a month later published a whole thing on how our diversity goals were to make the Department look like America. Again, there’s no basis in law for that, but that’s another story. The point is I filed the complaint and I’ll stop with this because it’s a long process and I don’t want to spend a lot of time on that, but to get it out of the way.

*Q: Okay, as background, we’ll come back to that.*

PIERCE: Two months after I filed the complaint, Dick Moose, the Under Secretary for Management, turned over my name and the entire 20-page text of my complaint to the Washington Post. So, there was the story in the Washington Post that named me. The reporter never contacted me, he never even tried apparently. Basically it looked like an attempt to try to intimidate me from saying anything else to anybody else. He said, that they were afraid of what might happen. They’d been sued by the women, sued by the blacks and they were about to be sued by white guys. I mean, that was what he said. Not exactly a positive atmosphere to work in, but that is the administrative side, just to close that out.

The Department which had a legal obligation to investigate all of this within six months stonewalled for several years, did not investigate at all for years until I finally after I got back from Cape Town and retained a lawyer as I was getting ready to leave Cape Town. At that point and only at that point did they go outside and hire an outside investigator to do the investigation. It was a result of that investigation that I, for the first time, saw those cables and other smoking guns that were in there. The hearing occurred last year in November of 1998 to an EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission]. It started in November and ended in January, under an EEOC administrative law judge. It’s been with the judge since February. It could be another year or more before we hear what they’re going to say.

*Q: What would be the result of this? What would this dismiss? What would they do?*

PIERCE: Well, the law is actually quite clear. I have to simply show that they considered race or gender in their decision. They’re up-front and they deny it now, but the fact is their writing makes it real clear that they considered it and that’s contemporaneous writing. Even though they deny it now under oath, the writing speaks for itself. Once that’s established and it’s also established that statistically they have the burden of proof for showing that they would have made the same decision otherwise, in other words if the other person were more qualified than I was. Since they had trouble even identifying the qualifications, that may be a problem for them. Obviously it’s not over until it’s over, but my assumption is that the combination of direct evidence is very rare. In this case we have it, it’s in the record. The clear statistical and other evidence will lead to a judgment



that in fact I was discriminated against.

They're going to have to bring me back into the Department. They're going to have to give back pay. These are things that are automatic because there's a set of guidelines in EEOC issues as to what constitutes bringing me back to status quo. But not only to status quo. They have to bring me to the point where I would have been had this not occurred. That could mean that they put me in one of the jobs that I bid on and that I was rejected from, or something similar. It could mean that they would have to put me in something that is akin to what the people who did get those jobs have now. So, we'll see. I suspect that up until a few months ago they would have had the option—as agencies do—to simply reject what the EEOC said and force me to go to court or go to appeal to the EEOC.

The EEOC just won a Supreme Court decision backed by the Justice Department that if the EEOC says “fix it,” the agencies have to fix it. The burden is on them. They have to go back because, in other words, the weight has shifted to the EEOC. I expect to get a judgment of liability. I expect that at a minimum they will have to bring me back to status quo, which means that I'll have three or four years of time left for a competition to the MC [Minister Counselor] grade. Now since the statistics show unequivocally, even their statistics show this, and their experts agreed that there was discrimination in the key year of my promotion, it's possible that they may be instructed to promote me to the next grade anyway. It won't be the first time that's happened. As you may know, that's what happened to the women in their settlement; I think there were 21 of them promoted to that grade. So, it's not like that they can't do it. In this case though both the women and the blacks, the black Foreign Service Officers, both the Palmer and the Thomas cases, the settlements that they reached were a result of their going directly to court, they did not go through the EEOC. I've gone through the EEOC because I don't want them to do to me what they did to Alison Palmer, which is, bankrupt her. They have unlimited lawyers. They can do whatever they want with an unlimited budget to pursue this. I don't. Now, if I do get a judgment of discrimination—and I suspect I will—the Department is going to have a fairly acute problem on its hands because they will not want to let that stand.

*Q: It would be a whole series of other cases?*

PIERCE: There could be. The Department has withheld a whole lot of data and information, I think. Look, I've spent my whole career off and on helping people resolve stuff, resolve conflicts. So, if I can get the Department at some point to actually sit down and talk to me, somebody like the Director General to actually go through this and take the prisms off, take the “we have to do this and we have to do that,” take the political piece out of it and say, “how do we actually do this to make it healthy for the Service as a whole and get beyond this mess that they have made of it,” that would be a good thing. There are a lot of things that I think we could do and I'm anxious to work with them on this.

They basically will not let me talk to the DG. I've asked and they have said no. Okay. I

think when they get a judgment against them then they're going to be wanting to talk. At that point, they will have lost a whole lot of leverage and I think they're going to be in a world of hurt. It's also true that this is probably going to happen fairly close to the time when the new administration, or whoever it is, is coming in and that new administration even if it is democrats, I think, may have a different slant on what's going on. We'll see. It will be an interesting thing to watch. Stay tuned. I promise to come back and talk to you after the result of this.

*Q: Please do.*

PIERCE: Just like the Palmer and Thomas cases are part of the Department's history. The Department has a very sorry history in this respect. I'll tell you what the history comes from.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

PIERCE: Chris Edley is the Harvard law professor who is one of the prime movers in the president's "mend-it-don't-end-it" response on affirmative action. He doesn't do affirmative action, that's just what he's come into in the last few years, but he said this morning, "you know there is this basic human tendency to associate with your own kind, whatever that is. We do that. Well why not? He's saying that some institutions have the job to really cross those lines. That's another issue. I think that's true. The core problem in the Foreign Service personnel system is, as long as it is a network-based assignment system, there's no systematic effort to find everybody who is qualified for that position, or to even define what the qualifications are, let alone find the people who have them. You just don't do that. The fact is if the special prosecutor tried to indict the State Department from using the merit system there wouldn't be enough evidence to convince even a star grand jury that there was. We try a little more on admissions when people enter the Service, but we really don't do it. That's not how we do assignments. We do assignments by networking and we even say so.

