

The Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

**PETER DeSHAZO**

*Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Background:**

Raised in Illinois  
Dartmouth College  
University of Wisconsin  
Study in Salamanca, Spain 1967  
Student and researcher in Chile 1970-71, 1974-75

**Entered the Foreign Service**

Junior Officer Training 1977

**La Paz, Bolivia**

**Junior Officer, Cultural Affairs Officer** 1977-1980

Bolivian politics, government, society, media  
U.S. Embassy. Consular section, USIS, public diplomacy  
U.S. – Bolivia relations

**Medellín, Colombia**

**Branch Public Affairs Officer and Consul** 1980-1983

U.S. presence in Medellín  
Regional politics, economy, society  
Security situation: M-19, FARC  
Medellin Cartel  
U.S. public diplomacy, Centro Colombo Americano

**Santiago, Chile**

**Cultural Affairs Officer, First Secretary** 1983-1987

U.S. relations with Chile 1983-1987  
U.S. Embassy  
Pinochet regime: political, human rights, economic climate  
Public diplomacy  
Shift in U.S. policy towards Chile 1985-1987  
Relations with the opposition to Pinochet

<b>State Department, Washington, D.C.</b>	
<b>ARA/SC: Country Officer for Chile</b>	1987-1989
U.S. policy toward Chile	
Chilean Referendum of October 1988	
U.S. Congress and Chile	
<b>U.S. Information Agency, Washington, D.C.</b>	
<b>Senior Policy Officer</b>	1989-1990
<b>Executive Assistant to Counselor</b>	1990-1991
USIA/State relationship	
U.S. Public Diplomacy during George HW Bush	
South Africa	
Voice of America	
<b>Panama City, Panama</b>	
<b>Counselor for Public Affairs</b>	1991-1994
<b>Acting DCM</b>	1993-1994
Panama after Operation Just Cause	
Endara Administration	
U.S. – Panama relations	
Implementation of Panama Canal Treaties	
Public Diplomacy	
<b>Caracas, Venezuela</b>	
<b>Counselor for Public Affairs</b>	1994-1997
<b>Acting DCM</b>	1996-1997
Caldera administration and Venezuelan politics	
U.S. – Venezuela Relations	
U.S. public diplomacy in Venezuela	
Emergence of Hugo Chávez as a candidate for president	
<b>Tel Aviv, Israel</b>	
<b>Counselor for Public Affairs</b>	1997-1999
U.S. – Israel Relations	
Israel/Palestinian Peace Process	
U.S. Public Diplomacy in Israel and Gaza	
Wye River Accords Anti-Incitement Committee	
Clinton visit to Israel 1998	
<b>U.S. Information Agency, Washington, D.C.</b>	
<b>Area Director for Western Hemispheric Affairs</b>	1999
Consolidation of USIA into the State Department	
<b>Department of State, Washington, D.C.</b>	
<b>WHA, Director of the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs</b>	1999-2001

Transition of the public diplomacy function of USIA to State  
Coups in Ecuador, January 2000  
Public Diplomacy and Plan Colombia

**U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States, Washington, D.C.**  
**Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative** 2001-2003  
Inter-American Democratic Charter, Lima, 9/11/2001.  
U.S. Relations with Latin America under George W. Bush  
Counter-terrorism activities of the OAS  
Role of the OAS and the work of USOAS  
OAS administration  
OAS and Haiti, Venezuela, Cuba,  
Canada in the OAS

**Department of State**  
**WHA: Deputy Assistant Secretary** 2003-2004  
George W. Bush administration and Latin America  
U.S. relations with Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia  
Latin America and the Middle East

**Post-Retirement: Center for Strategic and International Studies.**

## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is August the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This is an interview with Peter DeShazo.*

*Okay. So let's start at the beginning. By the way, this is Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewing. Peter, when and where were you born?*

DeSHAZO: I was born in Orange, New Jersey in 1947.

*Q: Okay. Let's take on your father's side. Can you tell me what you know up a ways, where your family came from and all on that, on your father's side?*

DeSHAZO: My DeShazo ancestors who were Huguenot who came to Virginia in the 1680s after the revocation of Edict of Nantes. The name is reconstructed from "de Chazeaux" or something to that extent.

*Q: Part of the Huguenot business.*

DeSHAZO: Right. And nearly all of the DeShazos are southerners.

*Q: Well, what had the DeShazos been? Were they living in Nantes or Rochefort, or where?*

DeSHAZO: I believe they were living in Besancon and other parts of eastern France. After a generation or two in Virginia, they began moving farther south and west so that you see the name DeShazo in the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, some in Texas, all around in the South.

*Q: In your part of the family, do you have any idea what they were involved in Virginia?*

DeSHAZO: I think they were tobacco farmers.

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

DeSHAZO: From what I gather, there were many members of the family living around Richmond, where they settled in counties slightly to the north and east of the city -- Essex and King and Queen Counties.

*Q: Well, sort of in your direct line, do you know -- when can you pick up, you know, have got an idea of great-grandfather, grandfather, that sort of thing?*

DeSHAZO: Before World War II my grandfather had a genealogical trace done that went back to the original arrivals in the 1680s. So I have some idea of who they were.

*Q: Well, were they in the tobacco business mainly, or?*

DeSHAZO: I'm not sure. My grandfather was in the textile business and my father also was.

*Q: And on your father -- your father, where did -- did he go -- where did he go to school? Did he go through college, or not?*

DeSHAZO: My father went to Dartmouth.

*Q: That's quite a non-Southern move.*

DeSHAZO: Well, he was born in the North. His father was basically a northerner too, although he ended up living much of his life in the South.

*Q: Uh-huh. And on your mother's side, what do you know about that?*

DeSHAZO: My mother's family is of more recent immigrant extraction. On her maternal side, Italians from Liguria, from around Genoa, who came to the United States in the 1890s and lived in Hoboken, New Jersey. My great-grandfather was a construction contractor. And from the paternal side, the background is Hispanic and Dutch Caribbean, from Venezuela and from Curacao where I still have relatives.

*Q: Do you know how your father and mother met?*

DeSHAZO: High school.

*Q: Ah. In New Jersey.*

DeSHAZO: Mm-hmm.

*Q: Where did you grow up? Was it in Orange, or?*

DeSHAZO: No, I grew up in Geneva, Illinois, small town about 35, 40 miles west of Chicago.

*Q: What was, what was Geneva like?*

DeSHAZO: Geneva was a very pleasant town of maybe 3,000 people at the time It was founded in the 1830s. Relatively prosperous town. You could look at it in two ways. Either as the closest small town to Chicago with a farming community around it or as the farthest suburb west of Chicago. It was the end of the line for the Chicago and Northwestern Commuter Rail. But in the end a small town. Although a Midwestern town, it was founded by New Englanders, who came via upstate New York -- like a lot of towns in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin. It had both a New England and a Midwestern feel to it.

*Q: Well, did you grow up there pretty much, or?*

DeSHAZO: I lived there from about age five through high school.

*Q: How big a family were you?*

DeSHAZO: Not large. My parents, my sister and myself.

*Q: And your sister older or younger?*

DeSHAZO: Younger.

*Q: Ah-ha. So you had a little bit of a seniority there.*

DeSHAZO: Three years.

*Q: Was it pretty much a -- did you feel you had sort of a small town education?*

DeSHAZO: Yes. Public grade school, junior high, high school. Small high school, 350 students or something like that.

*Q: Well, in your family were you much of a reader?*

DeSHAZO: I read all the time.

*Q: Can you think of any books that particularly struck you or series or anything you particularly liked?*

DeSHAZO: My parents had a lot of books – a good library – and I tended to read novels and non-fiction that were beyond my age group. I think most of what I learned through high school came from reading on my own.

*Q: Did you -- where'd your family fall politically?*

DeSHAZO: They were Republicans. I would say they were sort of, you know, back in the days of the '50s and '60s they were middle of the road Republicans.

*Q: And religion? What sort of -- how stood religion in your family?*

DeSHAZO: My mother was Catholic and my father was of Protestant background, but not religious, so I grew up Catholic.

*Q: Was the Catholic Church important in your life, or?*

DeSHAZO: Mm, it was a presence.

*Q: Yeah. Well, in school, you went to elementary school in Geneva?*

DeSHAZO: Yes, I did.

*Q: Is there any -- I'm just trying to think -- Geneva rings a bell. Was there a university or college there, or?*

DeSHAZO: No, there's a Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, which is just over the line in Southern Wisconsin. I don't remember a university being close to our home. Northern Illinois University in DeKalb was probably the closest.

*Q: In school, what subjects particularly appealed to you and didn't appeal to you?*

DeSHAZO: I liked English, I liked history, biology I liked. I didn't like mathematics, or chemistry.

*Q: Yeah, I must -- within the Foreign Service an awful lot of people who didn't really care for mathematics.*

DeSHAZO: I went through pretty well all the basic stuff, you know, through algebra and geometry and then totally lost interest in mathematics after that.

*Q: Did, you know, looking back on it, how did you feel it was as far as the school was?*

DeSHAZO: I thought it was good. Teachers were okay. The town had a reputation for having a good school district. In especially I think elementary and in junior high school. High school was sort of a mixed bag.

*Q: Was there any spillover there from the large ethnic mix that was Chicago?*

DeSHAZO: Not really. Geneva was an overwhelmingly white town with a lot of displaced Yankees that was later populated by Swedes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the point where it, it celebrated Swedish Days every year. There was an Italian-American contingent and a couple of Jewish families but not much else in terms of diversity. It was a really homogenous town.

*Q: Well, it sounds sort of like an Andy Hardy type town, growing up in a very, you know, sort of, a place without much sort of internal conflict.*

DeSHAZO: No, I don't think there was much internal conflict. I remember as a kid there was a murder in a neighboring town that caused a huge stir – I went to the trial of the young man who was accused – it drew so much attention. But in Geneva as a kid you could get on your bike and go anywhere you wanted. It was a prosperous town but not fancy. Geneva was a pleasant place to grow up.

*Q: Where did you all get your news? Was it television, radio, newspaper?*

DeSHAZO: My parents subscribed to a couple of the Chicago newspapers and I was up on current events. Also television news, magazines.

*Q: What was sort of -- what was the high school like?*

DeSHAZO: High school was, was interesting enough, pleasant. I didn't think I was particularly challenged in the courses in which I was strong and wasn't much engaged in the subjects that I didn't like.

*Q: Well, did you have any idea of wither you were bound, or -- by the time you hit high school?*

DeSHAZO: No, nothing. All I knew is I wanted to finish high school and go to college.

*Q: Was Dartmouth sort of expected of you, or not, or?*

DeSHAZO: Well, it was really the only school that I wanted to go to. I had visited it, really liked it, seemed great. So that's where I wanted to go.

*Q: How about the other kids? Did they -- were you in a school where most of the students ended up going to college?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, I think probably -- I would guess most of the graduating class went to college.

*Q: You graduated from high school when?*

DeSHAZO: '65.

*Q: '65. Did the Vietnam War intrude much up until that time?*

DeSHAZO: It was on the horizon. When I hit 18 I was enrolled in Selective Service. But because I had four more years of college ahead, I didn't think about it too much.

*Q: So off to Dartmouth in '64?*

DeSHAZO: '65.

*Q: '65. By the way, you were pretty young, but did the election of 1960 impact you? This was Kennedy versus Nixon.*

DeSHAZO: Well, it did because Kennedy visited our town. And I remember very well the visit -- a quick stop on a campaign tour of the region. Geneva was a Republican town. And my mother and a bunch of other Republican ladies were there with Nixon signs. I was fascinated by Kennedy. My sister shook his hand and that was a big deal. But I remember being there on the steps of the courthouse and hearing his very brief comments -- sort of recognizing that he's in Republican territory but that he hoped people would reconsider and vote for him.

*Q: What struck you about Dartmouth that you liked?*

DeSHAZO: The beauty of the surrounding countryside and the campus, that the classes would be small and that the professors of high quality, that I would have a chance to, to sort of spread my wings intellectually. Also that it would be a good place to have a good time.

*Q: How would you describe the student body at the time you arrived there?*

DeSHAZO: Mm, still relatively homogenous, of course all males still. More diverse than anything I was used to in my hometown, but nothing like Chicago, which had been my yardstick for measuring the ultimate environment of ethnic and racial diversity. Dartmouth was more diverse than Geneva, but still pretty homogenous.

*Q: What courses were you taking that you particularly enjoyed or --*

DeSHAZO: I majored in history, which had always been my passion And always sort of my strength. I enjoyed courses in government, literature, English, religion, -- the typical liberal arts curriculum. I was required to take four science courses and also reach



proficiency in a foreign language. I didn't speak a language when I got there, so I studied Spanish. I had the honor of one Spanish teacher telling me I was the worst student he'd had in 30-some years of teaching at Dartmouth.

*Q: (laughs) Well, you were there during tumultuous times.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah.

*Q: Speaking both about protests against the Vietnam War, but although Dartmouth is far away, the civil rights. How did this all affect you?*

DeSHAZO: There was a real sense of both issues. I remember George Wallace visiting Dartmouth during the run-up to the 1968 presidential campaign and getting a rough reception from the students. – I took part in the demonstration against him. Anti-war sentiment was also very strong at Dartmouth. And that led to demonstrations and protests – and the occupation of an administration building – the kind of things that happened on other campuses at the time.

*Q: Well, were there any major protests or all on your campus?*

DeSHAZO: Many. The most dramatic was the occupation of the administration building, which ended by police arresting the protesters and hauling them off to jail.

*Q: How did that come out?*

DeSHAZO: I think they were convicted of one thing or another and probably expelled from school. I don't know if they were allowed to come back. Maybe they were.

*Q: How'd you feel about what was going on?*

DeSHAZO: I was against the war and took part in several protest demonstrations.

*Q: Was there ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) there?*

DeSHAZO: There was.

*Q: Were you in it, or?*

DeSHAZO: No, I was not.

*Q: Did you begin to concentrate on any particular history or any events in any particular country, or not?*

DeSHAZO: I took courses in Middle East history, African history -- areas that I had no prior exposure to. A lot of American history and European history, but then my final term at Dartmouth with a new, very dynamic professor -- in fact the first and only woman

professor that I had the whole time I was at Dartmouth -- I was introduced to the history of Latin America, which I found fascinating.

*Q: You had no particular exposure to Latin America.*

DeSHAZO: None whatsoever. Despite the fact that my maternal grandfather spoke Spanish among other languages, as his native language.

*Q: Did you concentrate on any particular language?*

DeSHAZO: Spanish. When I was at Dartmouth I did a term at the University of Salamanca in Spain, that really got me going in terms of beginning to speak the language.

*Q: Well, how did you find Spain? That was still Franco time, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: A real cultural and political experience. It came in the waning years of Franco -- 1967. Salamanca was a really conservative town, strongly religious, and extremely conservative. Plus a repressive regime. My mail from the United States would arrive opened and resealed by the censors. One member of our group from Dartmouth was arrested and kicked out of the country for attending a demonstration in Madrid after our program ended. The regime seemed ever-present but people knew what the boundaries were. It was a mature dictatorship. Later in life when I traveled in other places I would sometimes get the same feeling, that the repression was not so obvious because the people were used to it -- they knew the limits of what they could and could not do.

*Q: of course you were not near the embassy. Did you have any contact with the Foreign Service?*

DeSHAZO: No, none whatsoever.

*Q: Did it have any interest for you?*

DeSHAZO: No, I didn't think of it at the time.

*Q: Were you thinking of beyond graduation, or was that pretty much it?*

DeSHAZO: When I graduated in 1969 the war in Vietnam and the draft were the big factors. Beyond that, getting a job, making a living. My horizon was not very long term.

*Q: When you're thinking getting a job, were you thinking of any particular type of work?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I had applied to the Peace Corps and been accepted to go to Korea. And I, I considered it. But in the end, I didn't feel like I wanted to embark on a path towards Korean and Korea. And I ended up taking a job teaching English as a second language in a public school in Jersey City, New Jersey. It was an emergency teaching job, considered a hard place to fill teaching slots. With it came a deferment from the draft for

the year while I had a job. And, and so I moved to Jersey City and taught English to kindergartners through eighth graders, which was an eye-opening experience.

*Q: What were you getting for this? Must have been very difficult.*

DeSHAZO: What was I getting in what sense?

*Q: I mean, you know, as a young man, this is an exposure to a really different world, wasn't it? With these young kindergarten, other kids?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, yeah, it was. It was interesting from many points of view. From the aspect of working with children and how they are educated. I hadn't really had any experience with kindergartners or older kids in terms of teaching. Also the experience for the first time in my life living in a highly urban environment – especially in a place like Jersey City, that was a tense city, many low-income neighborhoods, right across the river from New York City. You look over and see the towers of Manhattan. Jersey City seemed to be in decay. It was racially very divided, an invisible but pretty clear line ran through it in which African Americans were on one side and ethnic whites on the other. The city seemed depressing and gray.

*Q: How'd you find the kids?*

DeSHAZO: The kids were terrific. Most of them were in the same boat – recent arrivals to the U.S. who didn't speak English. Mostly from working class families. They were cheerful, smart, -- the kind of sunshine that the city seemed to lack.

*Q: Where were they from?*

DeSHAZO: Everywhere. They were from I think 27 different countries. I had kids from the Middle East, Greece, Italy, China, kids from different, different European countries, Mexican kids, Dominican kids. I had an Argentine kid. They were from all around.

*Q: Well, you know, I would think that the, the challenge would be overwhelming. How do you go about, you know, dealing with -- you have a bunch of young people looking at you and they're all speaking different languages.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, and I had about zero training in what I was doing. I had a couple of textbooks and got help occasionally from a consultant from the public school system who contacted me every so often to see what I was doing. But I was basically on my own. And to design the classes and figure out how to teach English to these kids. I can't claim it was me, but they sure learned how to speak English well. And they learned it pretty fast, they were very, very quick. The classes were fun and the experience helped with my own language learning.

*Q: I'm sure it did. The remarkable ability of young people. And of course at that age they're too eager to learn to be sophisticated and fight the system.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah,, they wanted to succeed. They knew that English was the coin of the realm and they wanted to be part of society.

*Q: Did you have much dealing with the parents?*

DeSHAZO: A fair amount. I tutored some Dominican kids and would visit their home, - met their mother and their older sister. The parents would come in for parent-teacher meetings, using translators to talk to me if they were not Spanish-speaking.

*Q: All this time the military was moving in front of you, or?*

DeSHAZO: Well, no. I took my draft physical when I was teaching in Jersey City and I failed it. And then the lottery came and I drew a really high number.

*Q: Well, then what were you thinking about doing?*

DeSHAZO: By then I could pretty much do as I wished. As luck or fate would have it, I had applied for a scholarship from Dartmouth that's given to recent graduates for study abroad, it's called a Reynolds Scholarship.. And I applied for it to study Latin American history at a university in the region. I was awarded the scholarship. It was a great deal in the sense that it basically said, "you can study where you want. We'll pay your round trip airfare and stipend for living for a year. " A former professor at Dartmouth suggested I travel to Argentina or Chile and I chose Chile. So after Jersey City, I boarded a plane for Santiago and enrolled at the Institute of History of the Catholic University of Chile for a year of study.

*Q: What was the situation in Chile at the time?*

DeSHAZO: It was *fascinating*. That was one of the reasons I went. I arrived two months before the election of Allende. The country was totally submerged in politics. Politics every, every minute of the day. Everyone predicted a close vote. The political polarization and politicization of students and the population at large seemed boundless. *Huge* disparity between the candidates. It was pretty clear that either the candidate of the right Jorge Alessandri or the leftist Salvador Allende at the head of a Marxist coalition would win – and that the Christian Democratic candidate had no chance. It was the kind of politics that I'd never seen before anywhere.

*Q: Of course at that age you couldn't be concerned about you might say your safety particularly.*

DeSHAZO: No, I didn't feel unsafe at all. Not a bit. At the university,- there was a lot of anti-U.S. sentiment, but never directed against me. I recall very vividly the Cuban and pro-Allende propaganda all over the universities. They showed movies depicting American soldiers, burning villages in Vietnam and people shot - very powerful stuff. The Left seemed to dominate the cultural scene and it was all anti-United States and

imperialism and Wall Street and all that. Chilean friends took me to coffee houses and *peñas* where singers like Víctor Jara performed -- all very anti-U.S.

*Q: Well, how did you react to this?*

DeSHAZO: I was not defensive. I told people I was an American citizen. I said, "I agree with you, I'm against the war in Vietnam too. But my country's a great country and, you shouldn't judge us by that alone."

*Q: Did you feel it was dangerous?*

DeSHAZO: No.

*Q: I mean sort of the universities separate entities? Did you go out and demonstrate and then run back into the university, or what?*

DeSHAZO: No. I didn't feel in danger at any time that I was in Chile. But I was totally non-political, being a foreigner.

*Q: Was there much in the way of classes, or was everything terribly political?*

DeSHAZO: It was very political, but the Catholic University stayed open and I took classes normally -- a full academic load.

*Q: Did -- how about the professors? Did you feel they were -- were they caught up with things too, or were they at odds with the students?*

DeSHAZO: They were more conservative. My professors were excellent. The Institute of History has long been famous -- Chile has produced generations of really fine historians. I was very honored to have had such good professors.

*Q: How'd the election go?*

DeSHAZO: Allende won.

*Q: How was that received?*

DeSHAZO: Well, it was received with joy on the Left and with a sense of impending doom on the Right.

*Q: How'd you feel?*

DeSHAZO: I felt like Chile was going to go through a challenging process. I didn't have enough background in the country to have a profound sense of the implications. Chile had a great deal of poverty and social problems but also a vibrant middle class. Over time, I began to question more how a very bourgeois society -- democratic and respectful

of rights – was going to transition to a Marxist economy and a power shift to the working class. It was pretty hard to imagine that things could change so dramatically – but for sure there were a lot of people who wanted to see it happen and were committed to it. And plenty who were determined that such a change would not take place.

*Q: Well, did you feel that there -- things might move way, way to the left? You know, moving into sort of the, sort of the communist sphere, or was there going to be a moderate change, or, or what?*

DeSHAZO: I assumed it would be sort of a moderate change. Despite the rhetoric, everyone stressed that Chile was really a conservative country. I got a sense that for many in the middle class the revolution was theoretical, although it was clear that the Communist Party was serious and there were people who were on the extreme left who favored revolution, the Cuban model, things like that. And I met some of those people too. But there was also a strongly conservative aspect of Chile that would make a revolution difficult.

*Q: Well, had the, sort of the, the young people of the left of Latin America begun to move into the scene in Chile after the election?*

DeSHAZO: Sure. The students were pretty leftist. There was a lot of revolutionary fervor – but again, much of it was rhetorical.