The problem with the networking system is it's like a fraternity or sorority system. It will replicate itself for precisely the reason that Chris Edley talked about this morning. There is a tendency to hang around with the folks who are like you. The reason, in that situation, unless you change that system, and work toward a system where you really attempt to do merit systems. I was really trying to define it, whose got good skills, what can they really do, quantify it, put it down there and deal with that, you're not going to get anything like a normal distribution. The only way you're going to get from where you are with this in effect network, old boy, old girl and everything else, old bureau networks, networks all over the place. The only way to get a normal distribution in a bureau or across the Department is to move past that to merit systems and if you don't do that, if you don't change the underlying networking process the only other way to get it is quotas. That's the reality and the problem the Department's had. So, we go for what looks like quotas. We say, okay every bureau, it's the Eagleburger rule, every bureau has got to have a female or minority DAS. Okay. All of a sudden, voilà, you can see the numbers. All of a

sudden, track the number, look in the phone number. It's real simple, it's all public. All of a sudden every bureau or almost every bureau's got a female or minority DAS. If you track the personnel numbers, the position numbers, it turns out that that female DAS is replaced by another female DAS, is replaced by another female DAS. Now is that quotas? Operationally, it sure is. Do we admit it? Absolutely not because they're illegal. We do the expedient thing, the thing to get by. We do the shortcut because we're not prepared to do what we really are in fact required to do by law. The Foreign Service Act does not make the merit system to use the merit system principles as an option, it's not a recommendation, it is you shall. That means you better do it. That means it's a requirement. I feel like I'm preaching, but I've been in this odyssey for seven years.

*Q: I know, I can imagine.*

PIERCE: There's a lot more than I should have learned on this. The truth is—given my background in racial and cross cultural, and given my background in helping pull people together, and EEO work, you probably don't find too many white boys who have volunteered to be EEO officers and counselors in big embassies who thought it was important to do that and did it. It is a lifetime commitment of mine. It is something that started very early. My family and my school and my community which was integrated, not all of it, but large pieces of it and I certainly was that way. It is to me a core-value issue; it is not something that I could walk away from.

*Q: No. Well, obviously a lot of unresolved issues on this and unfortunately we're a lot of patchwork. Illegal patchwork at that.*

PIERCE: That's what Chris said this morning. You know, he said, "This is shortcuts and that's what gets you in trouble. And the people who are defending it are not prepared to acknowledge the shortcuts. They say you got it, you got it. There are legitimate moral concerns here. If you're going to have a policy to post people together in a values level, you have to address those real concerns. Those are real concerns of displacement and real concerns of issues. It happens that the law is in a pretty good place at this point because it does require you to think about what you're doing. It does require there to be a compelling interest, a compelling government interest. Doing what you want to do and what you have to do has to be narrowly tailored to achieve that objective without unduly damaging other people. Unfortunately the way the Department has played this game has been to cut corners every time.

*Q: And to obstruct when challenged.*

PIERCE: Sure. As the lawyers have said, "Us, no, we didn't do that, of course not, of course not." Well, the problem is a lot of these folks, especially in the early days of the transition, in the first few months, were up-front and direct in what they wrote and said. Even in '94, and even today, if you open the Foreign Service exam booklet today, the first words after it says Foreign Service Exam, the next thing it says, "We are committed to a Foreign Service that looks like America or that reflects the diversity of the American

people.”

How do you get there from there? How do you get to that without making race- and gender-conscious decisions, not just expanding the pool, but shrinking, choosing from that pool down to here. If you're not race- and gender-conscious and you have a networked based system, you'll never get there. You'll never achieve it without doing illegal quotas or quasi quotas. That's the reality and that's the reality that they don't want to confront. It's so much easier to just do it, and claim you didn't, than it is to actually do it right. There's a sickness here that will come to haunt people. It will cause a whole lot of problems, long-term problems unless we can get past this consensus that we do it, but we lie about it. My hope is that we really make an attempt to do it right. I hope I can contribute to that process, but we'll see. Anyway, enough said, we'll see what happens.

*Q: Okay, that's fine, let's go on. Let's see how this comes out. It's a very important issue of course and it's one that's being wrestled with. I'm not even sure it's being wrestled with. It's just been patched. The Department of State's gotten pretty good at this sort of thing.*

PIERCE: Well, I realize that management is not our middle name, but we can learn. Even old dogs can learn some new tricks. We are, in fact, with this Y2K business, learning how to do contingency planning and risk assessment. It's not just a mechanical component. There's a political component. The decisions are whether you pull out now, or draw down personnel. Of course you have to tell people. We've already been through the drill of doing consular sheets and information sheets. Policy and resources are wrapped up together in these things as indeed they are in most issues.

You know, one of our other problems is we tend to specialize. Well, I'm a policy person. I write papers for a living or I manage things. You really need to be good at both. The more we interface with the military the more we learn. I'm thinking of Somalia and Haiti, and other places where you have these mixed non-classic World War II peace battles, or Kuwait. Kosovo, Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, I could keep going. These are all messy, nasty, interconnected, political humanitarian military lash ups. They don't mean that we can rely on the military to do our work for us. We have to be as good and as professional in the peace that we bring to the table and in our interaction as they are. That means we've got to learn some new habits, too and learn some new skills.

One of the more frustrating things I think for our military colleagues is to come to the table with us in trying to respond to a problem where they got checklists a mile long, all computerized. They get down to the checklist and there's this input from State, policy guidance. But we're not ready to fit that in there. They go, uh, and you've got a problem. We have to do a better job and we will. I think we're learning, unfortunately sometimes the hard way, but these are challenges that are critical. When you try to specialize, and separate policy from resources and operations and from separate political and military and diplomatic and military and humanitarian, you realize that's just not realistic in today's world. That's not what we're doing and we just need to be better at it.

*Q: Let's go to Somalia.*

PIERCE: Somalia. Perfect example.

*Q: Could you explain the background and all because somebody won't know?*

PIERCE: Okay. The background in Somalia is this. Somalia is not a case of ethnic diversity clashing against each other, religious. As far as I can tell there are no religious, ethnic, religious or racial or other kinds of divides in Somalia. They all speak the same language. They all are kind of interrelated. But there are clans with two major protagonists in the Somali fight, pretenders to leadership after the former president I think was killed.

*Q: No, I think he just left, Siad Barre.*

PIERCE: Siad Barre died. Anyway.

*Q: I thought he just died. It was a vacuum.*

PIERCE: It was a leadership vacuum that two people tried to fill, each from a different clan. In most normal years, Somalia is a food exporter, it produces a surplus of food. It can not only feed itself, but other people, too. What happened was that the battles got nasty and ugly, as happens in many places. Each side was trying to use food as a weapon, to deny food to the other side's folks in the hopes of reducing the military pressure on them, on the people who were doing the denying. What you had was fairly widespread starvation or risk of starvation, serious humanitarian disaster problems. Remember this comes in '92, only seven years since the massive outflow of people from Ethiopia into Sudan which produced Band-Aid and all these horrific pictures. It's been less time since Operation Lifeline in the Sudan began. It's the same neighborhood basically, East Africa.

In the first week or so after they lost the election, the Bush administration decided that this humanitarian situation in Somalia was something that they could do something about. They had a very limited objective: to go in with the marines in a heavy fashion and break the stalemate that was leading to massive humanitarian risks or casualties. In other words, break the logjam of each side's using food as a weapon, get in the middle of them and force them. Now you are the biggest player on the block and could wipe out anybody who challenged you, which they did. They went in extremely heavy and said, "okay, you guys are going to play nice now."

Bob Oakley was the political advisor, the political brains. I remember very distinctly watching Bob Oakley on video, watching him have Aidid on the stage. It was a CNN video, announcing the cease-fire, where they were going to allow food convoys to flow. They shook hands and smiled at each other. All of that happened within a very short space of time, within a few weeks. There was a problem, however. The problem is how

you disengage from something like that. We went in with the concept that we would do what just happened, what I described to you: get them to the point, give them a chance, calm down, let's stop starving people, let's get the food flowing. You guys come in and we can shift this to a more diplomatic process.

The problem, of course, is having intervened heavy like this, if we then pull out, their tendency might be to go right back to where they were. The new administration—not yet in power, but very soon to be in power in January—made the decision. They implemented it almost immediately, to not only stay for a little while, and not just leave because they didn't want to be tarred. If it all fell apart, they didn't want to be blamed. They didn't want the comparison: Bush went in, and nothing happened; you left, and all hell broke loose. Here's where I think the problem emerged. They started talking about nation building. At the same time they were talking about nation building, we're going to build these people up and we're going to use the UN to do it. Now you are replacing, in effect, a single tightly organized U.S. command force that is very heavy and not to be messed with. You're going to draw these people out in order to get the boys home in a reasonable amount of time and replace them with UN people. Now the UN is not what you might call a unitary actor. It is a collection of people. While we've got some political leadership there, it is a committee. In the field it's still a committee in the sense that it does not have quite the unitary command and control. The UN's just not good at that. What happened was, we expanded the goals of the operation for what we wanted out of it. We didn't want to just be able to walk away having handed the problem visibly back to them and then watch it explode. We wanted to make this a test case for the new policy on how we're going to use the UN to do this stuff for us. And by the way we'll take our troops out or leave some, but not many, the Pakistanis for this and that and the other.

The problem was that you've expanded the goals, but you've reduced our commitment of resources. And you've left the leadership in much less coherent command and control situation than you had before. Not surprisingly, both Aidid and Ali Mahdi took advantage of the situation. The UN pushed back. There's a scene fairly early on where the Pakistanis, or somebody, came in, one of the peacekeepers, the blue helmets were pinned down at the airport. They certainly weren't going to fight their way out of the airport. A couple of months later the UN decided that they were going to disarm people. Now, if the decision was going to be made to occupy the country and take over, to take the arms away from the combatants, that's a decision that probably should have been made when the marines were there and heavy. But that's a decision we were not prepared to make. That's a real question whether it was a wise thing to make that decision when you didn't have force majeure and you didn't have massive force, and you had multinational folks in blue helmets trying to do this. The upshot was that the Pakistanis tried to go into an arms cache in July, I think it was, and the defenders of the arms cache killed 25 Pakistanis in the attempt.

Now remember the timing of this, this was July or so of '93. One of the first controversies that the Clinton administration has was over gays in the military. They're vulnerable on this issue, politically vulnerable, because it is a draft-dodging issue. They

felt vulnerable. The response I think was to talk tough. Clinton goes on television. We want some more troops. We sent more people back out there. Now the issue is mission creep. We've gone from giving the combatants a break—so that they can resolve the problem—and then we leave.

*Q: This is tape six, side one with David Pierce.*

PIERCE: So, now in Somalia we have a bad guy. Our task is to get him because he's the one who is interfering with our grandiose plans to nation build. Not gradually, but pretty aggressively we get into the business of trying to capture him. This effort in September, over a couple of months, escalated. We kept putting more people in. A couple of Black Hawk helicopters full of people attempted to snatch him in the middle of the afternoon where they had a report that he was in a hotel.

The attempt was beset by a host of problems. First of all, it's daylight. Whatever force advantages they had from being capable of working at night are wasted in the daylight. Secondly it's an urban area. Third, you don't have a backup. You have no way to get him out if something goes wrong. The Black Hawks are marvelous instruments out in the open desert, as are Apaches and other kinds of things. They're not too good in urban areas where some guy with an AK47 can bring them down. And that's what happened.