*Q: Well, were you sort of sitting there with pen in hand sort of checking off the situation?*

DeSHAZO: I was an active observer. I'm not sure that I was taking notes. But I was stimulated enough by all of it to decide that I would look into pursuing a serious career of studying Latin America. I was deeply interested what I had seen.

*Q: Well, was the embassy, from your perspective at that time, at all a player around, warning you or doing anything? Or was it again, something out of sight, out of mind?*

DeSHAZO: No, the embassy was out of sight until I returned to the United States. I had married a fellow student toward the end of my stay and the embassy was helpful in getting her the visa that she needed to come to the United States. That was probably my first experience at an embassy or a consulate. I remember the consul being helpful and pleasant. That gave me a good impression.

*Q: So when you left Allende was in power?*

DeSHAZO: Yes.

*Q: And you know, you're, you're obviously somewhat at that time still a little bit of youthful experience. Did you things sort of developing peacefully?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I knew that it was not going to be easy and he was going to run into some big problems. The economy had a consumer boom in the first year and then inflation really started to pick up. The Chilean currency – the escudo, seemed to lose value every day. And the United States was laying down some big markers as Allende nationalized copper and began moving against the banks the battle lines were getting drawn.

*Q: Did you feel it was a good time to get the hell out, or?*

DeSHAZO: Well, no. I was there for a year. My scholarship was up and I had gotten a scholarship to the study in the PhD program in Latin American history at the University of Wisconsin.

*Q: By this time you no longer had to worry about the draft.*

DeSHAZO: No, that was gone.

*Q: So you're going to where, the University of Wisconsin?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah.

*Q: Why Wisconsin?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I was, I was counseled that the two best programs in the country for Latin American history at the time were Wisconsin and Texas. And I applied to both and got into both and I got a scholarship at Wisconsin, so that's where I went.

*Q: Well, so what was the University of Wisconsin like?*

DeSHAZO: Terrific. A world-class university that was extraordinarily stimulating and vibrant – also highly politicized. I started classes toward the end of the protests against the war in Vietnam – Wisconsin had been a major focal point of student protest in the past. A lot of political energy on the part of the students was channeled into local elections and the McGovern campaign for president in 1972. That was the first time I ever worked on a political campaign. As for the academics, Wisconsin had a top-notch Ibero-American studies program and the history department was a leader in the field of Latin America. I had top professors and the quality of the students was outstanding. The U.S. government and foundations were still putting large amounts of money into the study of Latin America, which provided opportunity for research, travel and scholarships. Wisconsin also had a very large population of Latin American and other foreign students. All this added up to a very stimulating experience.

*Q: Did you see yourself as a doctoral candidate?*

DeSHAZO: Yes, I was in a doctoral program.

*Q: Did you have at that time a goal? What were you -- did you have any idea what you were going to be writing on?*

DeSHAZO: When I got there I had no idea what my dissertation would be on. Of course I had a strong background in Chilean history. Did a lot of economic history. Wisconsin has a strong tradition in industrial relations, labor relations. I got very interested in that. Plus statistics for economic history. I ended up writing a masters' thesis on Chilean labor history and broadened the topic for my Ph.D. dissertation.

*Q: Well, did you find that you would become, if nothing -- sort of an unofficial resources for people interested in what was going on in Chile?*

DeSHAZO: Because none of my professors had that much experience in Chile I did become something of a local expert.

*Q: How did it proceed? Did you continue? Did developments in Chile sort of tempt you to try to get back there or not, or?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I, I had a scholarship to study in Paraguay, a Ford Foundation scholarship in the summer of '73. And my wife having family in Chile, we passed through Santiago on the way to Paraguay. In fact, my wife had been in downtown in Santiago when a mini-coup against Allende took place – a precursor to what would be the full-fledged coup in September. It was very clear that the level of confrontation and polarization was extreme and that something was going to give.

*Q: Where did your wife's parents fit into this?*

DeSHAZO: They lived in a small town outside of Santiago.

*Q: Did they feel strongly on the politics?*

DeSHAZO: Yes, they were rather politicized. And split.

*Q: (laughs) Yeah, this often happens in families.*

DeSHAZO: Yep.

*Q: But you know -- but normally the chips aren't really as down as much as they must have been in Chile.*

DeSHAZO: Yes. They were.

*Q: Well, were there efforts by the young people to draw you into the movement or --*

DeSHAZO: No. No, I don't think so. I went back to Chile with a Fulbright Scholarship to do dissertation research in the year after the coup. And the atmosphere was extremely



tense, very strong repression. As somebody from a university, like Wisconsin that has a reputation in Chile as being very progressive and who was doing research on labor history, I kept a low profile.

*Q: What were you hearing from the people you were talking to about events during the coup?*

DeSHAZO: A lot of bad things. People -- everybody seemed to know somebody who'd disappeared, who had been killed or arrested or exiled.

*Q: Did this make it -- must have been pretty hard to get people to talk to you.*

DeSHAZO: I was doing mostly archival research. I did interview a number of old labor leaders. Many of them were anarchists or leftists back from the '30s and '40s. They were men in their seventies or eighties, and they were mostly willing to talk and very, very interesting to meet.

*Q: Well, while in Chile did you feel that you were being observed as -- that the Pinochet regime was seen as being a possible agitator or?*

DeSHAZO: I assumed that they were keeping an eye on me because they seemed to keep an eye on just about everything that was moving in Chile. So I was careful.

*Q: Did you feel that this was -- did this take you back to your time in Spain?*

DeSHAZO: It was a different feeling. In Spain people weren't disappearing. At least not that I knew of, not in 1967. In Chile, the repression was at a much more active and extreme level.

*Q: Well, did you go back to Wisconsin and get your doctorate?*

DeSHAZO: Yes.

*Q: What was the final thrust or your PhD dissertation?*

DeSHAZO: The dissertation was a major revision of the history of Chilean labor during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It presented a very different picture than the sort of orthodox account that had been written mostly by Marxist historians -- that Chilean organized labor was the product of the Communist Party and the mining enclave workers. My theory was that it was anti-political actors, mostly anarchists and syndicalists in the main cities that were the key drivers of the labor movement. My thesis ran counter to just about all interpretations up to that point and was much more focused on the daily lives of workers and the functioning of labor unions than what had been written before.

*Q: Well, I would assume the laborers in Chile came from a different stock than the normal peasant stock of somewhere else. I mean these were mostly, I would think, people coming out of Europe with pretty strong you might say socialist tendencies.*

DeSHAZO: That was the case in Argentina but not in Chile. Chile didn't get working class immigration. It had very little immigration at all compared to Argentina or Uruguay or even Brazil. So the Chilean workers were homegrown, they were domestic.

*Q: How about were the Indians involved or the indigenous people?*

DeSHAZO: Not much. Not in the labor movement. To a certain degree Bolivian and Peruvian migrants who worked in the nitrate fields in the north of Chile. But in the central cities, not much.

*Q: So when did you get our PhD?*

DeSHAZO: 1977.

*Q: And then wither?*

DeSHAZO: My Ph.D. was awarded on a Sunday and the next day I was sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer.

*Q: Well, did you see a certain incompatibility with these two strains?*

DeSHAZO: No. When I returned to Wisconsin from Chile, when I began writing up my dissertation, it was pretty clear that the job panorama in the United States had changed a great deal since I started the PhD program. There were, basically zero tenure track positions available at universities in my discipline. And at the same time I began thinking about a career in the Foreign Service as something that seemed very attractive. So I took the Foreign Service test and passed it. After a relatively long delay, I was invited to join a JO (Junior Officer) class and decided to join the Foreign Service.

*Q: When you took the Foreign Service, I assume you took an oral exam.*

DeSHAZO: I did.

*Q: Uh-huh. Do you recall any of the questions that were asked of you?*

DeSHAZO: I remember being asked about the Law of the Sea, about which I knew virtually nothing. But I figured I could somehow manage to sound knowledgeable about it and so I launched into an explanation. One of them eventually said "You don't really know anything about the law of the sea, do you?"

And I said, "No, not really."

And he said, “Well, then don’t waste our time.”

*Q: (laughs) Well, I mean that -- I’m just thinking that you came in -- what year did you come into the Foreign Service?*

DeSHAZO: 1977.

*Q: You went to the basic officers course, I assume.*

DeSHAZO: Yes. It was the JO (junior officer) course for USIA – I joined the U.S. Information Agency.

*Q: Okay. What was the composition of your training group?*

DeSHAZO: There hadn’t been a JO class for more than a year at USIA. I think resulting from budget cuts. So our class was a bit larger than a typical JO class --around 20. At age 30, I was one of the oldest. Some of the class had advanced degrees and had travelled considerably, others were younger and less experienced.

*Q: How about composition, male, female, race, and all that?*

DeSHAZO: It was about 50/50, male/female. There was one African-American junior officer in our group.

*Q: How did you -- sort of were you integrated or not with the State Department Foreign Service?*

DeSHAZO: We took the A-100 course with the State JO contingent for several weeks but also a USIA-specific course. Then the usual area studies and language studies at the Foreign Service Institute.

*Q: Well, what sort of stuck in your mind about what you were picking up from this initial exposure to the State Department and all?*

DeSHAZO: I learned quickly that organizations have a culture and that the culture at State was very different from that at USIA. You learn this from what people say about the respective organizations and what you see and hear for yourself. We had lots of input regarding the nature of the Foreign Service, what a successful career looks like, what sort of jobs are considered higher or lower prestige, how promotions are given out, all of that. I heard many different points of view from plenty of people and tried to put it all into perspective. Some of the advice turned out to be really good – some of it not very helpful. This was my first view from inside government. It was a real learning experience.

*Q: Were you pointed -- did you sort of point yourself towards any particular area, specialty or country or not, or did you just sort of relax and go with the flow?*

DeSHAZO: I was open minded, but sort of felt that since I had so much background in Latin America that I would be well used there. I took the Spanish test and got a very high score. So I was ready to go in terms of language, if that was to be the destination. In this regard, I remember that in the first week of training, our JO class went up to the Hill for a House hearing - the Committee on International Relations chaired by Dante Fascell.

*Q: He was from Florida, I believe.*

DeSHAZO: From Florida, right. The hearing was about foreign operations. When Chairman Fascell was told that there was a group of USIA junior officers present, he welcomed us and asked that one of us come forward and speak on the record about our training experience. I sort of got pushed forward by my colleagues. And he asked me that very question. He said, "Where do you think they're going to send you?"

And I said, "Well, I'm, language qualified in Spanish, I've spent some time in Latin America. So perhaps it will be there, but I'm ready to go anywhere that they send me." And he made a joke about telling him later - after my assignment, if the USIA makes good decisions or not.

*Q: Well, how did -- what happened to you?*

DeSHAZO: I ended up going to Bolivia. That was, that was my first assignment. I was told that that was a good place for a JO, and it turned out to be excellent. It was also a great place for our family - we had a daughter who was born in Wisconsin.

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

DeSHAZO: From 1977 in maybe about September to I think June of 1980, a three-year tour.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

DeSHAZO: When I got there there was a Chargé. Then Paul Boeker was the ambassador for two years. And for the last months of my tour, Marvin Weissman, who was an AID (Agency for International Development) officer.

*Q: What was the situation in Bolivia at the time?*

DeSHAZO: It was a transition period from the tail end of what had been six or seven years of a military government headed by Hugo Banzer to a series of other military leaders and then a very unstable and tenuous elected regime - nearly toppled by another coup. By the end of my stay, it was clear that the civilian regime would be overthrown by the military - that it was just a matter of time. My tour in Bolivia was a period of considerable political instability.

*Q: How did -- I mean you were sort of the fly on the wall. How did the embassy respond to this series of coups?*

DeSHAZO: One of the key objectives of the mission was to promote democracy and to seek the consolidation of elected government in Bolivia and the promotion of respect for human rights. These were cornerstone policies of the Carter administration and Bolivia was meant to be a testing ground. It was also the poorest country in South America and so promotion of economic development was another key policy objective. We had a large AID mission that was very high profile. And, increasingly, concern about rising coca production and cocaine trafficking became a major issue in the bilateral relationship.

*Q: Well, what were your initial responsibilities?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I started off as a JO doing training, and I rotated through different sections of the embassy. Did a stint in the consulate, but in U.S. Citizen Services, not on the visa line – for about three months. Our USIS post then had a change in public affairs officers, but with a period in which there was no PAO (Public Affairs Officer) – and we were short staffed, so I ended up being both the acting Cultural Attaché and Press Attaché, doing one job in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Then finally after about six months I received an ongoing assignment in Bolivia, two-year assignment as cultural affairs officer - as cultural attaché.

*Q: What -- first place, how did the, the people of Bolivia strike you at the time? I mean the ones that are in power and your contacts?*

DeSHAZO: I dealt with a very wide spectrum of Bolivians. From government and political figures to newspaper editors and journalists, labor leaders, academics, cultural elites, students, writers and artists – my work extended pretty much across the board. I was responsible for the Mission's International Visitor Program and the Fulbright Program, so it was a great opportunity to identify and meet future Bolivian leaders. I remember sending a good contact of mine to the United States who was a young historian and cultural leader – Carlos Mesa – who later became President of Bolivia. In a turn of fate, Mesa was president in 2003 when David Greenlee – a friend of mine and a second-tour political officer at the Mission at the time of my tour, was Ambassador, and I was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs responsible for Bolivia – so we all came together again twenty-five years later.

*Q: Yeah, I've interviewed David Greenlee. He has the distinction of having been a Peace Corps volunteer, he married a Bolivian, he was a political officer, he was DCM (deputy chief of mission), and an ambassador.*

DeSHAZO: That's right. He was certainly Mr. Bolivia.

*Q: Well, did -- I mean this is a hard one to really answer, but did you find that there was sort of a dislike of the United States about it being big and powerful and its influence there and all? Was this a problem?*

DeSHAZO: There was a strong anti-American feeling but at the same time a certain admiration for the United States. This was the case in many countries in Latin America. In the case of Bolivia, the Left – the leftist parties, labor movement and student organizations were stridently anti-U.S. Our Embassy was a favorite protest site – there were countless times when crowds gathered in front of the Embassy to throw rocks – which mostly missed because we occupied the top floors of a bank building and the rocks didn't usually make it up that high – so they broke mostly the bank windows on the lower floors. But at the same time, even people on the left were largely open to listening to us if we made the effort. There was also anti-Americanism on the right – sometimes in the military that thought that our promotion of democracy and human rights left the door open to subversion and Communism. But there were many Bolivians who looked to have a closer relationship with the U.S. As a public diplomacy officer, I always looked to reach out to sectors that either knew little about the U.S. or disliked us. I felt as though these people should be the target audience for programs and outreach. This was something that motivated me throughout my career.

*Q: Well, when you say this, what does this actually mean? What would you do to gravitate towards opposing forces?*

DeSHAZO: I would be able to find common elements that were of interest to both - to find ways of engaging them to try to provide an image of somebody from the embassy who was genuinely interested in them and what they were doing. I thought I was pretty good at picking out future leaders among younger members of society, people who had a lot of potential, and engaging them. Sometimes it was through cultural activities, sometimes it was information about the United States. The embassies in Latin America in those days used the International Visitor program very well. It's a program that returned a huge benefit to the U.S. taxpayer in terms of developing leadership core in Latin America who knew the United States better by having firsthand experience with it. The program really improved the image of the United States in the region.

*Q: What about the, the influence of other countries such as Cuba? Were they messing around there?*

DeSHAZO: Bolivia didn't have diplomatic relations with Cuba at the time. It did with the Soviet Union and the Soviets had a pretty active embassy in La Paz. The Bolivian Left had a great admiration for Cuba – with the image of Ché Guevara still strong ten years after he had been killed in Bolivia. Certainly, students and the labor movement thought of themselves as proponents of the armed struggle. Bolivian Communists tended to be Trotskyists, however, and not much influenced by Moscow.

*Q: Well, you were a labor expert. I mean how was the labor movement at that time?*

DeSHAZO: The labor movement was at odds with the military regimes but gave only tentative support to civilian governments – since it was normally far to the left of them. Labor unions in Bolivia moved from being a strong supporter of the nationalist revolution

in 1952 to occupying a space much farther to the left. The Mission reached out to labor as an important priority – we had a labor attaché and I did cultural and information programming with labor unions. I remember sending labor leaders to the U.S. under the International Visitor Program. So there was dialogue and contact between the labor sector and the Embassy.

*Q: Well, given the events of later, was there the equivalent to a nativist movement? You know, indigenous movement?*

DeSHAZO: Bolivia, of course, had a very large indigenous – Amerindian – population. They were still referred to at the time as *campesinos*, - rural dwellers, but in fact many lived in urban areas. Indigenous Bolivians traditionally supported the MNR – the nationalist revolutionary movement that carried out the 1952 revolution but by the time I was in Bolivia, things were changing and there were currents within the indigenous political scene that were considerably farther to the Left. Overall, the indigenous in Bolivia occupied the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder – poverty was especially prevalent among rural indigenous. Racism and prejudice against the indigenous were always just under the surface – I remember many occasions that brought it out. Once, as cultural attaché, I arranged for two Bolivian music groups to perform at the Ambassador’s residence for guests at a reception – an audience of Bolivian elites in one area or another. One of the two groups of performers were Aymara *campesinos* from a remote spot on the *altiplano* who spoke only rudimentary Spanish. Their dances and music were totally traditional – very non-Western. After the performance, some of the guests remarked that they were impressed that the U.S. embassy would highlight such genuine indigenous culture – it was a revelation for them. But others complained that it was insulting that the U.S. Ambassador would allow such a “backward” picture of Bolivia to be presented. At any rate, indigenous Bolivians were not excluded from politics by any means but had considerably less political power than their numbers would merit – since they were over 50 per cent of the population. But the late 1970s did not see the kind of widespread indigenous political activism that would come later – in the 1990s and beyond.

*Q: Now, did -- how about Bolivia’s neighbors at the time? Would Chile have the greatest influence, or?*

DeSHAZO: Relations between Bolivia and Chile were very difficult owing to the loss of the Bolivian coastline after the War of the Pacific with Chile. During my time in La Paz, there were efforts by military presidents Banzer and Pinochet to reach an agreement on a swap of territory that would allow Bolivia to gain access to the sea. But the deal never materialized and Bolivia subsequently broke relations with Chile in 1979 – the hundredth anniversary of the War of the Pacific. I remember the moment well because I was visiting Santa Cruz and was being interviewed live on a local radio station. And all of a sudden somebody said, “Flash - Bolivia’s just severed relations with Chile. We have somebody here from the U.S. embassy. What is the comment of the U.S. government?” (*laughs*).

*Q: (laughs) Oh God.*

DeSHAZO: And I thought oh, Okay, here's my career up or down, right now.

*Q: How did you respond?*

DeSHAZO: I think I said something to the effect that, "This is an issue for Bolivia and Chile to, to work out between themselves," (*laughs*).

*Q: Your training really kicked in (*laughs*).*

DeSHAZO: That may be common sense. It was our official position but I had never had to respond before to it on the record.

*Q: Well, did you get involved obviously in one way or another in the whole drug business?*

DeSHAZO: Drugs was becoming a major factor. And it was something that was ever more present as an agenda item in bilateral relations. It was a factor in the coup of June 1980 that toppled the very fledgling democratic regime of Lidia Gueiler. The military regime that came to power had strong ties to the narco sector. Bolivia had become an important producer of coca leaf and a transshipment point of drugs. Cocaine consumption was on the rise in the U.S. and Bolivia was an important element in the illegal commodity chain. My early exposure to the drug issue served me well in my next assignment – in Medellín, Colombia.

*Q: Well, you were cultural officer. Was there anything that one, looking at that from a distance in sort of mega-terms would say, "Well, here's where American culture are pushing at -- would really be affected?" What was in it for us? What were we doing culture-wise?*

DeSHAZO: We were trying to show that the United States was a diverse country with strong democratic traditions, that we were still struggling to come to terms with the war in Vietnam and what that did to our society, that despite our problems we were a dynamic society willing to take on big social challenges. The Cold War provided a constant backdrop to everything we did – but I found it much better to put aside the anti-Communist, anti-Soviet stuff and focus on the United States – "warts and all." I was always confident that the more foreign audiences knew about the United States, the better for our bilateral relationship. And in terms of the Cold War, it helped highlight the differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union by having people draw their own conclusions and comparisons, a process which favored the U.S.

*Q: Well, did -- at that time were we able to -- or were you able to speak quite frankly about our racial problems and how we were dealing with -- because this was a time that we were pretty fully engaged in this.*



DeSHAZO: That's an issue I always spoke to. It was not something we dodged or underplayed. The Soviet and Cuban propaganda that we came up against pictured the United States as a virulently racist society, but it was impossible to deny that racism existed. What we had to show was the change that had and was taking place – away from segregation and Jim Crow to a system where at least legally equality was enshrined. Maybe because we diplomats spoke openly about racism in the U.S., we had credibility. It was interesting to see how young Latin Americans who visited the U.S. under the International Visitor Program or educational exchanges came back with a more nuanced view of race relations in the U.S. They were impressed – in terms of the IV program – that nobody tried to hide the social problems in the U.S. – it was not the kind of Potemkin village approach that official visits to the Soviet Union took.

*Q: Well, was there anything within Bolivian society that somewhat paralleled our racial problems?*

DeSHAZO: Bolivia was a society that discriminated against indigenous people. Not officially, but certainly there was discrimination -- and it varied from region to region in Bolivia and it varied from different group to group, but there was discrimination against indigenous peoples.

*Q: What about Bolivia and the arts? Was there much going on?*

DeSHAZO: The Bolivian arts scene was pretty vibrant. There were several world-class painters, many quality local artists, excellent musicians, at least one important film director and one of the richest folklore traditions in the Americas. Bolivian weavers and other indigenous artisans were top-notch.

*Q: Did you get any high-level visits while you were there?*

DeSHAZO: Well, let's see. Secretary of State Vance came for an OAS (Organization of American States) meeting in La Paz. And that ended up dispersing at the end in the midst of a violent military coup. Vance was probably the highest-level visitor from the United States that I can remember. On the cultural side, we had some important visitors – the saxophonist Phil Woods, the guitarist Barney Kessel – world class figures. But generally, Bolivia was not high on the agenda for visitors.

*Q: Well, it sounds like it would be memorable in the secretary of state's view too. I take it he has to leave in a hurry or --*

DeSHAZO: At least his transportation was well arranged. But I remember the other foreign ministers and high officials having a rough time getting out -- with the airport being closed and a violent coup that occurred just as the OAS meeting was concluding in La Paz. But the OAS general assembly meeting was a big event for me as a junior officer. By some unusual twist of fate, I and another JO from USIS ended up meeting with the Secretary for a few minutes to discuss his speech before the general assembly – how it

would be translated and distributed. We even had the gall to make some comments about how to improve it. And Vance listened.

*Q: Well, what -- Okay, where were you when the coup happened and what would a junior officer do during a coup?*

DeSHAZO: My boss, the PAO and I were sending reports back to the Voice of America and to Washington based on what we saw in the streets and learned from contacts in the media. And I remember driving around town with my boss – dodging street barricades with shooting going on sporadically. When we arrived at our office, there was a dead man in the doorway on the street. It was quite a scene.

*Q: When they had the coup, what did they do? In other words, when one side kicks another side out do they put them in jail, send them back home, or what?*

DeSHAZO: In this case it was a military coup engineered by an army Colonel, Alberto Natusch Busch against a civilian constitutional regime – headed by the MNR leader Walter Guevara Arce. Natusch managed on hold on to power for only two weeks or so and was eventually forced to back down and cede power to the leader of the Bolivian congress who took over as interim president – Lidia Gueiler. But civilian rule was weakly established and Gueiler herself was overthrown in another coup just after I left Bolivia in June of 1980. I don't remember where Natusch ended up.

*Q: Ah. Okay, well we can always fill some of this in. Now, did -- what was your impression of -- well, first place when did you get an ambassador?*

DeSHAZO: I remember Alec Watson – the new DCM, arriving a month or two after I arrived in late 1977 and Paul Boeker coming in as ambassador probably in early 1978. I don't recall exactly..

*Q: Yes, I've interviewed Alec.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, Alec was the DCM.

*Q: What was your impression of Boeker as ambassador?*

DeSHAZO: The first thing that struck everyone was how young he was. I think he was one of the youngest ambassadors in the service. I think he was probably 39-years-old. Nice guy, very competent. I later knew him when he was at the Americas Society in San Diego, California.

*Q: He died quite young, didn't he?*

DeSHAZO: He did. Very unfortunate.

*Q: In interviewing some of the early people who served there, I came away with the impression that Bolivia had a bunch of disgruntled miners with dynamite sticks stuck in their pockets.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, the miners were very militant. Their conditions were difficult. Bolivia's key export since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was tin. The boom cycle in tin had sort of come to an end a long time before my assignment there, but tin was still important to Bolivia. It was, however a very high cost producer – not very competitive. Tin mining was still a state enterprise – with COMIBOL (Corporación Minera de Bolivia) in charge of operations. The miners were a very militant labor group and often times you would see them in protests, sometimes carrying sticks of dynamite to show off their prowess and militancy. Miners had played an important political role and were the backbone of the labor movement for some time.

*Q: What was social life like there?*

DeSHAZO: It was quite rich. We had many Bolivian friends – interesting and charming people. We traveled all around the country – by air, bus, train and over the very difficult roads. The natural beauty of the country was incredible and I was able to do things I'd never done before like mountain climbing, very high altitude skiing, fishing at 16,000 feet – everything seemed to be at high altitude and far from human settlement. I played basketball in the Bolivian national league. The cultural life in La Paz was busy – and there was an active social life among people in the Mission. Most importantly, my son was born in La Paz, which made the tour entirely memorable.

*Q: Well now, was Vietnam at all a subject at this time, or had it pretty well died out?*

DeSHAZO: The image of the United States was still hurting from Vietnam. But I think the memory began to fade with the years – especially as new events took center stage. For example, I was in La Paz during the takeover of our embassy in Tehran. That had a large effect on everybody in the Mission and was the key item of news for more than a year. There were other issues in the Latin American region that got a lot of attention – the signing and ratification of the Panama Canal treaties, for example.

*Q: Well, did the Panama Canal Treaty, I mean this was one of the major reasons for coming up with it, was that it had been a, a thorn in the side of our relations with Latin American countries. Did the fact that we were really doing something about it seem to have a positive affect?*

DeSHAZO: I think it did. It had a very positive step and was seen in a positive light throughout the Hemisphere.

*Q: Was there a, a group of disgruntled Chileans who'd been opposed to Pinochet sort of hanging around in Bolivia or not?*

DeSHAZO: Not that I'm aware of.

*Q: I wouldn't think -- it wouldn't be a very receptive country for that sort of thing.*

DeSHAZO: No, I don't think so.

*Q: How about American visitors? Did they play much of a role?*

DeSHAZO: There wasn't much American tourism. One issue that became a substantial one in the bilateral relationship were Americans arrested on drug charges in Bolivia. I became involved in this issue at the start of my JO tour when I worked in the Consulate and visited prisoners in jail. One of my earliest achievements in the foreign service was working with Embassy lawyers to clarify the eligibility of Americans arrested on drug-related issues for parole or to serve out the remainder of their sentences in the United States.

*Q: How were prisoners treated?*

DeSHAZO: Well, in Bolivian jails at the time you sort of got what you paid for. If you had no money you got whatever treatment they gave you, which was not much. If you could pay, you could rent your own room or rooms in the prison and buy your own food. Plus other privileges. There was definitely a hierarchy of those who were able to pay and those who couldn't.

*Q: Well, after -- you left there when?*

DeSHAZO: In June of '80.

*Q: Where'd you go?*

DeSHAZO: Went to Medellin, Colombia, which was my next assignment.

*Q: Colombia was right in -- really -- this is a very dangerous and warlike situation, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I wouldn't say warlike. I would say that there were security concerns and, and it became increasingly more problematic during the tour.

*Q: So, so you went to Colombia from when to when?*

DeSHAZO: I was there from June of 1980 to probably June or July of '83.

*Q: What was your job?*

DeSHAZO: I was branch public affairs officer, with the diplomatic title of consul.

*Q: And you were where now?*

DeSHAZO: Medellín.

*Q: I'm surprised we had anybody there.*

DeSHAZO: We had a consulate in Medellín when I arrived – as well as in Cali and Barranquilla. I was assigned to the consulate as the USIS (United States Information Service) officer in Medellín. Reported to the public affairs officer in Bogotá. There were three other officers in the consulate – the consul and two vice-consuls. . There was also a U.S. – Colombian bi-national center, which I ran and did the public affairs work for the consulate. The consulate was closed a year into my tour and the State Department officers were withdrawn. So I was there by myself for the last two years still with the diplomatic title of consul. And I ended up doing everything. I did political reporting, some economic reporting, reported on security, provided U.S. citizen services as needed, plus all the USIS stuff -- running the bi-national center and the outreach to the newspapers in Medellín , relations with universities, the cultural community – all that.

*Q: All right, let me stop for just one second. Okay. Well, I must say I would like to get a picture, because I thought Medellín was sort of out of bounds and sort of a no-go area. But I mean, how dangerous was it for you to be there?*

DeSHAZO: At the time, I understood what the threats were and felt confident enough to be able to do my job quite freely. The largest threat to my security was probably from left-wing insurgents – guerillas, especially the M-19, that had attacked the Medellín bi-national center more than once. When travelling outside Medellín, I was concerned about the FARC – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, that was slowly taking control of rural areas in the Department of Antioquia – of which Medellín was the capital. Common crime was also a large concern. I was not as concerned about the drug cartels – at that point it did not make much sense for them to move against me – although they clearly could if they had wanted to. I did not think that my family was at risk – I would have been the target. To put this into perspective, when my tour in Medellín was about to end, the Department re-evaluated the presence of an American officer in Medellín and decided that the security situation was such that I should not be replaced. Since me, there has been no U.S. diplomat stationed in Medellín.

*Q: Well, we had a very active drug program, anti-drug program going on, didn't we?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, we did.

*Q: I would have thought that would have attracted the, the nasties against you.*

DeSHAZO: My three years in Medellín was a time in which the Medellín Cartel was really ramping up. They had pretensions of being a legitimate business concern but at the same time used any and all means, especially rampant violence. Drug-related killings were an everyday matter – the murder rate in Medellín reached astronomical levels. But at the same time, for example in 1982, Pablo Escobar, the leader of the Cartel, ran for the

Colombian congress and was elected as an alternative representative out of Medellin. It was incredible that he sought to portray himself as a legitimate business and political figure – and also that he could be elected

*Q: Well, did you see Escobar?*

DeSHAZO: No.

*Q: I mean was this -- you were prohibited, or?*

DeSHAZO: It would have sent a terrible message.

*Q: But he was a political figure.*

DeSHAZO: It was something that never crossed my mind.

*Q: No, I was just wondering because if he ran -- if he held political office there he would be a natural subject to call on.*

DeSHAZO: I had no contact with any of the members of the Medellin Cartel, - at least that I was aware of. In Medellín at the time, there was great concern about Cartel money and influence penetrating legitimate institutions and organizations. Rumors about who was what were rampant.

*Q: Well, what would sort of -- here you are in a place that most people have avoided like the plague. How was life there?*

DeSHAZO: It was normal in many ways. I never felt that my family was threatened and I think they led relatively normal lives. I assumed that if someone wanted to eliminate me, they would find me somewhere other than at home. We had security at home and at the office, but the care that I exercised personally was also a key variable. I maintained both a low and a high profile -- high on the cultural side as director of the binational center and low on the diplomatic side. I did considerable programming at the universities, even the University of Antioquia, which was a center of support for the Left in Medellín and where anti-Americanism was the strongest. My greatest concern was the M-19 and the attraction that the binational center had as the key symbol of the United States in Medellín.

*Q: Well, I would think that the bi-national center would, I mean it would be a place where a prudent student or somebody would go.*

DeSHAZO: It became a place where a lot of people went, which was the goal. They studied English in large numbers and the BNC became a key cultural institution in the city. We had a good library, refurbished our art gallery and inaugurated a dynamic program in American film. USIA at the time was well-funded and many high-level U.S. cultural attractions visited under U.S. government auspices. I'm very proud to say that

after I left, the BNC continued to expand in size, in the number of students, in its cultural presence, and became perhaps the most effective and dynamic bi-national center in all of Latin America. For me personally, running an institution with 60 employees and being responsible for generating its income, meeting payroll, covering administrative expenses and putting away a sizeable reserve was a new and welcome challenge. I learned a great deal about management from that experience.

*Q: This really seems just sort of astounding, that this was going on. Do you have the feeling that there was almost, with the M19 and the drug people and all, was there the equivalent to an arrangement not to upset things, or did you have any feel of that nature, or not?*

DeSHAZO: No. I don't think that any such arrangement existed. I guess I was just lucky. The M-19 attacked the BNC some years after I left, so it clearly had no qualms about striking against what it considered to be a U.S. presence.

*Q: How about the local officials? I'm talking about the normal people you'd deal with, the mayor and head of police, and all that.*

DeSHAZO: I dealt with a wide array of local officials according to the circumstances. Alvaro Uribe, who later became president, was elected mayor of Medellin in 1982 – when I was stationed there. And I knew the governor of Antioquia, the commander of the Fourth brigade of the army, the chief of police and the university officials and the publishers of the two main newspapers. Beyond contacts with the local elite, I reached out to younger people who were journalists, professors, and community, business and cultural leaders. Many of them went on to hold very senior level positions in Colombia.

*Q: Well, you know, particularly the reputation of the Latin American universities was that they're often really controlled by very strong leftist elements from the student body. And it became really dangerous places for Americans to go.*

DeSHAZO: If somebody told me I couldn't go someplace that's where I wanted to go.

*Q: (laughs)*

DeSHAZO: When I heard "It's a place where Americans don't go and we never do anything there," then my goal was to do something there. It was like catnip. Like the University of Antioquia. I remember doing a program there about the El Cerrejón mining project on the Atlantic Coast that was being developed with U.S. capital and we wanted to get our views across. If a group of people had a poor view of the United States, I wanted to do something about it.

*Q: Well, could you -- I mean did you have problems talking to the students, or were they really interested?*

DeSHAZO: I would find that they would generally be interested. And people would be sometimes amazed that somebody would come in and say “I’m the U.S. consul,” or “I’m the director of the Colombo-Americano” or “I’m the, whatever, the secretary of the U.S. embassy or the cultural attaché.” They weren’t expecting it, and they would listen.

*Q: Well, what was the M19 after? I mean they had kidnapped our ambassador at one point.*

DeSHAZO: The M-19 was a nationalist, proto-Marxist organization formed in the early 1970s, with the purpose of toppling what it considered the oligarchic government of Colombia. It was mostly based in cities and a large number of the militants in the organization were middle class – many from the universities. After some very bloody confrontations with the government, the M-19 eventually agreed to renounce violence and demobilize and began to participate in politics. Years later, when I was DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary), I remember a lunch held in the residence of the U.S. ambassador in Bogotá where I was seated across the table from a senator who was an M-19 leader during the 1980s.

*Q: Well, what were -- what were we doing in the Medellin area? I mean did we have any anti-drug programs going on there, or?*

DeSHAZO: I gave support to programs that were run out of the NAS (Narcotics Affairs Section) of the embassy in Bogota – mostly oriented toward improving law enforcement and also treatment of addiction and public awareness. We had two DEA agents assigned to Medellin. Talk about people in the hot seat. As the Medellín cartel grew in strength, it became increasingly more difficult to do high-profile counter-drug programs.

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

DeSHAZO: The ambassador most of the time I was there was Tom Boyatt. I overlapped for a couple of months with Lewis Tambs toward the end of my tour.

*Q: How’d you find Tom Boyatt?*

DeSHAZO: He was very effective. He visited Medellin several times during my tour, kept track of what I was doing and was very supportive.

*Q: I would think that the ambassador would spend an awful lot of time checking on sort of your, you might say your health in the place there.*

DeSHAZO: I definitely got a sense that he was concerned about me as was my boss, the public affairs officer Carl Howard, and followed events in Medellín closely. But it became increasingly more difficult for embassy officers to visit Medellín

*Q: When it became more difficult what did that mean?*



DeSHAZO: Well, there were more rules laid down by diplomatic security about when you could visit and when you couldn't and whether you could spend the night and all of these kinds of things, which seemed kind of strange because I was spending every night there (*laughs*). I remember how nervous the vice-consuls were when they made periodic visits to meet with U.S. citizens, but I guess that is normal, since the city had a bad reputation and they spent very little time there. People tend to be less worried when they know the terrain – even if there is danger present.

*Q: Yeah. Yeah, one, one thinks about well, you know, I spent 18 months living, living by myself in Saigon in the middle of the city. And you know, it wasn't -- there wasn't much of a threat. But I was protected by a Siamese cat.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah.

*Q: So.*

DeSHAZO: Well, - my protection was I guess mainly my own common sense.

*Q: Yeah (laughs). Well, after -- I mean did you have any difficult times there?*

DeSHAZO: In what sense?

*Q: Well, I don't know, where you really threatened or in the wrong place at the wrong time?*

DeSHAZO: Well, a couple of times, I thought that things were, were going to happen. I remember a couple of false alarms at the office and once thought I was about to be kidnapped when somebody cut me off in traffic and forced my car to stop, but it turned out to be nothing. It had unfolded like a textbook kidnapping attempt – the kind we studied and supposedly prepared for in the security seminars. But as it unfolded, I was able to determine that it was not a kidnapping. Another night as I was driving back from a softball game with my three-year-old son in the car we came upon a roadblock as we rounded a corner – but poorly done – it looked like local thieves trying to get cars to stop – and I ended up driving right over it and kept on going. Every time somebody would come up next to you in the car on a motorcycle with a young guy sitting behind him, I would watch carefully. That was the typical operating style of the *sicarios*, the hit men, on the motorcycles. When you were out on the street or moving around or in different places where you hadn't been used to, you were always on guard.

*Q: Yeah. Well, did the -- you might say -- obviously in general terms, but did the people of Medellin who were responsible, the mayor and all, try to encourage us to try to continue our presence there?*

DeSHAZO: They lobbied hard for the return of the visa function of the consulate.

*Q: Oh yes. I mean was Miami sort of the great R&R (rest and relaxation) place for the people?*

DeSHAZO: There was a certain amount of travel to the United States. The people in Medellin have a very strong civic spirit and a very big identification with their city and their region in Colombia, an enormous amount of regional pride. And they're famous for having a strong work ethic and being serious people, very entrepreneurial. That kind of environment was being undermined by the drug cartels. The city of Medellin was going through a really hard period and everybody knew it. It was not a prosperous time. The industries of the city were in decay and the physical infrastructure was falling apart. Twenty years later, Medellín experienced a tremendous renaissance. But this was a rough time for the city

*Q: Was it because of the drugs or were there other factors?*

DeSHAZO: Mostly the drugs but there were other factors. The 1980s was a tough period for Latin America in general. Colombia didn't suffer as much from the big debt crisis in Latin America in the 1980s because its financial house was in much better shape. But it was not a particularly prosperous time. And Medellin had been on a downward swing in terms of its textile industry and other businesses for some time. But the city was really under assault by the drug gangs. You could feel the weight of the cartel all around.

*Q: Well, when you have a drug business in a country, it brings money in, but at the same time it also brings drugs into the country. I mean in other words, were young people involved in the drugs? I mean using drugs or --*

DeSHAZO: I think drug use was going up. But there were other effects too. There was distortion of real estate prices, the rise of people who had inordinate amounts of money who were trying to buy influence and buy their way into acceptance in society. Everybody was questioning whose money was legitimate and whose wasn't. It was a tough period.

*Q: Well, you left there when?*

DeSHAZO: In 1983 in the summer.

*Q: Well, must have been quite a feeling of relief.*

DeSHAZO: Well, to a degree. But we were leaving good friends, many people that we had a lot of affection for. People whom I admired and liked very much – courageous people who loved their city and their country. But it was a relief not to be so much on guard. I remember when I was driving the streets of Santiago a couple months later and the first time someone on a motorcycle and a rider behind him came right up next to me. And I immediately tensed up – which I no longer needed to do. It took a while to readjust.

*Q: Well, what about -- you know, I've left out your wife and kids. How did this affect them?*

DeSHAZO: There was not a large American presence in Medellín My wife was from Chile and integrated well with the Colombians. At the time my son was very small and my daughter was in grade school. Both spoke native Spanish. So they were able to get along. But it was tough for my daughter because the Antioquian families were really tight knit and tended to be sort of clannish. At least at school it was hard for her to be accepted by the Colombian kids, even though language was not a factor. Eventually she was, but it took time. I'm sure it was not easy for them – all of us felt somewhat isolated and, over time, more limited by security concerns in where we could travel and what we could do.

*Q: Well, then where did you go?*

DeSHAZO: We were transferred to Chile. In August of 1983.

*Q: What was your job there?*

DeSHAZO: I was first secretary and cultural attaché.

*Q: And you're in Chile from when to when?*

DeSHAZO. 1983 to 1987.

*Q: What got your change there to Chile?*

DeSHAZO: Why did I go to Chile?

*Q: Yeah.*

DeSHAZO: After Colombia, I definitely wanted to be in an embassy. It was a good opportunity and a chance to work in a country where I thought I could play a helpful role. For my family, it was a nice change, because my wife's family lived there – so the children had their grandparents, uncles, cousins.

*Q: What was your job?*

DeSHAZO: I was cultural attaché.

*Q: And what did that mean in, you know, because the job is used in various contexts.*

DeSHAZO: Right. Early on – in Bolivia – I learned that the cultural affairs officer job was maybe the most flexible position in the embassy, in which you can work in just about any area and make contacts almost anywhere – if that is your inclination. In the case of Chile, for me it meant that I went well beyond the sort of normal cultural type contacts and made a concerted effort to establish contacts in political circles, with the media,

human rights activists, -- all over. I had a certain number of government contacts, including some in the national police (Carabineros) and at the national military and diplomatic academies. But I would say my strongest suit was contacts in the opposition to the Pinochet regime, be they in the media, cultural, academic, or political areas.

*Q: All right. What was the situation when you arrived there?*

DeSHAZO: It was a very tense and difficult moment for the Pinochet regime. There had been a severe financial crisis in Chile in 1982. The banking sector had virtually melted down, with a severe downturn in the economy and a large devaluation of the currency. The economic crisis led to widespread protests in 1983 that were led by oppositionist labor organizations. This was the first time in many years where there were widespread demonstrations in the streets. The reaction of the Pinochet regime was to declare a state of siege. We arrived in Santiago a couple of days before a huge protest in which the government called out the army. Dozens of protesters were subsequently shot down in the streets. I recall vividly the sound of gunfire after dark – there was a curfew and we were living in temporary quarters in downtown Santiago, where much of the action was.

*Q: Well, was this unusual that they would be using that type of force?*

DeSHAZO: For several years after the coup of 1973, there was severe repression of political opposition in Chile with thousands killed, disappearances, that kind of thing. But by the late '70s the Pinochet regime had achieved a certain amount of economic success and required less repression to maintain control. The economic crisis of 1982 changed that equation – prompting widespread protest and a return to more repression on the part of the regime.

*Q: What was -- how would you say -- I mean was the embassy defensive of Pinochet or was it opposed -- I mean were the officers divided? How would you say they were dealing with - it must have been a difficult situation?*

DeSHAZO: U.S. policy towards the Pinochet government during the first Reagan administration was supportive of Pinochet, as a bulwark against communism. The administration backed all of the military regimes in southern South America – Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The idea in vogue at the time was the Kirkpatrick doctrine -- that pro-American authoritarian regimes that were anti-communist deserved our support. And so, the relatively poor relationship that existed between the United States and the Pinochet regime during Carter years was turned around during the early part of the Reagan administration. The U.S. goal was to engage Pinochet, to discourage him from violating human rights and to quietly encourage some sort of an eventual transition to a democratic government, but certainly no pressure in that regard. More or less “constructive engagement” with a regime that was seen to be basically friendly to U.S. interests.

*Q: Well, how did you feel about the policy? I mean you'd been away and been infected by pressures not governmental. How did you feel about the Pinochet government?*

DeSHAZO: For me the Pinochet government was an aberration in Chilean history. I understood the confrontation that had taken place during the Allende regime, but it was hard to be in any way sympathetic with a government that had so massively violated human rights. So I was not in agreement with our policy. I thought that we should be much more active in trying to promote a transition to democracy in Chile. But I was just a first secretary and didn't have much clout in that regard.

*Q: No, I understand. I'm trying to, you know, delve a little bit below the surface as far as in an embassy during a difficult period. I was in Greece during the time of the Colonels.*

DeSHAZO: Right.

*Q: And you know, there are different elements within the embassy. What were you getting from -- I mean you were hitting, particularly as cultural attaché dealing with the media, but particularly universities and all. Were these periods -- were these people receptive of you? Or were you the representative of a, of a government that was supporting a repressive regime? Or how, how did this work?*

DeSHAZO: I arrived in Chile with the goal of reaching out to the opposition to the Pinochet regime. In 1983, this was not encouraged by the Embassy front office but I felt that it was absolutely necessary. So, I found myself in the odd position of trying to establish contacts with people who distrusted the Embassy and the U.S. Government and at the same time were considered by the front office to be either unfriendly leftists or people of no consequence. There was distrust of me at first – people wondered why I was interested in them. I started with places where leftist academics and intellectuals were able to openly work – think tanks, human rights organizations, some media people, and cultural figures. I made many contacts among student leaders – at the time elections for university student federations were the only elections taking place in the entire country. Also university professors. Eventually I reached out to purely political figures – mostly Christian Democrats and Socialists – who were in the opposition to Pinochet.