Suddenly there are 10,000 Somalis. You're dealing with a country here. Somalis, like Zulus, Koreans, and a few others are people that pride themselves on their—for want of a better word—macho desire, a willingness to get mixed up in a fight. As Bob Oakley or somebody told me, he said, "There aren't that many people in the world that are like this. The Somalis are one of them. If they hear a firefight going on, their response is not to run away, but to run toward the fight and flick off the safety on their AK47 as they go." Talk about force majeure, we're surrounded by an impossible situation. They have heavy vehicles, but they're not ready to roll in and pull him out. It takes hours before that happens. At the end of the day, at the end of this firefight, 18 Americans are dead.

The next day we see pictures of American bodies being dragged around the cities and desecrated by people jumping up and down on them. At that moment the Clinton presidency held by a very thin thread, in my humble opinion. Here was a commander-in-chief who was suspect politically in terms of the military, in terms of his background on the fudging or whatever on the draft dodging issue. He was taking a lot of heat on the gays in the military issue. Now, you've got American boys overseas who are dead. On CNN the situation is portrayed in some ways as being worse than in Vietnam. The potential of that moment was worse than Tet, in my opinion. Because in Tet it didn't put the president's survival in office at that moment in question. This one did. The White House didn't say a whole lot for several days. We're running a task force, or trying to, you know. The task force doesn't make the decisions, but it's an information-gathering point, it's a point where some decisions at the operational level are made.

*Q: This is what you were doing?*

PIERCE: David Chin and I were leading the task force in the State Department at the moment that this happened, yes. We're not making policy at this point. We are the information clearinghouse. The military is obviously not happy with what happened. This was not where they wanted to be. It took several days, six or seven days, before Clinton went public. What he said was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. He said exactly, I think, the right things which is that we will take losses if we have to, this is an important thing to do, we're not going to cut and run.

In fact, what we did was to send marines in there, put enough force in there so that we could get him out on our terms, and not be driven out. Now, that was the right answer, in my humble opinion, but it was a huge problem. I'm trying to give you an idea of what it looked like from the inside in terms of the communication. The old song in the Foreign Service is you don't get to make policy, but sometimes you get a ringside seat. This was a ringside seat. Maybe not ringside at the White House, but it was certainly ringside in the State Department. It was a very difficult four weeks. Very trying kind of thing. I spent a lot of time talking to the people. For the next four months, we eventually moved it down from a task force into the creative special office for Somalia in the Africa Bureau, which we then ran. We had a special coordinator, Jim Dobbins. He came in and did Somalia, and, interestingly enough, did Haiti as well shortly afterwards. In both cases I got involved before he did. This was a very interesting moment, a very challenging, difficult time for the new administration. It's one where, I think, the White House and the folks in leadership realized the depths of the problem that they had, and responded accordingly. They stepped up to the plate and they did well. We can argue about whether it was a smart thing to get into. Hindsight is always much clearer than when we're doing it, but I'm not suggesting that there were ill motives anywhere along. I don't think there were. I do think you had a case of overly ambitious goal-setting. You know, we want this and this and this and this. Yet there was unwillingness to put the actual resources there, and say okay, if we want that, are we willing to pay the price to get that and to define what that price was? I think there was an over reliance on the UN as an instrument to do it. Is this helpful?

*Q: Oh, yes, it is. This is very important because I'm told that during the very recent Kosovo conflict the Yugoslav army leaders were taunting our leaders when we were trying to say we're going to attack you if you don't do nice things in Kosovo. They would taunt us with a number 18 saying that if we pulled out from Kosovo after 18 Americans were dead. In other words, we wouldn't have the guts to do anything. So, this is something that lingered on.*

PIERCE: Oh yes. It was a bad situation. There were no great and wonderful answers that solved all the problems coming out of it. I think, in fact, we got the best we could out of it. The right answer was to go in and reinforce. We did not take any more casualties. There were some people killed in flying accidents offshore, but not there. We did get them out without losing anybody else after that. It was a six-month process to get them out. I think it's also true that we don't have an organizing principle of relationships



similar to what we had during the cold war, which was containment. That one word captured a whole set of strategic and tactical behaviors and patterns that, in fact, proved successful. We don't have anything like it. It was a bipolar world essentially, with the third world attached to it. This is a multilateral, multipolar world.

Despite the fact that we're the sole superpower, like Gulliver, we can't always do what we think we want to do. We don't yet have an organizing principle adequate to handle the complexity of the stuff that we're dealing with. That doesn't mean, however, that we can't deal with it. We have to anyway, we have no choice. Just because we don't have the loadstar yet to work—and we may never get it—we may never get something as clear and as simple and as clean as containment was. When you look at Vietnam and Korea, containment is not really as clean as we'd like it to be there. Anyway, it has ramifications now. I hope we learned something. Look, East Timor is a perfect example as well. It's not us this time, it's a multinational force going to be replaced by a UN force. That also happened in Haiti. The UN doesn't have a real good track record of doing that well. I hope they've learned something from the problems of making that handover from the past because you could have another mess on your hands.

*Q: Well, you then moved from the Somali thing to Haiti. What were you doing there?*

PIERCE: I was on the task force for a month. I put it together. Mark Grossman, who was the executive secretary at the time and who was it, was it Mike Kozak, or somebody else in ARA, and Branson McKinley in RP asked me to be director. They needed a task-level person to do it. I had never been a DAS, but I was fool enough to do it. I had worked in ARA and I had worked in Caribbean affairs before, and I certainly was well known in the refugee bureau. I was pretty well known in both bureaus. They asked me if I'd do it and I said, sure I'll do it. Again I don't have an official assignment, not for lack of trying. I've been trying all along, but nothing. Anyway, I did it and we had two sets of problems. One was the mechanical part, not exactly a neo, but a non-combatant evacuation short of us flying helicopters to take them out. We were working very closely with American and other airlines to get all the Americans out of Haiti who wanted to get out. This was June and July of '93.