*Q: Well, did you find that there were true believers of Pinochet? People that really felt that any giving away to what we would call the left at the time would be disastrous?*

DeSHAZO: Sure. There were plenty of those, especially in organizations like the army, in some political groups that were staunchly pro-Pinochet, people who were strongly anti-communist and thought that the opposition - if it should come to power again -- would be dominated by the Left. Also in the business community. But there were others among Pinochet supporters who felt uneasy with the continuation of authoritarian government and were looking towards another day but were still distrustful of the opposition. There was a specter of fear of future instability or Marxism, since at the time the most active and vocal opponent of the regime was the Communist Party and its armed wing, the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front. It was not as if the Communists were about to topple the regime, - far from it -- but Communism certainly caused fear in some sectors of the population.

*Q: Well, could the left demonstrate itself or -- I mean, you know, if you got a repressive regime, what about the left? Where --*

DeSHAZO: The Left was divided. There were still a considerable number of former officials of the Allende government in exile. Some had returned. The big division was in the Chilean Socialist Party between a social democratic group that had been exiled in either the United States, Mexico, or Western Europe and a Marxist sector of the party that had returned from exile in Eastern Europe and was more militant. The Christian Democrats were also somewhat divided between a more conservative and a more progressive or liberal element within the party. The Communist Party was deeper underground and was considered the most anti-American and most dangerous element by both the Pinochet regime and the Reagan administration alike.

*Q: Could we make contact with the Communist Party?*

DeSHAZO: We did not have contact with officials of the Communist Party.

*Q: But it was off limits?*

DeSHAZO: Pretty much so. The Communists were considered beyond the pale.

*Q: Yeah. What about the military? Did you have sort of contacts with the military other than our attaches?*

DeSHAZO: There was a shift in U.S. policy that was very dramatic between the first two years I was in the embassy, 1983 to mid 1985, and the last two – 1985 to 1987. This had a large effect on our outreach to the military. Before 1985, I attempted to make contacts in the military largely through efforts to bring U.S. speakers to the military academies and advanced policy centers. These speakers normally discussed U.S. foreign policy, Central America, and other issues that Chilean military officers were interested in. After 1985, when our policy of support for Pinochet began to change, there was greater distrust of the U.S. in the Chilean military – especially the Army and Navy, and it became more difficult to work with them – despite the fact that we were trying all the harder to reach out. The National Police – the *Carabineros*, and the Air Force were more open to us – but only to a point.

*Q: The Carabineros were like -- the Carabiniere in Italy and all were actually essentially part of the army. Were they, or were they --*

DeSHAZO: No, they were a separate branch from the Army but were brought under the Ministry of Defense during the Pinochet years. The commander of the *Carabineros* was a member of the four-man military junta that governed the country – headed by Pinochet.

*Q: But I would assume that they had probably a better feel for the populous and all than say the army or navy did.*

DeSHAZO: Yes, I think they did. They tended to come from the ranks of the working classes and their officers more representative of the lower middle class than those in the army or navy, which tended to be recruited from the middle or upper middle class.

*Q: Did you get any feel for sort of -- I'm not sure how one does this, but for the housewives? Because the housewives, you know, turned out to be pretty -- these were the people who got out and banged pots and pans and this sort of thing. I mean this is a group that's hard to, to win over by any particular party.*

DeSHAZO: All political groups in Chile sought the support of women. The Pinochet regime thought that it had special attraction for women – and tried hard to win them over by appealing to what it thought was their fear of Marxism and a return to chaos, economic insecurity, etc. The opposition tried to win over women by an appeal to democracy, respect for human rights, and by underscoring the importance of equal rights for women. So one appeal was negative the other more positive.

*Q: Well, did your -- how'd your wife find it there? I mean was she welcome as a daughter of Chile, or was she -- or was her American connection somewhat suspect?*

DeSHAZO: She was not overtly political and was able to deal with lots of different people. She knew the culture of Chile well, obviously the language. Both of us had many close friends in an array of circles.

*Q: How about, how about your work with the universities? Universities are, as I understand it in Latin America, are often quite independent. They get kind of taken over by students or become easily radicalized and all. How was that playing out in Chile?*

DeSHAZO: During the military government the universities were not being taken over by radical students. The administration of universities remained either in the hands of state-appointed officials or conservatives who were very careful not to be in opposition to the regime. In terms of student politics, however, Christian Democrats or the Left tended to dominate the elections for student federation leaders. These were significant events – as I mentioned earlier, the only real elections taking place in the country and therefore an interesting barometer. Students were highly politicized. But even the student leaders had to be wary of the military regime.

*Q: Well, did you find that you were treated sort of with kid gloves, or were people very careful when you went to the universities?*

DeSHAZO: I spent a lot of time at universities and did not feel uneasy. The reaction of students to the U.S. began to shift as our policy changed. I carried out a very wide array of academic and cultural programs on university campuses and could see how this change was registered. One example was a visit Ambassador Harry Barnes and I made to the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Chile – one of the most far Left entities in terms of student body of a state university. The occasion was a performance by a zydeco band –

Cajun musicians from Louisiana that USIS had on tour. When Harry showed up, all of the students recognized him. As he was announced, a group of Communist students began to jeer him – but their boos were drowned out by the cheers of the Christian Democrat and Socialist students who were pleased by his presence. The reaction reflected our policy of support for a democratic transition – rejected by the Communists, supported by the rest of the opposition.

*Q: Did we get much in the way of -- or did you all get much in the way of visitors from Washington?*

DeSHAZO: Again, I think you have to look at the two periods. In the first two years, when the USG was more enthusiastic about Pinochet, there were relatively few official visitors. I recall a visit by Assistant Secretary for ARA (Bureau for Inter-American Affairs) Tony Motley, but nobody higher than he that I can recall. As our policy shifted, we had more and higher level visitors – including high level congressional visits – such as Senator Ted Kennedy, who came to express support for the opposition and Senator Jesse Helms.

*Q: Well, why -- what caused this split?*

DeSHAZO: This was a conscious policy decision that was formulated over time and was manifested during the course of 1985. At the beginning of the year, policy still appeared steady on course in support of Pinochet – although with more misgivings. By the end of the year, it was clear that the policy had changed and that the USG would actively seek a transition to democracy in Chile. It came about, I believe, from the realization that quiet engagement with Pinochet was not producing results in terms of greater respect for human and civil rights and that Pinochet had no intention of making any changes to his long-term plans for Chile, that would leave him in power for a decade more and result in a “protected” democracy still dominated by the military. Washington made the decision that this scenario did not favor U.S. interest or ideals.

*Q: Did, you know, through your connections, reading the American papers or something, see where this -- what was fostering this shift? Was this within the administration or was this public opinion, or what?*

DeSHAZO: Everyone at the Embassy knew about the policy debate in Washington. The manifestation of it became clear in late 1985 when Harry Barnes was assigned as ambassador to Santiago. Harry made it patently apparent to everyone – and to the Chilean government and people, that this was a new situation. Upon presenting his credentials to Pinochet, he reflected that the “ills of democracy must be cured with more democracy” or something to that end. This was a sea change.

*Q: What was your initial impression of Ambassador Barnes?*

DeSHAZO: There were few people with whom I worked in the foreign service who inspired me to the degree Harry did. He was transferred from being Ambassador in India



– someone who clearly was sent to Santiago with a special mission and with high level support at the Department. Although he had never served in Latin America before, he managed to learn sufficient Spanish to conduct business and was energetic in learning everything he could about Chile. Harry was tireless – I never knew anyone so devoted to duty, and yet he seemed entirely tranquil, almost placid. He was a great leader – projecting clear goals to the embassy and enlisting support from every element in the Mission. I had the honor of working with him for four straight years – both in Santiago and in Washington - and a great honor it was.

*Q: Did somebody explain to the embassy or to you or anybody that things really were changing and why?*

DeSHAZO: We understood our goals clearly and our efforts were well-coordinated. We had an excellent team and topnotch leadership.

*Q: Mm. Well, how about -- did you get representatives of the American press that came there and did they kind of beat up on you all, or?*

DeSHAZO: There was considerable representation of U.S. media – and international media in Chile at the time. Our relationship with them was very good – I had very close ties – friendships - with many of the top journalists in the city – very beneficial and positive. The coverage coming out of Santiago by international media was usually sophisticated and well-informed.

*Q: And so, you know, sometimes the story is that what happened in Chile is American's fault and you all at the embassy did it.*

DeSHAZO: Well, the, the story began to shift, as the Pinochet regime reacted very strongly against Ambassador Barnes. And it quickly got to the point where Pinochet would not meet with the ambassador, where Harry was being reviled in the right-wing media. The far right called him "Dirty Harry", because it was quite clear that U.S. policy had shifted and was supportive of a transition to democracy.

*Q: I might point out for somebody looking at this at a later date, Dirty Harry was the name of a very tough policeman portrayed in the movies by Clint Eastwood and --*

DeSHAZO: Correct.

*Q: Well, was the media -- I mean was there sort of each section of the body politic had its own newspaper and that type of thing?*

DeSHAZO: The media was censored and controlled in varying degrees. Television was the most controlled. The government understood the inherent power of TV and jealously denied any access to TV by the opposition and tightly enforced content control on television stations. The Government TV station was, of course, a total mouthpiece for the administration. The print media was also censored tightly – above all the big daily papers

– some of which were controlled by private individuals or groups that supported the government anyway. There were oppositionist weekly and monthly publications with small circulation and even they were sometimes shut down or individual journalists punished if they went too far in their criticism. Radio was a little bit more open – there were radio stations friendly to and oriented toward the opposition – one major station in particular was controlled by the Christian Democrats. But again, the government could come down hard on them if criticism of the regime took a turn that was considered unacceptable.

*Q: Did the opposition of the people who had fled, were they located in Bolivia or Peru or Brazil or what? Did they have much influence?*

DeSHAZO: The people who were exiled were spread out across different countries of Europe, North America and South America. Communists and members of the far left wing of the Socialist Party tended to go to Eastern Europe and especially the GDR. Western Europe, the U.S., Mexico, and Venezuela were destinations for Christian Democrats, or Socialists or members of other parties who had been exiled, depending sort of on their connections.

*Q: Well, did this cause sort of international protest of the Pinochet regime?*

DeSHAZO: Absolutely. It was, it was a key factor that helped fan a very strong rejection of the regime outside of Chile. Of course at the time there were plenty of other military regimes in Latin America. So the Chilean regime was not unique in being a military government in the region but it was singled out for particular criticism.

*Q: What was your impression of the effectiveness and sort of running the government of the Pinochet government? I hark back to my days when the Colonels were running Greece, and they were doing a terrible job. Most governments did a terrible job but theirs was particularly bad. I was just wondering.*

DeSHAZO: The regime made a decision - and this took place while I was a student in Chile in 1974 -- that it was going to embark on a liberal, orthodox, free-trade kind of economic model. It used a team of economists, civilian economists, who were trained at Chicago or other schools of business or economic departments, in the United States to carry out a much more liberal kind of economic policy, moving away from the import substitution industrialization model with a large state sector to one based on freer trade, privatizations, de-regularization, encouraging foreign investment, etc. That produced a strong economic performance in, in the late '70s, but then the system came crashing down as did so many economies in Latin America in the early 1980s when the debt crisis hit. Chile's entire financial sector melted down in 1982. But unlike what happened in other Latin American countries, the liberal model was not discarded but rather reformed and by the latter years of my time in Chile, '85, '86, '87 the economy was going strong again. So the Pinochet regime pointed to this as a mark of its credibility and effectiveness. And politically it was useful to them obviously, because they could claim that if Pinochet were not in power, the opposition would come up with a model that

would return Chile to the disastrous economic policies of the early '70s. What the regime was trying to do was to ease up on the repression, try to win people over to support it because of its economic capabilities, point to higher paying jobs, more employment, claiming that that prosperity was widely shared and that therefore the regime deserved support.

*Q: Looking at, at the situation, was there the feeling of the military junta that the air force was a bit more liberal or, or navy, or what?*

DeSHAZO: The Air Force was closer to the United States in terms of its training, doctrine, and all of that, and was therefore seen as more open to the U.S. than the Army or the Navy.

*Q: What was your impression or were you somewhat removed from the role of our attaches there?*

DeSHAZO: I thought our attaches did a good job. As we, as we embraced a policy of support for a democratic transition, that made their life more difficult, especially for the army and the naval attaches because their counterparts in those branches of service began to look at the United States as operating against their interest. And so it made their work more difficult. But they tried hard.

*Q: Well, it had to be a difficult assignment.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, it was. Especially with the Chilean Army

*Q: What about the artistic -- I mean you were a cultural attaché and so obviously you had artistic contacts. I would think this group would be -- to a person opposed to whatever the United States was for at the time.*

DeSHAZO: Interestingly, this was a group that was very anti-regime, anti-Pinochet but that eventually began to look with favor on U.S. policy. When I arrived in Chile, there was suspicion of me as I reached out to them but over time I made many friends. And as it became clear that the United States was on the side of a democratic transition, the Embassy was viewed as being on their side. We used the International Visitor program to send Chilean artists to the United States. I especially recall sending three very distinguished Chilean actresses to the U.S. – all of them vocal opponents of the regime. The Government was furious – to the point, I recall, of sending a diplomatic note of protest to the Embassy. We promoted contact between the artistic communities of the U.S. and Chile. I had very strong contacts and friendships in the Chilean theater world, among writers and intellectuals.

*Q: Had there developed something akin to the self-publication that developed in the Soviet Union of, you know, mimeographed pieces of literature and criticism and all?*

DeSHAZO: Criticism was more open than that. The most obvious criticism of the regime was in theater, where the government decided -- I guess early on -- that the theater was one area where they weren't going to really crack down hard because the censors assumed that only a minority of elite types attended plays and that most of them were anti-regime anyway. It was also an area the regime could point to -- as if to demonstrate that it was open to criticism - but without any risk. In terms of the morale of the opposition, however, the theater played an important role -- keeping alive a flame of protest. Film production was much more tightly censored and there were few feature-length movies produced. TV was the key media -- from which the opposition was banned. It was the promised land for reaching out to large audiences. And the regime at all cost wanted to keep the opposition away from TV. In terms of print media, low circulation cultural publications could criticize the government -- to a degree -- but it was not easy to publish books strongly critical of the regime.

*Q: Well, was there any sort of dissident groups? I mean sort of the like, but I assume quite different than the Shining Path in Peru and elsewhere. But you know, sort of terrorist groups or the equivalent?*

DeSHAZO: There were plenty of dissident groups. The political parties of the opposition were not legal but still functioned. Political exiles were returning to Chile on a steady basis since the late 1970s and more in the 1980s, including some of the leading Socialists, like Carlos Briones and Clodomiro Almeyda. The Christian Democrats also operated openly. The Communist Party was clandestine, but everybody knew that it was there and who the leaders were. The armed wing of the Communist Party, the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, carried out dozens of bombings and far left elements nearly assassinated Pinochet in 1986.

*Q: Well, did you feel at the embassy under any particular threat?*

DeSHAZO: The Manuel Rodriguez Front planted bombs in different places that were linked in the public mind to the U.S. and the Embassy was always on the alert. I was aware of all this, but especially after Colombia did not feel personally threatened.

*Q: Did you all feel under a certain amount of siege by public opinion in the United States of saying oh, you're part of that support group for this horrible dictatorship and all?*

DeSHAZO: No, I didn't. I was aware of what world opinion thought of the Pinochet regime, but it had little effect on me because I had confidence in what I was doing. And after 1985, more sophisticated observers began to understand that the U.S. was no longer automatically supportive of Pinochet -- quite the contrary. At the Embassy, post 1985, I felt that all of us had confidence in the rightness of our mission.

*Q: What about -- I would think that the French embassy and its outreach would be sort of a -- I would say -- I don't know, a bone of contention. Or it's just because the French took a pretty strong view against Pinochet.*

DeSHAZO: That is interesting. Despite what international public opinion may have perceived, the U.S. was in the forefront of seeking a transition to democracy in Chile. We were in close contact with the Western European embassies, with Canada, Australia, and the democratic countries of Latin America. But in terms of staking out a public position in Santiago in support of democracy, we were in the front lines. The reaction of the Pinochet regime made that pretty clear.

*Q: Well, how about -- did you have the equivalent that was up in Central America? Sort of the Sandalista crowd? The kids who -- American kids who came there to promote the anti-Pinochet movement?*

DeSHAZO: No, I wouldn't say that. There were not large numbers of American students or groups who were in Chile at the time – at least that I was aware of. But it was clear that there was interest in Chile in academic and other circles in the U.S.

*Q: Did you feel that you were under any particular constraints in your work? Or were you pretty able to do I mean what you wanted within the boundaries of what a job would be in any embassy?*

DeSHAZO: Especially after the change in policy after 1985, I felt I was making the very best use of my abilities and contacts. As if this was a job that I had been waiting to do for a long time. That was not the case during the first two years of my tour, where I felt like an odd man out in the Mission – there were a couple of colleagues like me – who openly chafed at our policy of friendly engagement with Pinochet – but we were a small minority.

*Q: Well, could you describe say maybe a day going to a university? I mean what sort of things would you be doing there?*

DeSHAZO: I was chair of the U.S.-Chile Fulbright Commission and worked hard on promoting the academic exchange and trying to enlist Washington's support in expanding the program. I would go to universities and meet key faculty, looking for ways to strengthen courses regarding the United States, looking for possible speakers, sometimes bringing in U.S. professors. We did programs with Chilean universities aimed at promoting U.S. positions on democracy and human rights. One particular example of this was a conference that we had with the law school of the Catholic University in 1987 marking the bicentennial of the U.S. constitution. We brought three leading U.S. experts in constitutional law, the history of the U.S. constitution, human rights law, etc. The program compared constitutional traditions in Chile and the United States, with leading Chilean experts participating. I remember the, the enormous sense of anticipation and, positive tension in the conference hall when we held the opening session -- on the human rights tradition in U.S. and Chilean constitutional law. Ambassador Barnes was there to open the event. . The large hall was packed, with national and international media covering the proceeding. The result was a vigorous statement of U.S. support for democracy and human rights – and, in comparison, a laying bare of the violations of civil and human rights by the Pinochet regime.

*Q: Well, were we concerned that Castro might be making inroads there because we were kind of on the wrong side of the, of the agenda for some time anyway?*

DeSHAZO: There was always concern in Latin America that the Cuban regime was supportive of the far Left. By the 1980s the threat -- in South America -- of any kind of organized insurrection by the far Left, however, was long gone. It was no longer the situation of the late '60s and early '70s with, the Montoneros, Tupamaros and Allende and the sense that Latin America was exploding in revolution. There was an assumption that Cuba was always supportive of a revolutionary alternative, always in one way or another against U.S. positions. However, in the case of Chile, the Communist Party of Chile was more conservative -- more pro-Soviet and less Cuba-oriented, . But there were elements of the Chilean Left that were pro-Cuba -- and Cuba looked favorably on the Manuel Rodríguez Front. The Chilean Communist Party was virulently against any U.S. position whatever it happened to be. As the U.S. encouraged a transition to democracy -- eventually through the mechanism of a plebiscite to determine whether Pinochet would remain in office or that free elections would be called, the Communists denounced the process as a gringo trick to lure the opposition away from direct confrontation with the government and keep Pinochet in power. So we found ourselves in the situation where we were being criticized by the Pinochet regime for siding with the opposition and by the Communists for allegedly propping up Pinochet. I felt very comfortable with that.

*Q: I mean overall this was -- well, not this Chile, but elsewhere -- did you find that -- Cuba was of course always meddling and it was a darling of the left. But the very fact that they did not have elections or meaningful elections, this must have been a very good weapon to use against those that supported the regime there.*

DeSHAZO: When I was in Chile, from '83 to '87, I would say the Cuban influence was small. How it plugged into the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front, was a concern. The Cuban example was something that still had resonance in university circles -- as the revolutionary regime that stood up to the United States. But Chile is a far more conservative country and the idea of Cuba as a political model was something that most people in the Chilean opposition never considered desirable or viable. There was instead a strong commitment to democracy that became even more solid as the opposition began coalescing into a powerful force.

*Q: Well, were you there when the plebiscite came that basically brought the end to the regime?*

DeSHAZO: I was in Washington as country officer for Chile at the State Department when the plebiscite took place in October 1988. I left the embassy in the summer of 1987.

*Q: Did this -- this was a period, this was really before the internet was more than a twinkle in Al Gore's eye, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: Pretty much. The first computer that, that I ever had in front of me was when I moved over to the Chile Desk at the State Department in the summer of 1987. A Wang.

*Q: Well, is there anything else we should cover while you were in Chile? Did you make some influential or important to you friends while you were there?*

DeSHAZO: I had many contacts and friends. Many of the people that I met and knew when I was stationed in Santiago became high officials in the democratic regimes that were to follow. These were academicians or politicians who were on the outs during the military government. Many of the young student leaders of that generation that I was able to meet and engage with went on to be high-level political leaders as well. These contacts and friendships became very helpful later in my career.

*Q: Well, did you find that, during the time you were there that was almost an intellectually stultifying feeling within the society at the time?*

DeSHAZO: No, not at all. To the contrary, it was quite stimulating. There was so much political discussion in the air over what the opposition should do – what kind of transition to democracy would take place and what a future government in Chile would look like. It took time for the opposition to unify, to develop a shared program, to coalesce around a decision to play by Pinochet's rules according to his constitution of 1980 and go to a plebiscite. Pinochet and his supporters built into the 1980 constitution a plan to institutionalize military control for a longer period of time – sixteen years. But they judged that such a long period in power was unseemly and so decided to break it up into two eight-year periods, and that there would be a plebiscite after the first eight years to determine whether Pinochet should continue for another eight years or that elections should be held. In 1980, when the economy was strong and his popularity was high and he had full control of virtually the whole country, Pinochet had no qualms whatsoever about going into a plebiscite. It was assumed that he would win overwhelmingly. But the economic downturn in 1982 and 1983 changed the panorama. This meant that the opposition – and pro-Pinochet sectors, did a lot of soul-searching political maneuvering, rethinking about how to proceed.

*Q: Well, while you were there, I mean were we optimistic or were you optimistic that things would be moving in the right direction?*

DeSHAZO: I was. I was after the shift in policy in 1985. But for Chile the key factor was the unity of the Chilean opposition. If it had not been able to unite, it had not been able to reach a minimum consensus on its goals and objectives it could not have won the plebiscite in 1988. That was the watershed event. But the opposition did coalesce and there were several central factors involved. I would say perhaps the key development was the migration of the Socialist Party away from Marxism to Western European style socialism, forming a more coherent link with Christian Democrats and other opposition groups. During my first two years in the Embassy – before the arrival of Ambassador Barnes, I and a mid-grade political officer were about the only officers in the mission who made a major effort to reach out to the Socialists. That was not something

encouraged by the Front Office. I remember holding a reception for the new Secretary General of the Socialist Party in my home and when the U.S. media wrote about it, the Ambassador at the time was not pleased. After 1985, we had close contact with the Socialists.

*Q: Well, you went back to Washington then to what, to the Chile Desk?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah.

*Q: You served there from?*

DeSHAZO: '87 to '89.

*Q: '87 to '89.*

DeSHAZO: Mm-hmm.

*Q: Well, that must have been a fascinating time.*

DeSHAZO: It was a remarkable assignment.

*Q: Again, when you got back, did you find you were bringing sort of good news or, or were you all on the same team at that time, or what?*

DeSHAZO: It was very clear when I got to Washington that our policy was to encourage a transition to democracy in Chile. The problem was how to do it. In my case, Ambassador Barnes had encouraged me to apply for the Chile Desk job and supported my application. He wanted somebody on the desk who knew Chile and all the issues – understanding that there would be some major challenges ahead.

*Q: Well now, who were some of the people dealing with Chile in Washington?*

DeSHAZO: The assistant secretary for ARA was Elliott Abrams. Bob Gelbard was the DAS who had South America and Chile in his portfolio. Our office director (Southern Cone) was Dick Howard who had been political counselor I think, in Buenos Aires and generally handled more Argentina stuff. Bob Hopper was the deputy director and was very supportive. The ARA team was well-coordinated and on the same page on most issues. Other bureaus at State were focused on Chile as well – Human Rights, International Organizations – which was not enthusiastic about ARA's positions – and others. Throughout other agencies, there were an array of people who worked on Chile – I worked with all of them in one way or another.

*Q: Well, the secretary of state was?*

DeSHAZO: George Shultz.



*Q: George Shultz. Did you get a feel for his approach to the situation in Chile?*

DeSHAZO: I was present a number of meetings with Secretary Shultz with both Chilean government figures and opposition leaders. He was strongly engaged – more so than I would have expected, - and was very supportive of the Bureau. He had respect for the economic achievements of the Pinochet administration but promoted the policy of support for a transition to democracy.

*Q: Well, I mean we -- our secretary to the United Nations was still --*

DeSHAZO: Vernon Walters.

*Q: Yeah. But prior to that it had been?*

DeSHAZO: Jeane Kirkpatrick.

*Q: Jeane Kirkpatrick. And she was the big exponent of supporting dictators who supported us.*

DeSHAZO: Right. As laid out in her famous article in *Commentary* magazine that got so much attention.

*Q: And apparently it attracted the president at the time.*

DeSHAZO: Right. It appealed to the Reagan campaign.

*Q: Had that, that no longer was operative, I take it.*

DeSHAZO: For some it was still very operative.

*Q: You know, when you have this bulwark against communism, which is -- comes up again and again and again, in the context of as an officer, desk officer, did you look at this and see that this really didn't make sense, or not?*

DeSHAZO: My talking point all along had been that Pinochet's resistance to a transition to democracy was the best thing the Communists had going for them. It was just about the only thing they had going. I used the term "symbiotic" to describe the relationship between Pinochet and the Communists.

*Q: Often this is the case, yeah. Did you find yourselves, find yourself pretty much where all of you dealing with Chile and Latin America, pretty much on the same side regarding the apparent changes in Chile?*

DeSHAZO: I think that by the time I got to Washington it was clear that there was a growing consensus in government and on the Hill regarding the need for democratic change in Chile. Ambassador Barnes and others in the Bureau worked really hard with

Congress to cultivate, to inform, to elicit support for our policy in Chile, to build bipartisan support for U.S. policy as we moved forward to try to promote a transition to democracy. I think that by the time the plebiscite took place in October 1988, there was strong consensus support of that policy. But it took a while to build. And there were those who opposed it and still thought that by promoting a democratic transition we were undermining Pinochet and supporting a position that would make Chile vulnerable to communism.

*Q: Well, while you were there the Iran Contra Affair cropped up, didn't it?*

DeSHAZO: It sure did.

*Q: I mean did that affect other parts of our Latin American policy, or weaken the, the bureau, or anything of that nature?*

DeSHAZO: It certainly affected the Bureau but interestingly I don't think it had much influence on our policy in Chile. I saw that as being on a different track. But certainly it was something that was a big factor for the Reagan administration. Some claim, given the fact that Elliott Abrams was Assistant Secretary, that support for democracy in Chile was some sort of a counterweight to Central America. But I didn't see it that way – but rather as in and of itself an important policy initiative.

*Q: Well, during this whole time, did the fact that the Soviet Union was sort of collapsing way off there, did that make any difference?*

DeSHAZO: I think the gradually closer relationship or more productive relationship that we had with the Soviet Union had an effect on our policies towards Latin America. The fear of a major Soviet presence in the region or its ability to manipulate the communist parties or whatever was less. Both the ability and the desire of the Soviet Union to promote organizations opposed to the United States was further weakened by the late 1980s. The Chilean Communist Party was also weak and increasingly isolated – in part because our policy favored a coalescence around democracy. The Chilean communists were only able to gain ground if the Chilean people lost all hope in a peaceful transition to democracy. If there was nothing on the horizon, no hope of removing the Pinochet government by some sort of an electoral means, the Communists were there waiting to promote some other way of doing it. That was their main appeal.

*Q: During this -- as you got back to Washington, did you find that the organization of American states, OAS, was much of a factor in what we were up to?*

DeSHAZO: I'm trying to remember an occasion in which the OAS had a role in the case of Chile when I was on the Desk. Of course the Chilean representatives at the OAS would have wanted to make sure that the OAS stayed neutral. Maybe the Human Rights Commission had played some role, but I wasn't aware of a major OAS position on Chile.

*Q: Well, what did -- as the desk officer, what'd you find you spent most of your time doing?*

DeSHAZO: There were everyday matters that every desk handles – but the ever-present and key issue was how the United States could support a transition to democracy in Chile. When I started at the Desk in August 1987, no date had been set for a plebiscite the following year – in fact there had been no decision taken to go to a plebiscite. The opposition was still talking about a preference for elections rather than a plebiscite, which it feared could be more easily manipulated by the government. The constitution, however, stipulated that there would be a plebiscite sometime in 1988. The Bureau's position was that the United States should early on lay out a clear Chile policy and to state it publically. I drafted that policy statement and, once it was cleared by the Department, it went over to the White House, where, to my surprise, it was also approved. The policy statement -- authorized both by the President and Secretary Shultz, was read at a press briefing in Washington in late December 1987 and became the lodestone of our policy – something that we referred to for the next nine months and afterwards. The statement put us on the record as supporting a transition to democracy and outlining our views on what a free and fair electoral procedure would look like – freedom of expression, assembly, the right to register to vote, no states of emergency, etc. But the key factor was our position that a legitimate electoral process would allow the opposition to have easy and equitable access to TV. Or, put differently, that it would not be a legitimate process if there was no such access to TV. That was the holy grail of an election in which the opposition could compete. The Chilean government hated the policy statement. It came in conjunction with other steps – removing Chile's GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) privileges, etc. – all sending a strong signal of U.S. support for democracy. I remember the day the State Department spokesman read out our policy, the NPR story I heard on the radio that night claimed that “Today the United States put in lump of coal in Pinochet's stocking.” There were many other big issues – shoring up support for our policy with Congress, working with European and Latin American governments on Chile, marshaling USG support – from AID and from the NED -- for a free and fair plebiscite and working hard on moving forward our efforts to obtain justice regarding the longstanding dispute with Chile over the Letelier-Moffitt murders that place in Washington D.C. in 1976. Eventually, we invoked a bilateral treaty with Chile that was signed in 1914 as a means of making progress on the dispute. The Pinochet government used every means at its disposal to sandbag our efforts.

*Q: How did you find the Hill? I mean was it pretty much all in the same, working on the same side, or was it pretty mixed?*

DeSHAZO: There were some Democrats who were suspicious of the Administration's policy, thinking that somehow the Reagan administration could not really be serious about trying to promote a transition to democracy in Chile. They wanted to take yet more energetic steps against the Pinochet regime. There were some very conservative Republicans who thought that the Reagan administration had gotten off track and was being steered by the State Department into taking a very dangerous path to undermine Pinochet and therefore open the door to Communism. And then there was what became a

majority that ended up joining a bipartisan consensus in support of U.S. policy. Eventually, Congress issued resolutions supporting the transition and reaffirming U.S. policy – all of which was very helpful. By the summer of 1988, nobody could argue that support for democracy in Chile was some sort of a rogue policy by the State Department.

*Q: Well, did the Pinochet government have a lobbyist in place here in Washington?*

DeSHAZO: The Chilean government worked very hard in Washington to, to bolster its image and to try to convince people that, that the State Department had gone rogue and was taking a position that was harmful to western, anti-communist values. Or that Chile's efforts and success in the economic areas would be overturned and that an irresponsible, Marxist-dominated government would run the country if Pinochet did not continue in office.

*Q: Were you able to refute that, or get others to refute it?*

DeSHAZO: We worked hard and successfully to do that. Many like-minded people in and outside of government spoke out in favor of U.S. policy.

*Q: Sounds like you were working day and night.*

DeSHAZO: I worked really long hours. But I was not unique in this. Everybody in our office worked really hard. We were motivated.

*Q: Well, what was Washington like in those days? I mean did you -- was it -- did you feel you were fighting a battle that you were getting good support on, or was it a bit lonely, or what?*

DeSHAZO: I always had confidence that the senior leadership in the Department supported what we were doing. Again, I was present at meetings with the Secretary on a number of occasions and was impressed. Our efforts on Chile were unusually well coordinated. Harry Barnes was very influential. He visited Washington frequently, was unusually effective on the Hill. The ARA Front Office was very supportive and proactive. It was really a very coherent effort, which made it so successful. I can think of many instances in which U.S. foreign policy failed – many. This was a textbook case of success and there were some important lessons to be learned from it.

*Q: Well, tell me. What was sort of the atmosphere when the plebiscite was held? Was there the feeling that this was going to be -- that they may declare a moratorium or do something, or was -- what was the feeling?*

DeSHAZO: Well, there was an enormous expectation going into it. I was confident that the opposition -- the "No" vote, would win. The key factor was what the reaction of the Pinochet administration would be when it became clear that it would be defeated. There were many international observers in Chile at the time – including from the United States – and the opposition – with support from the NED and others, was ready to conduct

polling of voters and quick counts. The television ads by the opposition that had run for several weeks prior to the vote had been extremely effective. The impact of seeing and hearing material critical of the regime on TV had a dramatic impact, as everyone expected. Again, the key concern was that the regime would take steps to impede the outcome. The Department had already expressed deep concern to the Chilean ambassador in Washington on the eve of the plebiscite about any effort to disrupt or negate the results of the plebiscite. On the day of the plebiscite, things appeared orderly, although there were long lines at some polling places. The first announcements of partial results made by the government claimed that the “Yes” – the pro-Pinochet vote was far ahead, producing consternation and growing tension. Then the government side fell silent – with no further results announced. Around midnight, the members of the military Junta arrived for a meeting with Pinochet in the presidential palace. The media interviewed the air force commander, General Matthei at the entrance and he stated, quite directly, that it was clear to him that the “No” had won. That pretty much sealed the deal. And then the results were announced – showing that the “No” in fact had won handily.

*Q: Yeah, I've talked to others who'd been there and said the fact that Matthei said that publically sort of cut the ground off from those that were planning some sort of declaration null and void or, or rigging the ballots or something like that.*

DeSHAZO; It showed that within the Junta there was acceptance of what was going on – that the results were clear and there was no option but to accept them. Whatever Pinochet's plans had been, he had to suck it up.

*Q: Well, what did we do after the election? I mean was it sort of wash your hands and sort of say okay, this is a new game? Or had we been -- did we have to do much changing?*

DeSHAZO: Soon after the plebiscite, Harry was replaced as ambassador by Tony Gillespie. Elliott Abrams moved on and Bob Gelbard was replaced as DAS. So there was a transition to new players in the Department, but the policy remained the same. The transition to democracy was not a done deal – the plebiscite victory by the opposition meant that there would be elections for a new president. Whether Pinochet would run was not clear. Even if he did not, he could still remain commander of the army and exercise power. There was considerable concern that he could somehow derail the transition process. The 1980 constitution also gave the Right considerable power. It was not going to be by any means an easy transition. There would have to be a lot of negotiating. And any future government of the opposition, would be stuck with Pinochet encrusted in the system. So, support for a successful transition remained the key goal of the United States.

*Q: I interviewed Tony some years ago. And he said that, “You know, I came there full of great expectations.” And the next thing he knows, he was dealing with grapes. Did you get involved in the grape situation?*

DeSHAZO: Yes, I did. That was, that was an unfortunate and very difficult issue.

*Q: Could you explain for someone who might not have been following this what the grape situation was?*

DeSHAZO: The embassy in Santiago had received an anonymous warning from someone in Chile who claimed to be planning a number of actions, among them to poison fruit being shipped from Chile to the United States. Chilean fruit was one of the key exports at the time -- copper was more, in terms of value but fruit was a big business. Very large amounts of Chilean fruit arrived in the U.S. via the port of Philadelphia for distribution, with the peak of the export season being the Chilean summer – the U.S. winter, January-March. With the warning, the USDA, FDA and others were alerted and stepped up the inspection of fruit coming into Philadelphia. Perhaps a week following the warning, a small number of grapes arriving in Philadelphia looked unusual and were tested – the results stating that there was evidence of cyanide, I believe, present. This resulted in the FDA imposing a ban on Chilean fruit from entering the U.S. – I believe it came in early March, 1989. U.S. supermarkets were dumping the fruit that was already there. This added up to a large loss in revenue for the growers and exporters in Chile. There was an outcry in Chile that the U.S. had overreacted or – worse – in some circles there were accusations that the crisis was fabricated by supposedly anti-Pinochet elements within the U.S. government.

*Q: How was it resolved?*

DeSHAZO: Both sides worked to put in place a system of more robust inspections and controls – both in Chile and in the ports, that allowed for the ban to be lifted in a couple of weeks. But the dispute dragged on for years – long after I left the desk.

*Q: Well, did you move from the Chilean Desk to another job in Washington?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, I left the Chile Desk after two years and went, went back to USIA because I was a USIA officer, not a State officer.

*Q: When you moved after -- it must have been a very satisfying period on the desk.*

DeSHAZO: Yeah, it was about as rewarding as a tour gets.

*Q: Yeah, I mean there's one of these things, it sure as hell is not a routine job.*

DeSHAZO: No, not at

*Q: Did you find you were sort of away from things or back to USIA?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I had very much enjoyed the work I was doing at State and had never worked USIA before and, to be frank, was more interested in overall foreign affairs than public diplomacy at that point. I had been offered some interesting positions at the State Department, but USIA insisted that I return to work at the Agency.

*Q: So what did they have you doing?*

DeSHAZO: Well, first year I was assigned as what was called a senior policy officer job in the Bureau of Information at USIA – basically clearing editorials put out by the Voice of America (VOA) on Africa and Latin America and working with those two regional bureaus to ensure that USG policy was being effectively addressed. It was an interesting job in the sense that I was able to learn more about Africa than I had known before and could brush up on policy initiatives in areas of Latin America with which I was less familiar – Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. I tended to be something of a general utility player for different areas of USIA on those two regions.

*Q: Well, can you think of any particular area that you got really involved with?*

DeSHAZO: There were issues related to Cuba percolating – the Agency was attempting to launch TV Marti, so I got involved in that. On Africa, the growing sense that there would be an opening and that the apartheid regime in South Africa was, was on its last legs. I had the good fortune of visiting Africa for the first time - Zimbabwe and South Africa and then went to a PAO conference in Kenya. The trip to South Africa was, was one of the most interesting I ever took during my career. I had the luxury of meeting with an array of influential South Africans – in the media, academia and the cultural world, who were generous in their comments about the transition that was taking place and what they thought a post-apartheid regime would look like. For example, I spent the better part of an afternoon in Soweto with maybe five or so young African writers and the novelist Nadine Gordimer – just us. It turned into a passionate discussion about the end of apartheid, democracy and what a future South Africa could become.

*Q: Well, what did you -- I mean how evident was it that apartheid and all its manifestations was on its way out?*

DeSHAZO: People were no longer obeying many of the rules of apartheid. The walls were coming down – enforcement of apartheid seemed haphazard. There was a surprising sense of openness. It appeared clear that the, the system didn't have legs. The situation seemed like a sort of limbo in which everyone knew that the old system was on its way out and but that nobody knew exactly what was going to replace it.

*Q: Well, were you -- you know, one of the things that had been said, I know when I was in INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) back in the 1960s we were talking, you know, when sort of the system broke down there it could be the Night of Long Knives. I mean was that still prevailing, that sort of talk? Or was the feeling that things were going to work out?*

DeSHAZO: I don't know, -- perhaps since most of the people I met with were anti-apartheid and in opposition to the regime, there was a greater sense of optimism. But it was clear that a positive outcome would not come easily and that the transition would face many challenges.

*Q: This trip there make you want to go to Africa?*

DeSHAZO: It made me appreciate the similarities in terms of having been through the long process of Chile's, transition to democracy – and the issue of building democracy out of authoritarian regimes was something that interested me very much. And South Africa was clearly a case which if it worked out right would be an enormous impulse towards the promotion of a democracy worldwide. But in terms of changing the direction of my career and becoming an Africanist I didn't see it. I really did believe and still do that accumulated experience in a region and profound understanding of what makes a given society work is an extremely valuable resource. And that my greater utility lay in the fact that I knew Latin America as well as anybody in the Service and could make larger contributions to our goals there.

*Q: Well, in terms of Latin America, you know, talking about TV Marti, you know, there've been articles in the paper just recently showing this rather fancy aircraft which was being stored away, which has been stored away now for decades, ready to go out and broadcast TV. And you know, the feeling is this is a boondoggle. I mean and they're, they're -- group after group talk about how sort of Radio Marti was so political, but had really no practical effect. How'd you feel about it at the time?*

DeSHAZO: I thought that TV Marti was not a good idea. It wasn't feasible from many different angles. I thought it was a waste of our time and the taxpayers' money.

*Q: Did you find that one had a treat TV Marti sort of with kid gloves?*

DeSHAZO: It was a project that had enthusiastic backers within the Reagan and Bush administrations – and in the Cuban-American community in Miami, and USIA was given marching orders to make it work. As I recall, the possibilities for transmitting the signal were limited to only a few hours per day – in the middle of the night – and that the signal even during these periods could be picked up only in a couple of isolated spots on the Island. In the end, almost nobody in Cuba ever saw it.

*Q: Well, then you know, after you'd done this African trip, what did you do?*

DeSHAZO: I became the executive assistant to the Counselor of USIA, who traditionally was the most senior foreign service officer of the Agency – a person seen as a key advisor to the Director of the Agency. The Counselor had a large role in coordinating the activities of the geographic bureaus of the Agency and linking them to the other Agency bureaus – Cultural Affairs, Information, Broadcasting, etc. The position was an interesting vantage point in viewing both the overall function of USIA, its relations with State, and the inner workings of the Agency itself.

*Q: Who was the counselor?*

DeSHAZO: I worked for two Counselors. First Michael Pistor and then McKinney Russell. .



*Q: Who was the director of USIA?*

DeSHAZO: Bruce Gelb and then Henry Catto.

*Q: How did you find USIA at this time?*

DeSHAZO: USIA was always considered a paramount Cold War agency of the United States government. It was created toward the end of the Korean War – in 1953 and normally justified itself and its budgets for its effectiveness in countering the propaganda of the Soviet Union and promoting a positive vision of the United States in the environment of the Cold War. Anyone who knew what the accomplishments of the Agency were and how it worked understood that it did much more than fight communism. I was always more drawn to USIA as a force for improving relations between the United States and other countries, for promoting democratic ideals, and for carrying out long term programs that were aimed at involving new generations of world leaders. The key activities -- academic exchanges programs, the International Visitor program, the Agency's publications, libraries, cultural programs, - all built a huge network of personal ties between the U.S. and people all over the world and promoted an image of the United States that was realistic and real but at the same time favorable. That made USIA a vital element of U.S. security. The soft power employed by USIA was vitally important to the United States not just as a means of countering the Cold War adversary, but in and of itself, -- something essential to successful foreign policy and, and diplomacy. From 1989-1991, when I worked at USIA, the Cold War was winding down – and it was pretty clear that the entire role of the Agency was being reconsidered.

*Q: Well, I agree with you completely. But how did you find -- I mean would you say that at least the high command of USIA didn't quite see that?*

DeSHAZO: It made sense that the leaders of USIA appealed to anti-Communism as a key argument for funding the Agency – that played well in Congress. If the Cold War is the central factor point of focus and if countering the Soviets or countering the Cubans is an argument for getting budget support, then that's what you end up underscoring. So the Agency did well when the Cold War threat seeming greatest – under Kennedy, Johnson and Reagan and budgets slacked off when there was détente or the threat was seen as lesser – such as during the Carter Years. USIA had many strengths, but also weaknesses. It had some key defenders in Congress but a small domestic constituency, and with the end of the Cold War, it found itself in a position in which it was not particularly successful in defending its mission. While I had seen ups and downs in Agency budgets during my first 12 or so years in the foreign service, it wouldn't be until the mid-1990s when the really debilitating cuts to the budget came – as part of the so-called “peace dividend” during the Clinton administration.

*Q: Well, did you get -- did you see, were there any difficulties, you know, bureaucratic issues that were taking up a lot of everybody's time?*

DeSHAZO: For me, personnel issues and bureaucratic turf wars consumed a certain amount of time. I was on the tenuring board for junior officers – a very useful and important assignment that gave me helpful insight into the supervision of JOs. But the major issues in foreign policy dominated overall efforts – the Gulf War, the disintegration of Soviet control over Europe, Tiananmen Square, the transition in South Africa.

*Q: Well, you know, this of course is with hindsight. But at the time, was there much talk about using USIA, the USIA apparatus to begin to focus on the Arab world?*

DeSHAZO: The Gulf War certainly focused attention. Beyond that, the Agency seemed to have an excellent corps of Arabists who knew the region well and had valuable language and policy skills. Certainly the Israel-Palestinian relationship was an ongoing matter for the Agency.

*Q: Well, before I moved away from this job with the counselor, were we looking towards other areas where we wanted to spread our influence, such as China or things of -- countries of that nature?*

DeSHAZO: USIA had, had been strongly focused on China for, for a long time. Generally, wherever there was a major opportunity like that to promote the image of the United States to reach out to audiences in countries that were of clearly rising importance that did not have much information about the United States available to people, especially closed societies, USIA played an especially important role. The Agency's experience in dealing with the Soviet Union and the tightly controlled systems in Eastern Europe provided it with a good background in dealing with China. Many of the Agency's top officers were assigned there.