*Q: Before the troops?*

PIERCE: Before the troops went in. I think September or October somewhere in there. The military was still there. The military were running the show, but we could see problems coming and there was a confrontation building and we were trying to get Americans out. At the same time the NSC decided that they wanted to try to do boat people screening on the boats. There were outflows of boat people. They waxed and waned depending on what was going on in Haiti and what the perceived opportunity was. They were concerned they didn't have a good way of handling these boat flows. They didn't like the visuals of pushing people back into Haiti at a time when they were, in effect, saying these are dictators and they're abusive and there is a problem here. On the one hand even if claimants don't meet the technical requirements of refugee status, they

will be perceived to meeting them, they will be called refugees by the media even if they aren't technical that. We will be perceived as pushing these apparent refugees back into the hands of their abusers. They didn't want to do that. They set up a process of screening if people made it to the boat, as they picked them up and fished them out of the sea, they would screen them on the boat.

Well, the word got out and what had been a few score of people a day turned very quickly into thousands. Of course, the visuals in that weren't a whole lot better because you had people with boats capsizing. So, the Coast Guard gets involved, and the navy gets involved. All of this is going on simultaneously. Again, it's a fairly clear indication that humanitarian, military, and diplomatic issues are hard to separate. At any rate, we had a single task force to deal with both and that's what we did. We had staff in a whole bunch of places. It was a pretty effective task force in the first part in the sense that within the space of a couple of weeks, we got out all, several thousand, 3,000 I think, Americans who wanted to leave. American laid on extra flights. We worked with them in terms of facilitating this process, letting them know that this might be a good time to think about leaving, folks, because we're going to draw down, too. A lot of people did. About the same number stayed. They decide no, we don't need to leave, but they had the opportunity.

The boat people crisis was not resolved while I was on the task force. I had already been asked by my CDO, my counselor, career development officer, if I wanted to do a Capstone course because they suddenly needed somebody to fill it. I had committed to do that and then they asked me to do the task force. I said, "I'll do the task force, but you know, you've got a month to find somebody else because I've already committed to do this thing." They knew up front I was going to do the Capstone course. When I left to go to the Capstone course the boat flows had tapered off a little bit. They were starting to get control, but it had not been finished, not been settled yet. It wasn't fully settled until the military went into what eventually turned out to be a permissive environment; then the generals left and the boat flows stopped. We could then credibly say, "you're not refugees any more, we don't have to take you." It's interesting because in an earlier incarnation, when I was in Caribbean affairs, I had worked on refugee issues, Haitian refugee issues. Haitian boat people flows through the Bahamas. You work these issues, you do come back to them. They don't go away.

*Q: They don't go away.*

PIERCE: No, they wax and wane. A lot of these issues are of a permanent sort, a subtext of other kinds of things that are going on and that're affected by what's happening in the broader context of the elections.

*Q: You finally got a regular assignment, didn't you?*

PIERCE: Actually no, not a regular assignment. Still I come back and I'm working in EPS, Economic Policy Staff. They needed a director and a deputy and I agreed to be their

director, but I wasn't assigned there. I said, "sure I'll fill in." By the time I came back, the Haiti task force had stabilized. It was six weeks on this thing.

I'm still looking for jobs. Now I'm in a new assignments cycle so I'm bidding on all kinds of jobs, looking for more jobs and not being able to pin anything down. So, this is the fall of '94, August of '94. I started working in the Economic Policy Office, find a director, find a deputy, and get staffed up against. The most interesting issues at that point were economic, the shift in focus from AID to trade, although there were still AID budgets. AID had a three-year budget to play with in terms of a whole bunch of new priorities that the administration was interested in, such as democracy, covenants, those kinds of issues. So, we spent a fair amount of time working on those kinds of issues. I won't say Africa was the primary interest of the administration at that time, although that is the time when Mandela was elected. There was a lot of interest in South Africa, and a lot of efforts to try to build on that perceived set of positive developments.

It was an interesting time. It wasn't quite as frantic as what I'd been doing for the last year when I went from one crisis to another, putting out fires and doing that kind of stuff. This was a little less of a crisis atmosphere, but then economic stuff often is.

*Q: Yes.*

PIERCE: You're not as concerned on most days that you're likely to have an explosion in your in basket.

*Q: Was the trade-not-AID idea, particularly looking at Africa, that much of our AID effort really didn't seem to be paying off?*

PIERCE: Number one. Number two, it was less necessary and number three, it was unsustainable. You couldn't get the American public to buy, in effect, giveaways, or what they perceived to be giveaways. Now, 85% of what AID spends is spent, you know, in the U.S. or buying U.S. services. It's probably fairer to describe it as a pump-priming mechanism here that provides some assistance that hopefully is assistance that works and is helpful. At any rate, it's not popular. AID has never been popular, welfare has never been popular for a reason. The two are perceived of as related. This is international welfare. Well, it's not, but it has that cachet to it unfortunately. I think the perception is that we need to find a better way for these relationships. The context of having South Africa, of all places, suddenly look like a real positive thing, and the fighting in Namibia stopped and an agreement signed, you had Mozambique also starting to look better. I mean, a lot of places started to look better in '94. There was an optimism and a hope that this could be solved. Within a year, however, you had the butchery in Rwanda for which we didn't have a real good answer, and we were sort of paralyzed for quite a while. I wasn't working in that area, but anyway, it was kind of an interesting set of problems. They didn't assign me officially to that job until December of '94. At the same time they had had an opening in Cape Town because the consul general there had been named as ambassador to Lesotho. So, they asked me if I would do it and I said sure, that was the

best offer I'd had.

*Q: So, you were there from, you went to Cape Town from when to when?*

PIERCE: I went to Cape Town from July of '95 to November of '97. So, almost two and a half years.