*Q: Well, this is the beginning of an age of, of you might call it digital revolution and all, with news being transmitted rather quickly. I mean -- or had it? I can't -- I'm not sure. Was this sort of the beginning of the cell phone era, or not?*

DeSHAZO: There were new operations in USIA to take advantage of the changes in broadcasting possibilities and in communications technology that was evolving. It was a period of considerable re-evaluation of the VOA and its role – also its delivery systems. Broadcasting to Eastern Europe was being reconsidered in light of the political changes that were taking place with the collapse of Soviet control. The effectiveness and value of traditional publications of the Agency – its magazines, pamphlets, etc., were being scrutinized in light of the opening of societies in Europe. FM stations in, in Eastern Europe and Latin America were coming online and the VOA had to respond accordingly. Increasingly people wanted a more sophisticated product. VOA television broadcasting was something that began in the 1980s and with cable television penetrating markets, USIA was looking to place its products there.

*Q: Well, did you feel that you -- I mean did you feel a cold hand of moving USIA to State? Was that a presence while you were there?*

DeSHAZO: Not so much at that point. But the relationship between USIA and State was something that was very commonly discussed at the Agency -- how USIA should fit into the foreign affairs community. My sense was that public diplomacy did not get nearly as much attention as it should have. Part of the reason for this was the Agency's physical isolation in SW Washington, D.C. It was sort of "out of sight, out of mind" for the State Department. Also there were not many formal mechanisms for Agency participation in the decision-making councils at State or the NSC (National Security Council). In my mind, public diplomacy was often an afterthought in planning at State. When I worked on Chile, it was a central factor, but that was -- in all modesty -- partly due to a public diplomacy officer being on the Chile desk. I questioned whether USIA becoming part of the State Department would be perhaps one way of resolving that issue.

*Q: Was there -- you were what, about a mid-grade officer at this point?*

DeSHAZO: I was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service coming out of the Chile Desk at State.

*Q: Well, was there sort of a feeling among officers of your rank of saying we wanted to get into the action and maybe getting together with State would be a good idea. Or did you feel that, you know, you could do more separate?*

DeSHAZO: There should have been more opportunity for USIA officers to be deputy chiefs of mission and chiefs of mission. Trying to formally bid on DCM jobs from USIA was very difficult at the time - there was no clear or transparent manner of doing so. I saw talented USIA officers, very senior, who did not become chiefs of mission -- something that at State would not have happened. Had they been State officers, there would have been given much more opportunity. In the end, the Foreign Service did not make the best use of their skills or expertise.

*Q: Yeah, I, you know, looking from the, from my standpoint of being quite removed from the career process, I feel that this was a bad mistake. And I'm not sure, it was a little too sort of bureaucratic, a selfish response.*

DeSHAZO: Of course, the State foreign service bureaucracy was protective of its senior positions. But it ended up being a major disincentive for senior USIA officers. Again, the interest of the United States would have benefitted had there been a clear and transparent process to allow public diplomacy officers to bid on and compete for senior State positions.

*Q: Well, were you doing this job when Mr. Duffy came on board?*

DeSHAZO: No. When I went back in the field Henry Catto was still the Director of USIA.

*Q: When did you go and where did you go?*

DeSHAZO: I left Washington in the summer of 1991 and became public affairs officer in Panama.

*Q: That must have been a pretty exciting time, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: It was a really exciting time. It was about a -- year and a half after the U.S. military action to remove Noriega. The U.S. mission was essentially engaged in nation building. Panama was nearly starting over from scratch in the sense that its government apparatus was almost nonexistent after the removal of Noriega and the Panama Defense Force that had run the country. There had been no democratic government for years. The treasury was empty. The Panama Defense Forces were abolished and it was necessary to create the new Panamanian National Police. The judiciary had been manipulated by the authoritarian regime, so the rule of law -- and effective administration of justice had to be established. There was a need to stand up new government entities and train personnel on issues such as financial administration, accounting, law enforcement, customs, holding elections -- just about everything. Basically rebuilding an entire state apparatus was the task at hand.

*Q: Well now, had Noriega and his cohorts -- I mean was it that they had destroyed or milked the government and ruined this functioning, or was there something else?*

DeSHAZO: They had left the country in a shambles. Top officials of the Noriega regime were removed, but a number of former PDF officers ended up in the new National Police. They had to be vetted and retrained, but a number of them were retained -- and new cohorts recruited and trained. The challenge was to stand up an effective security apparatus and at the same time move away from the abuses and authoritarian hold that the PDF had on the country. Panama needed to strengthen its political institutions -- political parties were partly in place but hadn't been allowed to operate and there was no electoral body that could conduct free and fair elections. The media was beginning to recover from Noriega rule and broaden its scope with freedom of expression in place. Panama was adapting to democratic circumstances.

*Q: Well now, an awful lot of you might say the ruling class or the political class had gone to school in the United States. Had they brought much back with them, or not?*

DeSHAZO: Panama's elite had very close ties to the U.S. -- even the PDF types who had received some training from the U.S. military along the way. There was a considerable talent pool but the challenge was to get the political system to allow qualified people to exercise positions of authority in government. Panama had huge challenges ahead -- not just standing up a government and an economy but also dealing with the reversion of territories in the Canal Area controlled by the U.S. to Panamanian control under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. By the end of 1999, all of the U.S. military bases and installations in the Canal area and the Canal itself would be under Panamanian control. But during the Noriega years the reversion process didn't move forward, so there was a lot to be done in preparing for the eventual turnover of all these assets.

*Q: How was the government working?*

DeSHAZO: The Panamanian government?

*Q: Yes.*

DeSHAZO: Well, it started off with having to begin from almost nothing. Endara had been elected in an election that had been overturned by Noriega and after the, after the invasion he was sworn in as president. But he had few resources at this disposal. The United States played an important role in supporting the consolidation of effective government in Panama. We had at the time, I think, the third largest AID program in the world in Panama, a very small country with a very small population. The AID mission at the Embassy was enormous. All of us were engaged in helping the new government to establish effective rule.

*Q: Well, what was -- what were some of your principle tasks during your transition period?*

DeSHAZO: Basically in general support of our policies, institution building, promoting democratic practices, greater transparency, support for our policy on standing up a new Panamanian National Police, support for our counterdrug policies, support for our policies promoting greater transparency in the banking sector and the implementation of the canal treaties. There was a big role for public diplomacy. We used the International Visitor program to help promote issues such as anti-corruption, transparency, good governance, judicial reform. One project that I was particularly proud of was an effort that took place with regard to the Panamanian presidential elections of 1994, the first elections to take place in a democratic environment since 1968. We brought to Panama as a consultant the Vice President of the U.S. League of Women Voters to work with Panamanian TV owners and electoral authorities to help set up the first ever televised debates among the candidates for the presidential election. This was a very complex project that turned out to be an outstanding success – our press attaché Ben Ziff did an extraordinary job in making it happen. We also developed a special International Visitor program for senior Panamanian officials who were in charge of putting together the new Regional Authority of the canal area to visit the U.S. and other countries to examine specific cases of reversion of U.S. military bases to local civilian control. This proved very valuable in extracting lessons learned from cases in which the reversions were very successful and others, which failed.

*Q: Yeah, I'm just thinking. Did -- were the Panamanians who'd lived in the United States coming back to lend their expertise?*

DeSHAZO: There were some. There were very qualified Panamanians in many different areas, but the country faced enormous challenges and the U.S. was able to play a useful role.

*Q: What about the press? Or the media? You must have been very much involved with that.*

DeSHAZO: The media was very lively. There were four or five dailies in Panama some of them very sensationalist and criticism of the U.S. was common. Others were more balanced and mainstream but were also free with criticism of the government and the U.S. The task of USIS was to outline for the public what the United States was doing in Panama, constantly reinforcing the message that we fully intended to carry out the terms of the Panama Canal treaties, that the process of reversion was moving forward. All eyes were on the United States and what the United States was doing because we had such an enormous role in the country. A very, very large presence.

*Q: Well, would you say that the overthrow of Noriega was a popular thing, or unpopular?*

DeSHAZO: I think in the end most Panamanians viewed military intervention as an unfortunate but probably necessary step. There were pro-Noriega elements in Panama after the invasion that remained strongly critical of the U.S. – and Panamanian nationalism was an important variable that affected the bilateral relationship across the board. But one thing that always surprised me was the generally favorable attitude that Panamanians had about Americans and about the United States – despite the record of the Canal Zone, the 1903 Canal treaty, the presence of U.S. troops, and the 1989 invasion. I recall vividly that President George Bush senior made to Panama in what – May or June of 1992. It was just before the 1992 presidential campaign in the U.S. really got into full swing. I was in the motorcade that took the President from the airport into the city and I could see as we rode in there were very large crowds of people that had come out to greet him. They lined the streets – wearing white - the color of protest against the Noriega regime. A genuine and spontaneous demonstration of support for Bush – something that impressed me very much.

*Q: Were the Cubans pretty well out of the game by this time?*

DeSHAZO: Again, I don't, I don't recall much influence of the Cubans in, in Panama. Certainly the model of Cuba as a society didn't get much traction in Panama. There was a minority current within the Torrijos-Noriega Party – the PRD - that was friendly to Cuba and perhaps saw Cuba as a model, but a very limited group. To the contrary, one of the things that continuously impressed me in Panama was the generally high regard people had for the United States.

*Q: Well, were Americans still in the Canal Zone living there or moving or, or what?*

DeSHAZO: It was no longer the Canal Zone, which officially ceased to exist after the treaties took effect in 1979. Increasingly more employees of the Panama Canal Commission were Panamanian and as the military bases reverted to Panamanian control, more Panamanians resided in the Canal Area. There were still American military and

civilians in the bases that remained under U.S. control – but an increasingly smaller minority working for the Canal.

*Q: Well, how about the economy? What was happening then?*

DeSHAZO: Well, the economy picked up pretty well while, while I was there. Panama had a strong service sector and financial sector. Trade increased. Tourism picked up.

*Q: Well, I would expect that the time you were there the embassy would be basically concentrated on rebuilding the, the normal structures of governance.*

DeSHAZO: Yes. That that was the key focus. And within that I think a particular challenge was standing up an effective Panamanian National Police. We had an ICITAP (International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program) program run by the Department of Justice in Panama that worked with Panamanian authorities to reconstitute a police force and the Embassy also helped with the formation of a maritime service and air service that would function as civilian entities. The idea was to demilitarize, to civilianize, and to try to build a police force that would have the respect and support of the Panamanian people.

*Q: How about drugs? Were drugs a presence? I mean a major importance?*

DeSHAZO: Panama was a major smuggling route for drugs coming out of Colombia and up through Central America and Mexico to the U.S. – or through the Caribbean. There was a considerable trafficking going on by sea, by land. Drug use was up. The entire Mission spent a lot of attention on counterdrug efforts.

*Q: I assume you were loaded down with all sorts of officials coming to see what was happening from Washington.*

DeSHAZO: There were a fair number of visits. The Bush visit was the major event. But I wouldn't say that we were overburdened.

*Q: Well, you were there how long?*

DeSHAZO: Three years.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

DeSHAZO: Deane Hinton for the first two years and then for most of the third year there was a Chargé. I was acting DCM and sometimes Chargé for most of the third year of my tour.

*Q: Was the fact that Noriega was in jail, you know, off in Florida, did that sort of weigh heavily, or was it kind of out of sight at this point?*

DeSHAZO: My sense was that Noriega's ability to influence internal affairs in Panama was almost nil. There were former *norieguistas* who had limited clout. But in terms of his exercising any kind of meaningful power, no.

*Q: Well then, you must have -- again, you know, you've -- when you were, your USIA jobs really put you into managerial positions of sort of, if nothing else cleaning up after a mess. Did you feel -- I would assume that you were having, in a way having a hell of a lot of fun.*

DeSHAZO: It was a great opportunity. I learned a lot from Deane Hinton. The quality of the officers in the mission was high. We all had a big job to do. Our work was organized in such a way that we knew clearly what our goals and objectives were. It was very exciting time to be in Panama. We had resources and were able to apply them in so many different areas. As acting DCM for a long period during my tour and as PAO, I was able to work with all sections of the Mission and make a very broad range of contacts – political, economic, security, media cultural. It was a great tour.

*Q: Of course the DCM has the prime responsibility for the people at the post*

DeSHAZO: Right.

*Q: Was there much hassling of families or others by the Panamanians? Under Noriega of course there had been. But I was wondering whether that died when he left.*

DeSHAZO: I don't think people felt targeted or threatened. I think it was a post where generally morale was good and where people were able to conduct a normal life.

*Q: How did you find your social contacts with the Panamanians? Were they -- were you getting complaints or a breathing of sigh of relief, or what?*

DeSHAZO: Complaints about?

*Q: Oh, just about conditions and, you know, you broke it, you fix it sort of thing.*

DeSHAZO: I don't think that was the prevailing attitude. Many were grateful to the United States for having removed Noriega. There was some persistent resentment about the loss of life and damages that took place during the military action by the U.S. and the aftermath – but by the time I arrived in Panama a year and a half after the invasion, these had dissipated by a substantial degree. Most of my contacts were concerned about the challenges ahead – especially the reversion of the Canal area and the military bases – and the degree of consolidation of security and democracy. Pretty soon, Panamanians were caught in the presidential elections of 1994 – in which the opposition PRD won.

*Q: Well, this was -- correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't this the time when the drug lords in Colombia were sort of really at their height and doing a lot of stuff?*



DeSHAZO: Pablo Escobar was killed during the time that I was in Panama. The Medellin Cartel was played out and the Cali Cartel was riding high. But yeah, the drug gangs in Colombia were extremely strong. And one could feel the effects of that in Panama.

*Q: How did you feel?*

DeSHAZO: It was quite apparent that Panama was a major transit country and that drugs and money laundering were a big presence.

*Q: What were they doing? Was there more an effort to bypass Panama or was stuff really going through Panama?*

DeSHAZO: With Noriega gone, there was no longer a government in power that was sympathetic to the cartels. But money laundering was a key issue, given the large banking sector in Panama and its vulnerability.

*Q: Well, money laundering was very much sort of the major industry, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: Panama had long been known for lax banking regulations, ease and lack of transparency in setting up corporations, and lack of control of Colon Free Zone – all of which made money laundering easier. Those were issues the Mission gave high priority to. During my time in Panama, regulations were put in place regarding the declaration of cash at ports of entry, and other sorts of practices to deter money laundering.

*Q: Well, I assume you had a treasury attaché there?*

DeSHAZO: Yes.

*Q: He or she must have been very active.*

DeSHAZO: It was a busy mission.

*Q: Well, did you have a -- you had obviously a military representative attaché or the equivalent. But even more so, I mean had the military completely cleared out of the zone?*

DeSHAZO: The U.S. SOUTHCOM was still headquartered in the canal area and was preparing to move. Some of the big questions were, for example, what was going to happen to Howard Air Force Base, which was the major air force facility in the canal area. The Panamanians were certain that the United States would invariably try to work out a deal to keep Howard after the full implementation of the Canal treaties. That didn't end up being the case. In terms of our military attaches, they worked with the Panamanian National Police and the air and maritime services. So that posed a special challenge - to work with civilian law enforcement. But we also had civilian officers who were working in that regard as well.

*Q: Were our military people having a problem adjusting to sort of the change in things, or had they pretty well written off the Panamanians before?*

DeSHAZO: Our military in Panama was strongly focused as was the Embassy on the reversion of properties and of the bases. There was an office of treaty implementation at SOUTHCOM that was headed by a USAF colonel who was tasked with coordinating the U.S. military efforts in that regard. We sent a clear signal that the U.S. military presence was being phased out and that the Panama Canal treaties would be fully implemented

*Q: Well then, you left there in '92, three?*

DeSHAZO: I left in '94.

*Q: '94. Where'd you go?*

DeSHAZO: I was transferred to Venezuela, assigned to Venezuela.

*Q: And I asked the question, which we didn't answer last time, what was the situation in Venezuela in '94 when you went there?*

DeSHAZO: Venezuela was in the midst of a difficult period, both economically and politically. There had been a coup in 1992. Actually two military coups, one led by future president and then lieutenant colonel in the army, Hugo Chavez to attempt to overthrow the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez. It was a violent, bloody affair. Failed. Chavez was, was imprisoned. But Perez later was involved in, in accusations of diversion of funds and corruption, was forced from office in 1993. There were elections held and Rafael Caldera, the president back in the, in '69 to '74 as a leader of the Christian Democrat party COPEI was elected. But this time around Caldera had left COPEI and had formed a coalition of small political parties, most of them on the left, couple on the right, which won the election in 1993 with something like 30% of the vote. In essence what was happening was that the Venezuelan bi-party system between Acción Democrática, the Social Democratic Party, and COPEI had broken down entirely. This was a setup made after the fall of the military government in 1958 to bring stability to the country. So the two-party system that had been the foundation of Venezuelan democracy was rapidly disappearing. The economy was in bad shape – Venezuela's economy had been in pretty much steady decline since the collapse of oil prices in the early 1980s. There had also been a major banking crisis in 1993. So Caldera found himself with a weak political coalition presiding over a bad economy.

*Q: Who was our ambassador then?*

DeSHAZO: When I arrived Jeff Davidow was our ambassador.

*Q: Did we have any -- what were our interests in Venezuela at the time?*

DeSHAZO: Venezuela was at the time was probably our third largest source of imported oil. After Canada and -- no, probably the fourth, after Canada, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia, Venezuela was the fourth. In those days we imported around what, about 1.2 million barrels a day I think. The energy links included Venezuelan refineries located in the U.S. and in the U.S. Virgin Islands – the U.S. was Venezuela’s largest customer for oil - so we always had a traditionally very close energy relationship. Venezuela was for a long time seen as, as important for the fact that back in the, in the ‘70s and the ‘80s when most of the other countries in the region were military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes, Venezuela was democratic. It was a country that had close cultural ties to the United States. The U.S. was a major trade partner, provided a lot of the manufactured goods to Venezuela. So ties between the two countries were strong. Venezuelans looked to the U.S. for educational opportunities. A lot of Venezuelan students studied in U.S. universities and the ties were quite close. During the years of the oil boom in the ‘70s, Venezuela had a very outward looking foreign policy and was seen as a player in, in regional affairs in the Western Hemisphere. Venezuela was also a founding member of OPEC. So it had that, that role toward international energy policy.

*Q: Well, did you -- I've heard other people I've talked to talk about the problem of Venezuela as being tremendous class differences there between the wealthy and the not others. Did you find that this was a -- were we too close, you might say, to, to the wealthy? Or was it an uncomfortable feeling that you got when you arrived there, or not?*

DeSHAZO: I had never visited Venezuela before my posting there, but one got an immediate sense arriving in 1994 that it was a country in decay. The infrastructure was crumbling. You could look around and see what looked like modern buildings 20 years ago that were in really poor shape. Everybody talked about the glory days of the past. It was very clear that real wages had fallen over a prolonged period of time, that GDP had declined substantially in real terms. So, poverty was on the rise. And the, the disparities that may have been papered over before when the system was flush with cash were now becoming apparent. Especially in the urban neighborhoods, the really poor urban neighborhoods that dotted Caracas. I remember getting lost on several occasions in very poor neighborhoods in Caracas and other places and feeling extremely uncomfortable. Both because of the high crime rate but also the fact that truly there was so much misery in a country that had been famous for having a very high standard of living by world standards. But that certainly wasn't the case when I was there.

*Q: Well, did we -- sort of what was the expectation when you arrived there? Wither Venezuela the next few years?*

DeSHAZO: It was clear that Venezuela was going through a really difficult situation and it was struggling with the decision of whether or not it was going to pursue a more orthodox economic path – a sort of Washington Consensus policy – or revert back to the statist type policies of the past. Caldera had made promises in the campaign that pointed to moving away from orthodox liberal policies that Pérez had implanted during his second administration. In the end, he pursued rather mainstream policies, including supporting an opening of the oil sector to private investment. There wasn't the kind of

money in the system to be able to keep it functioning as in the past, when governments could resolve political problems through economic largess. You'd throw money at a problem. But there was no money. The old system was dying and there wasn't anything new to take its place.

*Q: Well, were we, you know, as Americans, particularly with a neighbor we've been dealing happily with for a while, were we wrestling with the problem of what were we going to do about it?*

DeSHAZO: It was pretty clear that the United States could not resolve Venezuela's problems. There wasn't much we could do. We were a good trade partner, we were an important energy partner and when Caldera opened up the energy sector to allow foreign participation in production and investment, U.S. companies were coming in. But there were problems in the bilateral relationship. The Caldera government accused the U.S. of sheltering people involved in the banking crisis of 1993, some of whom fled and went to the United States. One of the biggest problems that we faced in terms of our public affairs in Venezuela was when we reinstated the policy that Venezuelans needed a tourist visa to visit the United States. That was a major blow to Venezuelan pride. And when the rate of rejections for visas to the United States started going up because of the economic crisis, that was also something that the Venezuelans deeply resented. It was a situation in which the relationship was generally okay but there were some problems that got a lot of attention and caused friction.

*Q: Well, then did Chavez -- he was in jail when you arrived, is that right?*

DeSHAZO: Caldera had promised during the campaign that if elected he would free the people involved in the coup. So, he released Chávez from jail and, and restored his political rights to him, which of course opened the door to Chávez winning the presidency in 1998. During my time in Venezuela, Chávez was behind the scenes building – slowly – a political movement. People didn't pay that much attention to him at the time. Even when I left in mid- 1997 it still didn't look like a Chavez candidacy could win the presidency, but he came on like gangbusters at the end.

*Q: Well, again, while you were there, you were what, what was your job?*

DeSHAZO: I was the counselor for public affairs – the USIS director – but was also acting DCM for the third year of the tour and Chargé on a number of occasions.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the public affairs side of things. How did you find the media and various elements of the media at that time? How effective was it? How open was it to what we wanted to do? How was it going?*

DeSHAZO: Venezuela had a large and sophisticated media sector. Caracas had three or four large-circulation dailies, which covered news about the U.S. and U.S. – Venezuela relations on a daily basis. My relations with them were good -- I met often with their publishers and top editors. TV in Venezuela was very strong – and profitable. Venezuela

was a major producer of soap operas that were sold to TV stations all over Latin America and in the U.S. Radio was also important – and many of the leading Venezuelan stations used news and feature materials from the Voice of America. When frictions arose in the bilateral relationship, we would get strongly criticized in some media but at the same time they would give us a chance to express our version and points of view.

*Q: Could you develop fairly good relations with newspaper editors and the like?*

DeSHAZO: I had an excellent relationship with the most senior people in the newspapers and television. Our top USIS information FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) were very important in maintaining close ties with the media over the years.

*Q: Did one sense that there is a growing sort of populist movement that would turn into the Chavez support?*

DeSHAZO: Well, it was pretty clear that the traditional parties of Acción Democrática and Copei were unlikely to revive – to return to the positions of power they held before the 1990s. But I don't think while I was in Venezuela that people foresaw that their decline would be so total as it turned out to be in 1998. There were lots of different parties. The trend was drifting leftward, but that really wasn't so important. What was important was what kind of government would emerge from the 1998 elections and whether there was any hope for consensus in a divided political environment. By the time I left Venezuela in 1997, the panorama was unclear – with very little sense of where the country was heading

*Q: I mean, did you feel that there was any, really much we could do, or was it sort of sitting on a ship and watching it sink?*

DeSHAZO: Well, no, there wasn't very much we could do. The Clinton administration had good ties with Venezuela. We were engaged on key issues. Mack McLarty, President Clinton's special envoy for the Americas had good relations in Venezuela and was helpful to the Mission. Clinton even visited Venezuela several months after I left post. But there wasn't a whole lot that the United States could do in terms of improving the quality of governance in the country, of promoting efforts to fight corruption. We worked closely with the Venezuelans on counterdrug efforts. Venezuela was a transshipment point of drugs out of Colombia. And at one point there was poppy production in one corner along the Colombian border and we supported Venezuela's eradication efforts. But we couldn't do much to counter the downturn in both the political and economic environment. U.S. – sponsored entities such the NDI (National Democratic Institute) and the NRI (National Republican Institute) carried out program and seminars with political groups in Venezuela to promote issues such as political leadership and support for good government and judicial reform. But in the end those were issues that the Venezuelans had to deal with themselves.

*Q: What about -- was Cuba messing around there?*

DeSHAZO: Cuba had decent relations with Venezuela. But to the extent that there was a major sense of Cuban presence, not that I recall. Nothing like what the relationship would later be when Chavez was president and ties with Cuba became very strong. Those were days when Cuba was still having a really rough time dealing with the fallout from the demise of the Soviet Union and having to survive without Soviet subsidies. So Cuba was not particularly in the strongest position then.

*Q: How about Brazil? Did Brazil have much to do with Venezuela?*

DeSHAZO: Brazil and Venezuela had good relations. Again the presence of Brazil in Venezuela was not that substantial. Of course, Venezuela's bilateral relationship with Colombia was very significant.

*Q: Well, one of the things that interest me is, you know, you have a country like Venezuela, which is having its problems.*

DeSHAZO: Mm-hmm.

*Q: And the United States, if nothing else, will not really express concern, but look for solutions. We might not have a solution, but I mean, you know, it's in our thoughts. What about other countries sort of looking at Venezuela at, at the time? I mean like -- well, I guess Colombia was pretty much tied up with its own problems, but Brazil and other ones. I mean were they making any effort, or was it -- is everybody for themselves?*

DeSHAZO: The nations of Latin America are loathe to get much involved in the domestic political aspects of other countries in the region. They will usually adapt and deal with whomever is in power. And the fact that the quality of democracy in Venezuela was deteriorating and not that the old system was really coming apart. As long as Venezuela was not in utter chaos, other countries in the region were not paying that much attention.

*Q: Did Venezuela have important supporters in the United States, and did they have influence on the embassy?*

DeSHAZO: Venezuela and many Venezuelans had close ties with the United States. Many Venezuelans studied in the U.S. There were people who had good connections in Congress and important business leaders who could exercise influence. There were lots of different types of ties. Baseball was one. There were many U.S. players and coaches going to the winter league in Venezuela and increasingly more Venezuelan players in the pipeline to the U.S. major league teams. Of course, the energy relationship led to close ties between Venezuela and the U.S.

*Q: Well, did you get any high-ranking visitors while you were there?*

DeSHAZO: I mentioned the Clinton visit that came, that came just after I left. I recall Attorney General Janet Reno visiting Caracas. Mack McLarty visited. In general, however, not that many.

*Q: I was just thinking any ones that stuck in your mind. But, as when you left there did you consider this sort of a, a normal post, not one that was going to shoot up in its profile very quickly?*

DeSHAZO: Well, by the time I was leaving the 1998 election was still a year off and the political panorama was very unclear. In mid-1997, the former Miss Universe, Irene Sáez was considered the front-runner among the candidates. She was the mayor of a well-to-do neighborhood in Caracas and was considered the top candidate. Chávez was not that prominently on the screen, as he certainly would be the following year. The only thing that was clear was that the old bi-party system controlled by Acción Democrática and COPEI was gone but no sense of what would replace it.

*Q: Prior to that, hadn't it sort of had the system that the -- I understand it in a good number of Latin American countries you had the -- was it the Blancos and the Colorados switching sort of almost automatically in the elections?*

DeSHAZO: The Punto Fijo Agreement between Acción Democrática, COPEI and a third party in 1958 was a power sharing agreement that circumscribed the rules of political participation to give the country more stability and basically ensure a two-party system in place over a long period of time. And this system was seen at the time as the means of preventing further military coups and providing Venezuela with the kind of democratic stability it never had before. Venezuela's democratic tradition prior to 1958 was extremely thin. Punto Fijo worked well, but it had built in difficulties that over time became more and more apparent as the oil boom of the 1970s turned to bust in the 1980s.

But let me mention something different, interesting and very positive about Venezuela at the time. Venezuela spent a great deal of money on lots of things – when it had much to spend back in the, the 1970s with the oil boom. One of the projects that the government helped finance was to make Venezuela a leader in terms of musical education for children. The government strongly sponsored the arts and built a big cultural center in Caracas that housed dance and theater companies and a number of symphony orchestras. Venezuela during my tour had more symphony orchestras than probably any other country in Latin America. They were fed from a national music education program called “The System” that was the initiative of José Antonio Abreu. Children from families of modest means in Venezuela -- or other kids too -- were given access to musical instruments, orchestral instruments, and taught classical music as performers. And this was carried out all across the country and it led to generations of quite talented Venezuelan musicians being formed, who then joined the different symphony orchestras that were springing up all over Venezuela and produced an enormous boom in the quality and quantity of classical – academic – music. Maestro Abreu has since been recognized worldwide for this achievement. Anyway, Venezuela acquired this widespread capability

in classical music that I didn't see anywhere else in Latin America, except at a very elite level.

And one of the things that gave me particular pleasure and satisfaction involved my work with Radio Nacional de Venezuela. Radio Nacional had a music channel that played classical music 24 hours a day - sometimes intermixed with Venezuelan folk music and but mostly just classical music. When I arrived in country and began to listen to it, it occurred to me that very little U.S. classical music was being played and I suggested to the director of the channel that it would be useful to have a program highlighting U.S. music. She immediately responded: "Good, it's yours." And so, every Thursday night I had a one-hour program at primetime dedicated to U.S. classical music. It became my baby – I planned the programs, ordered the music from the U.S. wrote the narration for the programs and hosted it on air – for my entire 3-year tour. It was an incredible experience. One, because I learned a whole lot about U.S. classical music that I didn't know before. Two, the program received a very positive response from the national audience. People would stop me on the street when they heard my voice and say, "Hey, you're guy on National Radio of Venezuela." And it led to a very fruitful relationship with Venezuelan Orchestras where we – the Embassy would help them to acquire and perform the scores of different pieces of American music.

*Q: Well, I, I -- you know, I can't think of anything more fun. What sort of support were you getting for a program like this from the USIA back in Washington? Did they have somebody who sort of fed you stuff and all?*

DeSHAZO: Some support, but I did it pretty much myself.

*Q: I find it remarkable that they -- was it that you didn't need it or, were they not very responsive?*

DeSHAZO: The Voice of America had great programs on jazz that they broadcast to the Soviet Union but didn't do much on classical music – maybe thinking that the U.S. contribution wasn't very substantial. What's his name? Willis Conover, the host of the weekly jazz program to the USSR became a household name in the Soviet Union.

*Q: He was mobbed when he went there.*

DeSHAZO: That's right. And that should have taught us that the United States could have done a lot more in the world of music. The VOA could have had an incredible rock program, or blues program, or something like that, that would have been an automatic outreach to youth in Latin America. Every time USIS put on anything related to rock or blues the hall filled up. We were able to touch generations we weren't reaching before. But bureaucracy is very conservative and often inflexible.

*Q: Well, I, again, I commend you for this and like to point out to the readers of this that the United States, we do, we do have tremendous resources in our people because we*



*come from such diverse backgrounds and diverse interests. And we kind of like to innovate things.*

DeSHAZO: Well, it's an awesome opportunity when a radio station that has national reach says, "We're giving you an hour a week to put on what you want." If I knew that a piece of American music was going to be played by a Venezuelan orchestra I would interview the soloist or I'd interview the music director to talk about it. People would phone in and make comments over the air and I would always provide introductory material, so it was an educational thing. Most Americans have no idea about the quality of classical music that was being produced in our country in, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Occasionally, 20<sup>th</sup> century composers would make it onto the programs of U.S. orchestras – and that's about it. This was a great way of underscoring the U.S. contribution. The interesting thing about this program was that a lot of young people in Venezuela listened to it because many of them were studying classical music and were playing in youth orchestras.

*Q: Well, could the ambassador have -- he had groups coming from the States on travel grants to come down and show their stuff?*

DeSHAZO: We had different groups coming through from the United States that played in the great venues in Caracas. Increasingly, USIA was doing less of that in the 1990s. During the Cold War when the Reagan administration had poured a lot of money into USIA, a larger stream of U.S. –sponsored cultural presentations came to Latin America. During the 1990s USIA was being cut back substantially, and these kinds of events were increasingly less prevalent.

One thing we did do in Caracas was something that I took a lot of pride in. It's interesting, when you look back on a career, the kinds of things that come to mind when you think about the satisfaction that they gave you. The Fulbright scholarship program celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1996. I led an effort in Venezuela to raise funds from the private sector to support 24 additional Fulbright masters' degree scholarships in the U.S. for Venezuelan students – mainly in the sciences and energy-related fields. There was also a competition at USIA to obtain funding for special projects to celebrate that anniversary. I proposed a program that would highlight U.S. – Venezuelan educational and cultural cooperation – and highlight U.S. music. In essence, it involved a national violin contest in Venezuela, with a master's degree scholarship --at Juilliard it turned out -- as the prize for the winner. We brought the former concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the director of the Utah Symphony, Joseph Silverstein to Venezuela to audition the three finalists for the Fulbright scholarship in violin. Maestro Silverstein also performed the Barber violin concerto with Venezuela's leading orchestra at a special concert that celebrated the Fulbright anniversary, with the Venezuelan Foreign Minister presiding. It gave enormous positive publicity and generated such goodwill for the Embassy and the U.S.

*Q: You know, these are remarkable things that, you know, if the stars and planets are lined up right can happen in our careers.*

DeSHAZO: Well you have to think a little bit out of the box. And put a little effort into it.

*Q: Well, I can't remember, did you -- I'm sure you mentioned it early on, but did you play an instrument?*

DeSHAZO: I played the banjo when I was a kid and played in string bands. With support from USIA and the Partners of the Americas, we recruited a group of North Carolina, folk musicians who played for us in Bolivia, and I later brought them to Colombia and then to Venezuela. They were huge hit, made so many friends and won praise wherever they played. It's impossible to put a number on the value of these kinds of exchanges. At least in my experience in the Foreign Service, cultural exchanges were normally worth whatever we spent on them. There were very few cases when I didn't think the payoff was really substantial. In general, the return on the dollar for public diplomacy is the best investment I think the United States can make and one we don't do enough of.

*Q: No, I, I always think of, as I do these oral histories of sort of the -- we talk about relations and the ups and downs and all. But there's sort of a steady constant stream of the cultural exchanges and the visitors programs and all where we're particularly good at. I mean people are really -- I mean our diversity, our willingness to work with other people, our friendliness really pay off in the long run.*

DeSHAZO: Sure. These programs greatly increased the number of people with some kind of experience with the U.S. – beyond commercial movies. Not to speak of the incredible value of the thousands who studied in the U.S. and became leaders in their countries. Back then before the internet and before people traveled that much, presenting a group of musicians from North Carolina playing banjo and fiddle and mandolin was an exotic cultural experience for people in Latin America. Or a Cajun group from Louisiana. Blues groups from Chicago - maybe people had heard the music on the radio but to see it played, by people who really lived it and were dedicated to it – was a great experience.

*Q: Oh yes. Well, what are we talking about, 1999 or so you left?*

DeSHAZO: Talking 1997.

*Q: And where'd you go?*

DeSHAZO: I went back to the U.S. for some training on the Middle East and a couple of weeks of intensive Hebrew and then went to Israel.

*Q: What brought this about?*

DeSHAZO: Good question. Guess it was a matter of timing of assignments, family factors, the job looked challenging – a combination of factors.

*Q: Well, so how did you find Hebrew?*

DeSHAZO: Hebrew's not that hard, but I didn't get that deeply into it – never really had more than courtesy level Hebrew. I could barely read it and could only speak on a rudimentary level. I had gotten some tutoring from an Israeli living in Venezuela before I left – that was somewhat helpful. It was not required and there was no time to learn it properly. But I knew from the start that I wasn't going to be able to function professionally in the language and that knowledge of Hebrew was not a requirement for my job, which I think was a mistake.

*Q: Well, just as an aside, how stood -- how was the Jewish community in Venezuela treated? Because there's always been, you know, significant number of Lebanese or Lebanese origins in Latin America, but how about in Jews?*

DeSHAZO: The Jewish community in Venezuela consisted of Sephardim from the Dutch Antilles and a group of Ashkenazim, who were of Eastern and Central European extraction that had come during different periods of time, including political refugees from other countries. The Jewish community was an active one that distinguished itself in different professions and activities. It wasn't large, but it was dynamic.

*Q: You went to Israel from when to when?*

DeSHAZO: I was in Israel from '97 to '99.

*Q: What was the situation there when you went?*

DeSHAZO: The big issue was the possibility of reaching agreement on a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian dispute. That was the overarching policy concern during my entire stay in Israel. The new framework was the Wye River Agreements signed in the United States in October 1998. – a deal that pointed towards a possible two-state, two-state solution in which the whole gambit of variables at play were under consideration. The Clinton administration invested enormous political capital in making this happen – staked a great deal on it and it looked as though at least from the point of view of a relative outsider like myself, that it held out substantial promise. Although there were so many problems and difficulties involved that there was considerable optimism.

*Q: What was your job? Again public affairs officer?*

DeSHAZO: I was the director of the U.S. Information Service in Tel Aviv – counselor for public affairs.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

DeSHAZO: Ned Walker.

*Q: How did you find the embassy?*

DeSHAZO: The embassy had very talented officers and exceptionally dedicated FSNs.

*Q: Well, I think for almost anybody, the Middle East has always been a high pressure area where we're very much involved and when you get to Israel it's doubled, particularly compared to anywhere else. I mean going from \_\_\_\_\_ to Israel would be a shock, and I imagine going from Venezuela to Israel.*

DeSHAZO: The major difference from Latin America was the enormous domestic U.S. political interest in Israel. And, consequently, the reality that Washington called the shots and that Embassy Tel Aviv had less policy input. Congress was intimately and strongly involved – as well as civil society, lobbies, and special interest groups. Israel clearly was a different matter than anything I was used to.

*Q: Before you went out, were you -- did you get a pretty good briefing?*

DeSHAZO: The program at FSI on the Middle East was interesting and helpful. I consulted with the different agencies involved in the issues I would deal with in Israel. My preparation was as good as could be expected for somebody who had had no experience in the Middle East.

*Q: Did you get a chance to sample the feelings of other countries like Jordan, Egypt, Syria and all?*

DeSHAZO: I traveled to all of those countries – including Syria. Whether or not I got a deep sampling of what people were thinking about Israel, who can say. I didn't spend much time in any of them.

*Q: How did the -- what was your impression of the Israeli media?*

DeSHAZO: Israeli media was extremely energetic, ran the gambit ideologically and politically. Some very serious, others more sensationalist – but sophisticated.

*Q: Did you have any immediate problems there? I mean were you -- sort of had -- were you treated as an outsider by say, first at the embassy and then elsewhere?*

DeSHAZO: Well, language was sometimes a barrier, though representing the United States gave me and my colleagues special standing. At the Embassy – some officers had prior experience in Israel - including Ned Walker - but very few spoke Hebrew or Arabic. Those who did tended to be especially effective.

*Q: Did you have much of a press corps there?*

DeSHAZO: There was a substantial U.S. and foreign press corps in Israel. Clearly it got a lot of international media attention. Plus the fact that a steady stream of high-level visitors from the U.S. visited and attracted considerable attention. Secretaries of State and

Defense visited several times during my stay – as well as a visit by President Clinton to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority and a visit by Vice President Gore

*Q: What would you do? I mean what would they expect of you?*

DeSHAZO: That would depend on who the visitor was and what the circumstances were. But generally we would be responsible for all of the media support, setting up venues, coverage, and working to ensure that the policy statements were disseminated correctly to U.S. and other media.

*Q: Well, did you have to sort of keep an eye on the American, American press, like The New York Times, The Washington Post, as well as what was going on in Israel?*

DeSHAZO: We would carefully track editorial opinion in the U.S. media – that got very fast attention in Israel – and also reported daily on Israeli media editorials on topics related to U.S. policy or relations with the U.S. Everybody was watching what the media was saying, not just in the United States but, but all around the world. Our post had very close relations with the U.S. media in Israel.

*Q: Did you find yourself teamed with the ambassador, or were you working -- I mean each did your own thing and didn't coincide very much?*

DeSHAZO: No. The country team worked in a very coordinated manner. Ned Walker was very good with the media -- but the big question was always how, when and where our policy messages should be delivered. Everything had to be closely coordinated with Washington – the Mission was under the microscope and the message had to be right.

*Q: How were your relations with our post in Jerusalem?*

DeSHAZO: Well, the relationship was interesting because USIS had an officer in Gaza. The embassy handled public diplomacy in Gaza, not the consulate general in Jerusalem - that was responsible for relations with the Palestinian Authority – which at the time was based both in Gaza and the West Bank. So, I ended up going to Gaza frequently. We carried out a wide variety of exchanges and programs there – coordinated by a very effective officer – Dana Shell - who commuted between Tel Aviv and Gaza several times a week. She spoke Arabic and was in closer touch with the consulate general in Jerusalem than I was – given her focus on the Palestinians. In addition, USIS Tel Aviv had an FSO in Jerusalem – Ben Ziff - who resided there, a very effective, Hebrew-speaking officer who directed the American Center in that city. He was the only Embassy officer resident in Jerusalem. In terms of the relationship with the consulate general in Jerusalem, we worked closely together during the visits of high-level U.S. officials and on other issues related to Israeli-Palestinian affairs.

*Q: How did you find the situation in Gaza when you arrived?*

DeSHAZO: Gaza seemed to be in a class of its own. Movement in and out of Gaza was tightly restricted by Israeli security – although at the time a number of people from Gaza commuted into Israel to work. Those were days when it was still easier to leave Gaza. While, not easy, movement in and out was certainly more fluid then than it is now. Arafat had one of his two headquarters in Gaza. Many other top leaders of the Fatah and the Palestinian Authority resided there. There were also anti-Fatah factions among the Palestinians in Gaza – Islamists and, of course, people who sympathized with Hamas. A large percentage of the population was still living in refugee status situations with, with a considerable amount of money coming from international organizations to help stave off privation. The place was isolated, poor, crowded – and yet had universities, police, and a government. A very strange mix.

*Q: Did you get around the West Bank much?*

DeSHAZO: Somewhat. Except for Bethlehem, Embassy officers needed to coordinate West Bank travel with the consulate general in Jerusalem. I didn't get to see the northern West Bank but I did travel to Hebron in the southern part. I would go to Ramallah frequently on Wye River Committee business.

*Q: Did you sort of come away with a, a feeling about Israel and the West Bank and the settlements and all? I mean personally?*

DeSHAZO: Although I was well aware of the sensitivity of the settlement issue as a bone of contention in Israeli-Palestinian relations, I was nonetheless surprised by the extent to which Israeli settlements had extended beyond the Green Line (1949 border of Israel). Many of the settlements around Jerusalem resembled full-fledged towns. Other settlements – especially on the isolated hilltops in the West Bank and the Israeli settlements in Gaza, looked like military outposts. Settlements were clearly one of the biggest issues involved in reaching a final agreement on a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinian Authority – with any number projections regarding which would be disbanded and which would stay.

*Q: Well, as I say, nothing -- that whole situation there is always evolving. Were there problems with intifada or?*

DeSHAZO: My time in Israel came between the first and second intifadas. There were occasional bombings or acts of terrorism, but generally the years that I was in Israel the level of violence was lower than it had previously been and later would be – an interlude. Security was a large concern, but not at the level it would later reach.

*Q: Well, I'm told that one of the things that's almost exhaust -- it's not almost, is exhausting, in serving in Israel is the high intensity of discussion with Israelis on issues and all. Did you find that this was all-absorbing, or?*

DeSHAZO: The Israeli-Palestinian peace process issue was for me the most interesting factor while I was in Israel. One of the committees that had been formed as a result of the

Wye River Accords negotiated October of 1998 was a so-called Anti-Incitement Committee. This was a trilateral committee of U.S., Israeli, and the Palestinian officials and specialists to work to lower bilateral tension between Israel and the Palestinians by attempting to halt provocations to hatred and violence caused by demonization and stereotyping of each other in the Israeli and the Palestinian media, in school textbooks and in other areas where the presentation by one side of the other was so terribly negative that it made -- it made the atmosphere for reaching any kind of consensus or cooperation that much more difficult. This committee, of which the United States was basically sort of the executive, would meet every six weeks or so. I was the responsible officer on the U.S. side for coordinating meeting agendas and coordination with the U.S. members. We started our work in -- I believe - January or February 1999. Meetings would take place in Tel Aviv or Washington when the U.S. was host, in Jerusalem when it was the Israeli turn and in Gaza or Ramallah when the Palestinians hosted. Members of the U.S. Committee consisted of five leaders in different fields outside of government -- a leading academician, the former president of the University of Notre Dame, a leading law enforcement expert, a top journalist, etc. The Committee would review different efforts that were being taken to lower incitement to violence and examine initiatives that might help in this regard. Both sides typically denounced the other at these meetings, with the U.S. trying to moderate and steer the work of the Committee towards something concrete. In doing so, we launched some very interesting initiatives, internships, for example, for Israeli and Palestinian journalists in media on the other side. We established a journalism center in East Jerusalem where Israeli and Palestinian journalists could work together and share ideas and try to help build mutual understanding and lower levels of incitement. We reached out to media on both sides to encourage them to take steps to avoid incitement. The Committee also focused on the issue of Palestinian negative portrayal of Israel and Israelis in their textbooks. It was a good faith effort. The U.S. team was excellent -- the members generously donated their time and felt very committed to the success of the effort.