*Q: What was the situation when you got to Cape Town?*

PIERCE: I got there a couple of days after the South Africans won the rugby World Cup, beating the New Zealand all blacks, the traditional winners, a class of rugby competition, one of the best always. They were all ecstatic about this. Now rugby in South Africa was the quintessential Afrikaner sport or Brit first, but Afrikaner as well. Probably the most poignant moment of what was an absolutely incredible screaming high for South Africa that won this thing was when François Pienaar, the team captain, put his jersey on Mandela and Mandela accepted it. Now, here's the black president of South Africa who had spent 27 years locked up on an island right outside of Cape Town. They sort of embraced each other, talked about conceptual nation building, reconciliation, and you know. It didn't deal with all the hurts and problems of the past, but it sure did point to the future, saying "yes, we can do this, we can get along. It also helped that the song of choice that the crowd was singing, was not the national anthem, but a black railroad worker's song. It's a marvelous call and response song. It's beautiful. It's just perfect for that kind of use. Here you have these white Afrikaners and Brits and others, whites, coloreds (coloreds meaning mixed race in the South African context), that's the word they use, meaning that they can trace their tribal relations to a specific language and tribal group. You know, sort of embracing each other, singing this thing, bringing the rafters of the stadium down sort of as one. It was a defining moment.

A couple of days later, Tutu, Bishop Tutu, walks down the streets of Cape Town again wearing a rugby jersey. Now this is a guy who in '89 led a march from his cathedral to the parliament, only a block away from each other. That march was one of the things that put the final nail in the coffin, and convinced De Klerk that they really had to do something. It led to a huge crackdown by the police. They chased people into the church, they sprayed people with stuff to the point that the church, they felt, was desecrated. You have a whole very complicated history all coming to a head right at that point.

That's when we came, we arrived there, so people are just in a very up mood. They haven't been hit by all the problems of opening up because opening up has some costs. Probably the most significant cost was drug flows. They had a mandrax problem. Mandrax is a drug from India, South Asia, that was fairly widespread, used and abused in some of the poorer communities. What happened when they opened up politically, they also opened up physically in the sense of customs. All of a sudden they've got a 1990s customs problem that they're trying to deal with '50s sort of technology and approaches. It doesn't work too well. At the same time they tried to move from an authoritarian police structure designed to keep dangerous social behavior confined to the ghettos and

townships, the colored and black areas away from the proper people to a neighborhood police. “We’re your friends, we know you, we grew up with you on the beat.” They try to make that transition in a year. Well, as we know from our experience in the States, it takes a little longer than that to develop trust especially when the assumption is that these are the agents of oppression. All of a sudden it’s real hard to make that happen. You didn’t grow up with them, you don’t know them that well, you don’t trust them. So, in effect they’re unilaterally disarmed by taking away the authoritarian system that they had. They didn’t have a great replacement ready to apply. You had, in effect, an explosion of lawlessness that came along with the drug trade. Mandela's take on this, and the take of a number of leaders, was that the white folks are now discovering what the blacks and the coloreds have had to live with for generations. That’s why they’re upset. It’s not really a problem. That’s one take on it.

My sense is it was much more complicated. It’s not surprising that they didn’t have a replacement immediately in trade. I mean, these folks had been exiles until about a year and a half before. You can hardly expect them to be able to run everything instantly. Even when you had a transition, most civil servants stayed in place. It was an awkward time and a difficult time, but it was also one of the very high emotional rides that, particularly, the rugby had taken them on. I can say this as a former coach. I know what that feels like; they were in the winner’s circle and loving every second of it.

Two weeks after I got there the consulate was attacked by radical Muslims. There is a big Muslim community in Cape Town. I’ve worked on all these hot issues. I’ve volunteered to go to the Sudan, and I was in the middle of all that stuff in Korea. There was a coup and a bunch of other things in Thailand. You know, Somalia, Haiti, Sudan I’ve worked all these hot issues. I had friends tell me, “if you go to Cape Town, don’t cause any trouble. If we see any trouble, we’ll know you caused it.” Well, you can imagine the e-mails I got. What happened was centered around Sheik Achmed Kassim, a local Muslim Brotherhood guy. This radical, political guy takes the position that the only legitimate government that a Muslim can live under is one that implements Sharia, the Islamic law. This is not likely to happen in South Africa in our lifetime, but that’s the position. A very tiny minority is struggling for leadership of a much bigger Muslim community in which the leadership is a pretty conservative Muslim judicial council, and we were caught in the middle. They came at us ostensibly because they were mad at us because of our policy in Srebrenica. That is part of Bosnia that is a Muslim enclave. We as partners with the UN in effect said this is a safe area and the Serbs were coming in and killing everything that moved.

*Q: Srebrenica?*

PIERCE: Srebrenica, yes. That’s what they said they were doing. But in fact, what was going on was a struggle for the leadership of the Muslim community. They came after us, the French, the Russians, the Brits, the Germans and they tried to occupy the consulates. They managed to occupy some in the morning hours. As others did, we called in the South African police and asked them to escort them out, at which point they claimed that

they'd been beaten by the marines. The marines weren't even close to them. We didn't let them in the same room for precisely that reason. That afternoon, 100 or so assembled around the consulate. We were in a shared space. During the attempt to attack the building, there were shots fired. Bullets were shot at the consulate and the police responded with rubber bullets. Nobody was hurt as far as I know. One of the bullets went about this close, about a foot from the head of a woman who was working in a building next to us by an alleyway that runs through the press building. You know, dogs and shots and tear gas and that kind of stuff.

I looked out the window and I said, boy I know what this is about. It looks like Korea. It was a nasty surprise. The South Africans were completely surprised by it. They didn't know it was coming. The next day there was a huge demonstration. Five thousand people came out and camped in front of the consulate. They were not the radicals, this was the conservative leadership not to be outdone by these people. They had very tight control of this crowd. Marshals and they were pulling instigators out as they saw people that were getting violent, they yanked them off and drove them away, They didn't let it get out of hand, it was very tightly managed. This time, of course, the South Africans knew it was coming and were better prepared as well. The demonstrator never got to any fighting or anything, they just sat down. It was a fascinating experience because the minute that the crowd started to get out of hand and pushing a little, the leader of the crowd moved his hands up to down and said for everybody to sit down. Five thousand people sat down like that. Then they started chanting "Death to America." It's quite an experience to watch 5,000 people sitting down with their fists in their air, saying Death to America, Death to America. We don't feel terribly threatened if they're sitting down. It was all over Srebrenica, it was all over that issue. They had legitimate concerns. I mean, Muslims were being slaughtered. That's exactly what was happening. We had no way to figure out exactly what U.S. policy was. We were not exactly on the lead in that regard. So, I couldn't engage them on a policy level.

We had subsequent demonstrations by Achmed Kassim. He brought his group called Kiblah and shortly thereafter took over the leadership of a group called PAGD [People Against Gangsters and Drugs]. This started essentially as a vigilante movement a couple of months later in the Muslim part of the colored community. A vigilante movement against drug dealers. Basically the message was, "You're not corrupting my kids, you'll take my kids over my dead body." They started this vigilante movement by throwing pipe bombs into suspected drug dealers' homes. Within a month they had actually killed one less than half a mile from the consulate. In fact, our warehouse was right next to where this happened. These people later on went down to the waterfront which is the main shopping area and integrated, mixed. It's the one place where everybody felt comfortable going. They got into a fracas and shot things up. There were some people killed. That's also the place where, a year later, shortly after I left in '97, the same group PAGD People Against Gangsters and Drugs detonated a bomb in the Planet Hollywood, killing some people. They attacked police stations. They did a number of things. There was a lot of talk that they were going to come after us in some sense, but that didn't materialize, in part, I think, because of a couple of things that we did.

We worked very hard to make an outreach into the Muslim community and respond to what we saw as their biggest concern: drugs and the impact of drugs. The INL I guess it is, the International Narcotics Drugs, has a small bureau for international drug control and law enforcement kinds of initiatives. They were able to help us pay for what we believed were culturally appropriate Muslim drug control experts from Indonesia and from Malaysia. Now that's the area of the world where most of the Muslims in the Cape Town area came from 300 years ago. There's a lot of cultural connection there. Many of the Muslims in Durban came from South Asia, a different set of people. The folks in the Cape Town area were primarily from what had been the Dutch East cities.

We didn't make a big deal about it. In fact, just before we left we were praised by the same guy who led this demonstration publicly on his radio station as being very positive and supportive and helpful to dealing with the primary issues bothering the Muslims at the moment which was drugs. So, they really liked what we did. We took it out of the competitive thing and responded to the specific need that that community felt. It also helped that we were not, at that point, seen as, in effect, helping Christians kill Muslims, which is the way they perceived the battle in the fighting in Bosnia which had stabilized at that point. I raise this because this is a very interesting set of challenges: I mean, they were writing a constitution.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

PIERCE: When I got there it was Princeton Lyman. He left in October and then Jim Josephs came in January or so of 1996. He's still the ambassador now. He'll be leaving fairly soon when his replacement comes. We had a very interesting set of issues to deal with, it was very positive. I'll say one other thing: we had visitors all over the place. The vice-president came twice. Hillary Clinton, the First Lady, came once. All her advance cast of thousands, we had eight cabinet members arrive. We had Hazel O'Leary come about four times.

*Q: She was the energy secretary?*

PIERCE: Energy.

*Q: Energy, yes, she's been faulted at least by the press for traveling too much.*

PIERCE: Well, they spend a lot of money on that, yes. Part of our job is to make our people with local expertise available. We help them, and also help them not screw up the connections we have, so that we have to spend all our time repairing the connections. I think we were pretty successful.

*Q: Did you find that, I mean this was sort of a euphoric time with South Africa.*

PIERCE: Not without problems, but euphoric.

*Q: But, I was wondering, and particularly given the thrust of the Clinton administration and all, did you have any feeling that you were reporting on the conditions in South Africa, you say not without problems, reporting on problems that in a way they didn't want to hear problems?*

PIERCE: No, I never got that feeling. The sense that I had was that if anything, we didn't do as much reporting from Cape Town as we could have. The embassy insisted that they were going to do the reporting. In fact, when I got there they said, "you will not have any relationship with any of the parliamentarians. That's our bailiwick, don't go near them." Well, that's a little hard to do. Cape Town is a much less formal place than Pretoria. In fact, that's why you want to be there because you can get at people and talk to them. It did lead to some problems and some hard feelings that I think could have been avoided and eventually were avoided. That's been fixed, that's been fixed in the long sense. The sense that I got there was not just a fascination, but a deep and abiding interest in South Africa. They wanted to know the whole story, they weren't looking for positive strokes only. They wanted to get the whole picture. Now, again, we were not the primary reporting officers of the country. Our focus was the Cape provinces, the three Cape provinces. It covered half the territory of the country, about a third of the population, but a very different mix of issues and people than you had in the rest of the country.

*Q: What was your fix on this, as far as this, I mean this was early days, but how did you, you've gone through the rugby thing and all, but looking at the communities, did you feel that they were cosmopolitan enough to already have begun to reach modus vivendi?*

PIERCE: I think the leadership did that. One of the fun parts of being there at that time was I saw thousands of people. I used the representational part of our function in part to support the visitors that came in. to facilitate their connections. One of the things that we did very effectively was to help people cut across these lines. Just because you take away the legal baggage of apartheid, you don't take away the geographic baggage. People are still living in their neighborhoods. It's not broken down yet. Yes, the doors are open, but they're still segregated of living in de facto segregation. There's mental segregation as well. People have grown up in different communities less than a half a mile from each other. They don't know each other yet should know each other.

One of the roles I was very careful to play was this role: We're the foreigners, we're too dumb and stupid to know what all these various fault lines are. So, we can invite people from all over the place. In fact, we did it deliberately. I brought all of my locals in. We made very extensive efforts to try to bring people who we thought really should know each other. We did this even with security people, police, do-gooders, social activists, and people who had been on the other sides of things. This is a new world. We were foreigners who could get away with this stuff. We could open them up. I said to people jokingly, they expect you to talk every time you get a gathering. In exchange for the food and the drink they have to listen to you.



I said, “Look, I’m not going to talk very much, but your job, your task tonight before you leave here is to make three new friends you didn’t have when you walked in here. I’m going to ask you, there’s a quiz when you go out the door, I’m not going to let you out until you do.” Ha, everybody laughs. Sure enough, they do it. You start these functions in all these knots where people know each other and about a half hour or 45 minutes into it, those knots are gone and that’s what you want. You want people to cut across those lines. It was a very fine time to do that. I try to do it in a teasing way, but throw the challenge out and they think well of us. People wanted to come to these events. They were desperate to come because this was an opportunity, we were the hosts, but we were not the show.

*Q: It was sort of neutral ground.*

PIERCE: Absolutely.

*Q: I mean, they could go there and say they went to the American do and who they met and they weren’t going to have to be answerable.*

PIERCE: It helped I think. I mean, I’m not going to take credit, no, we did not. The South Africans, this is a South African thing. This whole miracle has “Made in South Africa” written all over it. This was done by South Africans, but I think we were able to get beyond just the maxim of “do no harm.” I think we were able to help a little on the margins. It sure is a lot of fun to do that, to bring people together who really hadn’t rubbed shoulders with each other, but really should have, and to cut across new lines. Now, what they did with it is their business, In many cases I found they thought well of us for having done it. But in fact the great utility for them was to help build these lines in their society, these connections. We tried very hard to find people who we thought would have a reason to do things with each other. We do the same thing with the 4th of July stuff. I used the 4th of July party as not the usual, to bring the usual diplomatic suspects together and you have a toast with your finger pointed out. We had a bash. It helped that the Harlem Globetrotters came to Cape Town for the first time and played their first game in Cape Town and their only game in Cape Town on the night of the 4th of July. We had a huge bash at the arena where they were doing this on the side. It was a convention center. The next year we did it at the waterfront. I loved the visuals, it was great, great big guys with red, white, and blue all over. They’re wonderful entertainment anyway, but it was great fun to have. They got good coverage and publicity, but we were able again to use that to bring all kinds of different people together. We had, I had 1,800 people show up for this thing, the first one we did in the middle of a huge monsoon-like rain. They came anyway because they wanted to. A lot of fun. I think this borders on public diplomacy. I mean, I’m poaching on USIS territory. In fact, the USIS folks were very happy working with us. We had an African American pianist of great skill, but unorthodox approach and visuals. You know, dreadlocks and the whole thing, not what you think of when you think of a concert pianist, but absolutely talented, marvelous pianist. Pratt was his name and I worked with USIS. What we did was invite every music teacher in the province to see the show. This kind of talent comes in all kinds of packages

because the trained music teachers again, legacy of apartheid, most of them were white or colored, not black. One has to see that it's there, it's in your community. I didn't want to preach at them. I didn't want to pound them morally. No, I want to show you, I want you to see for yourself. You come to the conclusion. This is Peace Corps and that's what I was trying to do. I think we were successful at it. We had a lot of fun.

*Q: Well, David we have a time problem. I was wondering, you left there what in '97?*

PIERCE: I left in November of '97, not knowing if I had a job.

*Q: Just quickly, you can always add on to this transcript to develop including on what happens on your EEO thing. What did you do when you came back?*

PIERCE: Well, actually I came back and I had filed a grievance in September, basically saying, look they haven't investigated, they're stonewalling, they're just trying to wait until my time runs out and hope I will go away. The grievance board thought enough of the grievance that they kept me in the Service while they looked at it. That kept me going in the Service until October of last year.

*Q: What were you doing?*

PIERCE: Mostly I was responding both to the grievance filings, because they would send something and I had to spend most of my time doing that.

*Q: These things are incredible.*

PIERCE: And it's all under oath. So, you can be held accountable for every comma and every word. You talk about drafting procedure. The last thing I did before I was retired — they retired me for time in class the end of October of last year—was run the Liberia task force. But I did a lot of stuff in the West African office. I bounced around some of the African offices that needed help, primarily AFS and AFW, the Liberia task force when they had a crisis there, closed that down and, knock on wood, that's the [only] task force Africa has had, the Africa Bureau has had, in the last year. We haven't had one for a year, remarkable for Africa. Since then I did a few months, we had the hearings, we had these other things, I took the Job Search Seminar when the Y2K stuff emerged in the Africa Bureau.

*Q: Y2K you might explain what Y2K is.*

PIERCE: The year 2000.

*Q: For the computers, there was a concern about.*

PIERCE: Right. The computer chips made may go on the fritz or embedded chips may. We've done a lot of stuff I alluded to that area. I went out and did the training, taught

people how to use the tool kit that had been designed to do contingency planning, risk assessment, and contingency planning. In the last few months we've managed to get \$2 million for generators and a half a million dollars for generator fuel out of OMB which is not small potatoes; that's a big deal. We're at the point now where our posts have said "we don't really think we're going to need to redo staff, we think we can get through this with the resources that we have now and we're going to be doing a task force operation right at the turn of the year, century, or millennium as it were, turn to the year 2000 to make sure that folks are okay when that happens. My gut feeling is we'll be okay. I think there will be problems, but I don't think they will be insurmountable. I hope that's helpful.

*Q: Okay. Well, this is very helpful. Why don't we stop at this point and if there's any more to be played with, we can play with it?*

PIERCE: Thank you.

*End of interview*