*Q: Did you feel that you were able to damp things down?*

DeSHAZO: I think we made small inroads that were probably pretty much erased afterwards. I don't think there was anything particularly lasting from it. There were points of confluence between the Israelis and the Palestinians, perhaps more than one might expect. Maybe I was overly optimistic at the start of the process that the two sides could make more progress. I was guardedly optimistic -- but that proved to be mistaken.

*Q: Well, were there any sort of significant developments in the time you were there?*

DeSHAZO: The Wye River accords made it appear as if there was trilateral progress being made at the top. The Clinton administration invested a great deal of political capital and will to get this thing done. President Clinton visited, soon after the agreements were signed -- in December of '98. It was remarkable to be with him - hearing him one night addressing an audience of Israelis in Jerusalem -- with a very favorable -- positive reaction. And the next night being with him in Gaza where he addressed a convention hall filled with Palestinian leaders -- with Arafat sitting at his side -- and getting a warm

reception. The message was basically the same to both groups. President Clinton had an amazing ability to connect with people.

*Q: Speaking of Clinton, as a public affairs officer did you have problems -- I mean we had the sort of ongoing battle -- it's not unlike what we have today -- between Congress and Clinton and special prosecutor and Monica Lewinski?*

DeSHAZO: Yeah.

*Q: And all that. That must have been a difficult thing to deal with, wasn't it? I mean --*

DeSHAZO: It was certainly a distraction – and got lots of attention in Israel.

*Q: Did you get much guidance from Washington about what to do?*

DeSHAZO: Sure. But Washington handled all media regarding the Lewinsky issue.

*Q: And --*

DeSHAZO: The Israeli media played it different ways – depending on their views of Clinton and the peace process with the Palestinians. For the Israeli Right, it was a godsend.

*Q: How did you feel about sort of in general the Israeli media and Clinton? Was he considered somewhat not really on their side, or what?*

DeSHAZO: Israeli society is not homogenous by any means. There were/are, Israelis who were extremely suspicious of the United States and thought that the United States was taking a pro-Arab position, and there were others who didn't feel that way at all. On the Palestinian side it was much the same. Our job was to try to find middle ground in support of a peace agreement. One of the more creative projects that we did was organizing a three-day seminar on political party organization for members of the Likud youth and members of the Fatah youth. This project was designed by the USIS cultural affairs officer Dan Sreebny and it took a lot of guts to do, since the chances for it to come off successfully were always in doubt. We held it in Cyprus – acceptable neutral turf. It reminded me of bringing the Jets and Sharks together in West Side Story. To convince these very conservative Israeli youth politicians from Netanyahu's party to meet with members of Arafat's youth organization was a major effort. We brought experts from Washington on nuts and bolts political skills like polling and reaching out to constituents -- the kinds of things that political parties do – as speakers and workshop leaders. But the main goal was to put these two groups that really had never had anything to do with each other in contact.

*Q: How'd it work?*



DeSHAZO: It worked beyond anything we had expected. The event almost fell apart at the beginning, but by the third day both sides were treating each other as if they were colleagues. We worked with both sides to try to facilitate follow-on contact. Participants on both sides were enthusiastic.

*Q: How did you feel -- how did you find social life in Israel?*

DeSHAZO: I always felt a little bit more of an outsider because of my poor quality Hebrew. It felt odd after my years in Latin America having to use English in a country where a considerable number of people did not speak it. I remember spending a day as guest of the mayor of an important Israeli city and communicating successfully despite his not speaking English and having no available interpreter. He spoke in Ladino – a Jewish diaspora language based on 15<sup>th</sup> century Spanish – which I could understand and I responded in Spanish. Likewise, in Gaza, my lack of Arabic was also a limiting factor. But I did have good friends and many contacts.

*Q: Well, you left there when?*

DeSHAZO: '99, summer of '99.

*Q: How did you feel things were going when you left?*

DeSHAZO: Things were still looking reasonably positive. The Labor Party won the elections in 1999 and Ehud Barak replaced Netanyahu as Prime Minister. Peace process talks were still ongoing and the Clinton administration appeared determined to keep pressing for a resolution. From what I could see on the ground, many difficult issues remained unresolved -- the issue of Jerusalem, the settlements, many others. Coming to agreement on these would require a huge effort.

*Q: Well, this is probably a good place to stop. Where -- but where did you go? So put it -- what happened then?*

DeSHAZO: I then went back to USIA and basically in time to prepare my bureau to be molded into the State Department.

*Q: As I recall, we were up to 1999 and you were -- you had been where and you came back to Washington, is that right?*

DeSHAZO: In Tel Aviv and I came back to Washington in the summer of '99.

*Q: Okay. Well, what were you up to?*

DeSHAZO: I was reassigned as director of the Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs for USIA, meaning in charge of all of USIA's field operations in Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean. I knew when I arrived that it would be a short-term assignment

because USIA was scheduled to disappear as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 and become folded into the State Department.

*Q: My personal prejudice is, I've never served in USIA and had no particular dog in that fight, but I think it was a terrible tragedy to dismember USIA. I think it was one of our most effective organizations in the government. But.*

DeSHAZO: By the time the reorganization and the incorporation of the State Department came around, USIA bore little resemblance to what it looked like in the 1980s. There were some important achievements, but in terms of budgets and personnel, there had been very deep cuts. We saw this in the field during the 1990s where we were laying off Foreign Service Nationals and seeing branch posts cut and reductions across the board, budget cuts, cuts in all the major programs. This was the part and parcel of the famous "peace dividend," – based on the view that USIA was a Cold War instrument and that public diplomacy had less value with the Cold War over.

*Q: So what was sort of the atmosphere there? What was going on?*

DeSHAZO: I think the atmosphere was one of considerable apprehension regarding the consolidation and what it would entail. Quite frankly, my position with regard to it was very different than that of many – probably most -- at USIA. I didn't think it was necessarily a bad thing. I could see advantages in the consolidation with State – above all from the point of view of moving public diplomacy closer to the foreign policy decision-making process. I thought at the time and still think it was a good move. But there hadn't been a lot of preparation. In the field, we were told that working groups had reached agreement on how the process would move forward and everything was being handled, but when I got back to Washington I certainly got a sense that that wasn't necessarily the case. Many big decisions had yet to be made. My immediate goal was to move my bureau of USIA into the State Department at the earliest possible opportunity, to try to make that transition as smooth as possible while also paying close attention to USIS posts in the field -- to try to reassure people, both in Washington and in the field, that the result would be a positive one. There was considerable apprehension – especially among foreign service national employees in the field.

*Q: Well, I mean this -- one of the things that we so often forget when we're talking about these things, we concentrate on what happens to the Foreign Service Officers and all and really, an organization like USIA, the Foreign Service Nationals were the guts of the organization, had been around for a long time, they knew everybody. And how, how was this working with them?*

DeSHAZO: Foreign Service Nationals have an essential role in any Embassy. They are the collective memory, maintain important local contacts while FSOs rotate in and out, possess great expertise and make things happen. USIS FSNs were especially important and capable in this regard. In the waning weeks of USIA, I made a couple of trips to some of the big posts in the region like Mexico where we had the largest public diplomacy operations. There was concern regarding just about everything, but especially

about how in the future public diplomacy would be able to access the resources USIS controlled -- the infrastructure, especially vehicles, and, and equipment. There was concern about representational funds, budgets for programming, how it was all going to be handled. The traditionally high morale of USIS FSNs had already begun to wane during the budget cuts of the 1990s and with the impending consolidation, FSNs worried about their future – both in employment and professional terms. They liked the idea of working for a smaller, less bureaucratic and more creative agency like USIA and were apprehensive about how life would be under State. I found myself sort of in the role of top cheerleader for the consolidation, saying that indeed public diplomacy would keep what was good about USIS and benefit from closer cooperation and coordination with our State colleagues – that we would be even more effective.

*Q: Well, what did you find yourself doing within the department?*

DeSHAZO: My first job was to get physically moved in at State. We had to pack everything out of our offices in USIA and then watch while our stuff was moved out. Our move took place in the midst of a ceremony at USIA honoring the Agency and its legacy – the last hurrah. It was ironic to see the ceremony going on downstairs while the moving carts and dollies carried equipment and furniture out of our offices and into the moving vans on the street. The following day – a Saturday – we moved into our new space at State – as the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. I went from the position of what in USIA was an assistant secretary in State Department terms to being an office director. There was a lot to do -- coordinating the work of our office with the different offices within WHA, establishing my role within the Bureau, trying to educate and to help my former USIA officers to understand the very different culture that they would experience at the State Department, how paper was moved, how initiatives were taken, how the organization worked. Fortunately, I knew WHA and the Department well from a previous assignment there as a desk officer, so I was familiar with the process from the inside and I think was helpful in that regard.

*Q: You know, one hears in bureaucratic terms how different companies, different organizations all have different cultures. Can you think of any examples of the difference between sort of the State Department and the USIA cultures?*

DeSHAZO: The State Department culture was sort of a culture of paper. Initiatives were moved by paper, an action memo, an info memo, that required an enormous number of clearances. As a desk officer I spent a great deal of time getting documents that I had drafted cleared, working the bureaucracy to get these clearances. Good policy outcomes depended on good bureaucratic skills – both within the Department and outside. USIA was much less bureaucratic in that regard, it was much more flexible. I think there was greater creativity, perhaps more risk taking. But again, it was dealing with different kinds of issues. And being part of the actual policy making process at State was exciting for the officers who moved from USIA to State. I had always considered USIA to be far from the policy loop – both physically because it was located in Southwest DC and

bureaucratically. This changed with consolidation. And you could see right away how operationally things were going to be different, and I think better.

*Q: Well, I -- you know, having been in the field for most of my time, I always thought that the USIA representative was probably one of the, the most important figures in any embassy or consular team. But in talking to people in this oral history program, the USIA officers, when they came back, they, they, as you say, I mean there was both the removal and distance in their offices, but also in responsibility. They seem to be, it seemed to be more, well not a, not a very important part of the policy process in Washington.*

DeSHAZO: That's one of the reasons why I wanted to work at State when I came back to Washington and I'm glad I did. There was nothing at USIA that could have put me in the position of influencing policy on an important country at a key moment like the desk job on Chile at State. I had always been interested in policy and in the full realm of diplomacy – not just public diplomacy. In the field, that was possible but not at USIA headquarters.

*Q: Well, then who was head of USIA when you were back in Washington?*

DeSHAZO: There was an interim director. Joseph Duffy had left and an interim director was in charge while the consolidation was taking place.

*Q: I've heard many, or a good number of rather disparaging remarks about Duffy from disgruntled USIA people. How did you feel about his time?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I wasn't assigned to Washington while he was director but I could see from the field how the agency was cut back.

*Q: Yeah. Well then, how did things develop for you back in Washington?*

DeSHAZO: I was perhaps biased in favor of the consolidation of USIA with State – but I felt that the transition went rather well – at least in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, where the role of public diplomacy was well-appreciated. I quickly got the sense meeting with colleagues from other Bureaus that the consolidation of public diplomacy in WHA was the most successful. WHA was extremely welcoming to us. Pete Romero was the assistant secretary and the DAS who oversaw public diplomacy was Sue Wood. Both were very aware of the importance of public diplomacy, very anxious that the public diplomacy function be as strong as possible in WHA and the consolidation process produce a good result.

*Q: Well, let's -- did you -- how did you find your ambassadors responding to changes?*

DeSHAZO: I visited every large post in the region soon after the consolidation and many of the smaller ones to confer with Ambassadors, DCMs and PAOs about the transition process. In all cases that I can recall, everyone was committed to keeping public diplomacy strong and effective. FSNs in many posts were not enthusiastic about the

change, but they adapted to it well. Again, I tried to lead by example, pointing out that the Bureau was firmly supportive of the public diplomacy function.

*Q: Did you -- during this period you were working on this, were there any crises in the Latin American area?*

DeSHAZO: There were many challenges that demonstrated the value of public diplomacy as part of the State department – both in terms of short-term crises and in developing initiatives on a more sustained basis. One early example was the civil-military coup that took place against the democratically-elected government of President Mahuad in Ecuador in January 2000 – engineered by the military and backed by indigenous groups. They took over the presidential palace, removed the president and were preparing to consolidate a new regime. In the early stages of the coup, I worked with Pete Romero and the PAO in Quito to have Pete address a linked-up chain of radio and TV stations in Ecuador with our statement of policy in favor of democracy – strongly condemning the military takeover. We were fortunate in the sense that Pete had been ambassador to Ecuador just before his being nominated as assistant secretary for WHA – so he spoke with even greater effectiveness. The broadcast quickly helped take the air out of the coup balloon and by evening it failed and civilian rule was restored. Under the old regime, with USIA across town and not in the policy loop, this result would never have happened.

*Q: Well, you know, I don't know if you had anything to do with it, but I'm a bit hazy on the details, but during the time when there was a coup against Chavez, who'd been dually elected, and we kind of pussyfooted around that. Did you have anything to do with that? Because it sounds like we, we sort of picked our issues and other issues that we didn't like we didn't, didn't do the right thing.*

DeSHAZO: That was the coup against Hugo Chavez in April 2002 that arose out of large-scale public protests by the opposition against him. It occurred while I was deputy permanent representative to the Organization of American States (OAS) and perhaps we can discuss it later. But yes, our handling of the public affairs aspect had a negative effect.

*Q: Well, you know, it rankles with many of us. I mean and I, you know, far removed from that. But we'll talk about that when we get to --*

DeSHAZO: When we get to it, we need to look more closely. But back to the advantages of the USIA consolidation from my own experience. Perhaps the most important initiative of the U.S. in Latin America at the end of the Clinton administration and the first year of George W. Bush and beyond was support for Colombia – where public diplomacy played a large role. Colombia was on the brink of meltdown in late 1999 when I returned to Washington – the result of a state destabilized by leftist insurgents, right-wing paramilitary armies, widespread drug trafficking and - in consequence – a terrible security situation. In the summer of 2000, Congress – at the urging of the Clinton Administration – approved an emergency support package of some \$1.3B for Colombia – in support of the Colombian initiative called Plan Colombia. This made Colombia the

largest recipient of U.S. aid in Latin America – and I believe the third largest aid recipient in the world. At the beginning, Plan Colombia and U.S. support for it faced some substantial challenges in the public affairs area – responding to the need to disseminate information about it and to counter disinformation and misconceptions in the region about what U.S. support for Colombia would entail. An important sector of U.S. civil society – human rights organizations, religious groups, and some political and media figures were vocal in criticizing the U.S. position -- claiming that this was a great mistake, that it would lead to massive human rights violations, that the U.S. would be bogged down in a Vietnam-style quagmire, that it would mean U.S. troops would be sent to Colombia to die in jungle clashes with the FARC – all manner of negative scenarios. Plans for large-scale counter-drug activities, including aerial spraying of coca fields, were likewise portrayed as human and ecological disasters in the making. The public discussion of Plan Colombia was also a heated one in Colombia, around Latin America and in Europe. My Office took charge of coordinating all U.S. public affairs and public diplomacy on Colombia – working with the press office of the Pastrana Administration in Bogota and public affairs offices in other USG entities. The challenge was to launch an effective public affairs campaign that was coherent, accurate, and that provided strong advocacy for U.S. policy.

*Q: Well, were you sort of involved in the development of Plan Colombia?*

DeSHAZO: After October 1999, yes – as the public affairs expert at State working in conjunction with others both within State and in the inter-agency process.

*Q: This is something that, you know, at least one doesn't -- at least I haven't heard much about great initiatives and all in policy matters and all about the public diplomacy side of things. It's sort of we do it and then we said okay boys, you go out and make them understand what we're doing, but not, not sort of building the explanation into the plan itself.*

DeSHAZO: As we were moving forward, and especially after the passage of the supplemental package of U.S. support, I took part in high-level interagency discussions and planning on the issue. There was considerable attention paid within the USG to the public reaction to our policy. We were constantly updating, refining, and broadening our public diplomacy campaign as new challenges arose. But the bottom line was that the public diplomacy function was carefully considered from the very beginning and coordinated from within the State Department as a high-priority issue.

*Q: Say in Plan Colombia, this is the Bush, Bush II administration. Is that right?*

DeSHAZO: U.S. support for Colombia under the rubric of Plan Colombia was developed during the Clinton administration and the supplemental funding package approved by Congress with strong bipartisan support while Clinton was president. Bush II continued and further broadened support for Colombia and afterward, the Obama administration as well. This was a strongly bipartisan initiative – which was one of the reasons for its success.

*Q: Well, for somebody looking at this, what had generated this plan and why was it, did we feel it was important to us?*

DeSHAZO: Well, Colombia is a key country and it was on route to state failure by the late 1990s. Stability was being undermined by Marxist insurgents – the FARC and the ELN, by the right-wing paramilitaries and by an enormous rise in the size of the illegal narcotics economy that fueled these groups. The Colombian government did not exercise authority over large amounts of national territory. The state was weak and the armed forces at a point where they could be defeated in battle by the FARC. By 1998, key officials in the Clinton administration – State, the NSC, and ONDCP (Office of National Drug Policy), came to the realization that Colombia was in deep trouble.

*Q: What was, did you -- I mean was this sort of number one on your, your list of things to be concerned about?*

DeSHAZO: This was our major effort. There were other important issues, but this was the one that took up more of my attention.

*Q: Well, was the opposition to this sort of the -- I'm not trying to be facetious -- but sort of the knee-jerk liberals, anything that had to do with arms or something was bad? Or, or was our history of our involvement with Latin America so unsavory that they didn't like to see us do anything there, or what?*

DeSHAZO: There were different groups who opposed Plan Colombia for different reasons. Some were skeptical that U.S. support for Plan Colombia was put forward as a counterdrug plan. In essence I think it was a “save Colombia” plan from the get-go. But there was concern that the United States would be involved in counterinsurgency, that there would be large numbers of U.S. troops sent and therefore Congress built in to the -- built into the supplemental conditions that limited the number of civilian and military personnel that could be in Colombia at any given time. There were concerns from human rights groups, from the AFL-CIO, church groups, all putting pressure on Congress. In the end, one of the strengths of Colombia initiative was that these issues were carefully considered and influenced the final package.

*Q: Well, do you feel that -- well, when you were doing this were you drawing on the experience of all of us in Vietnam? Seeing where we had not handled that very well?*

DeSHAZO: Vietnam was an example to be avoided. In the end, Plan Colombia was successful because the United States came across in a timely way with sizeable support that the Colombians really needed. The money was generally well spent. The most important factor was that the Colombians themselves were determined to reverse the downward slide in their country's fortunes. They themselves spent a great deal more than the United States on improving their security apparatus and taking control of national territory. And with a, with a very small footprint, the United States was able to provide

substantial support to a process that I think was extraordinarily successful. Support for Colombia in the 2000s was one of the real foreign policy successes of the United States.

*Q: Yes, it -- I think one has to say some very brave people in Colombia itself.*

DeSHAZO: Absolutely. The Colombians deserve the credit for the remarkable changes that have taken place in their country. It was a turnaround that took years to do. It's a process that's still not completed, there are major shortcomings that the Colombians still need to address. But in the end, it was a very successful process.

*Q: How did you feel sort of working with political officers or talking about political appointees, but I mean officers who were Foreign Service political officers? Did you find that it was a pretty comfortable fit in the State Department?*

DeSHAZO: I had worked with political officers during my entire career – and in several assignments was in essence one myself. The good part about the new foreign service is the greater interchangeability of assignments.

*Q: Well, were there any other issues that particularly occupied you while you were in Washington at this particular time?*

DeSHAZO: I was acting DAS for periods of time working on Central American and Canadian affairs – with governance and security issues on the former and a lot of trade issues related to the latter. The turnover of the Panama Canal to Panama was another important issue.

*Q: You know, you'd mentioned Canada. I would think that the Canadian Desk and all was particularly -- this was very early when they were amalgamated and they'd been in the halls of Europe before for eons and all of a sudden -- I think would have thought they would be sort of wandering out looking bemused, what am I doing here and what's this strange language they're talking?*

DeSHAZO: Canada was increasingly becoming a bigger and more visible player in Western Hemisphere Affairs, especially, especially after NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), and Canada had a very important role at the OAS, which later I was to appreciate even more fully. Having Canada in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs made good sense and Canada became an important focus for our office – Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

*Q: Was there a problem with the Canadians, the Canadians themselves feeling sort of pushed away from you might say the heart of American diplomacy by being made a Latin American -- I mean not a Latin American, but a Western Hemisphere oriented country in respect to how we dealt with them?*

DeSHAZO: Canada has a special relationship with the U.S. – although the news media pays relatively less attention to it than it should. While Canada has very broad



international interests, increasingly it is more connected with the Western Hemisphere – a good thing from the U.S. point of view.

*Q: How about the issue of Cuba? How did you find it during your time there?*

DeSHAZO: I visited Cuba once as WHA director of public diplomacy. Our public diplomacy presence was very small – but it was one of the areas where the possibilities for some improvement in the bilateral area was more feasible.

*Q: Did you find, when the Bush administration came in, did that shake things up much or was it, you know, sort of a regular transition?*

DeSHAZO: It was a big transition that got a lot bigger after 9/11. Many new faces, starting with Secretary Powell.

*Q: Well, what was your impression of how they were going to treat the issues of Latin America?*

DeSHAZO: President Bush came into office stating that he would pay closer attention to Latin America – especially Mexico, where he had personal ties with Vicente Fox. At the beginning, the new administration claimed it would give high priority to the region.

*Q: Did you feel that that actually happened?*

DeSHAZO: After 9/11 then things began to change rather quickly, with U.S. attention diverted to Afghanistan and the Middle East. The invasion of Iraq really sealed the deal.

*Q: Yeah. How'd you find Secretary Powell?*

DeSHAZO: I admired him very much. He really injected a high amount of energy into the Department and promoted the idea of working as a team. There was a genuine desire to improve the administration of the Department and to get more resources. Morale was high. He was a leader.

*Q: Can you give me a bit about your -- what -- how you got the news and what happened kind of around you at 9/11?*

DeSHAZO: I became the deputy U.S. permanent representative with the rank of ambassador to the OAS in summer of 2001. My boss was the Permanent Representative, Ambassador Roger Noriega. The most important item on the agenda at that time for the OAS was the negotiation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. This was an agreement that was in the process of being negotiated by the member states. It was a Summit of the Americas mandate, to come up with a consensus document that defined the central tenants of representative democracy and looked for ways of strengthening democracy and also protecting democracy from different kinds of disruptions. Not only the idea of a military coup, which was increasingly not the problem in Latin America, but

the kind of disruption that took place from a weakening of democracy from within, or an auto-coup by a civilian ruler, harking back to Fujimori in Peru. Growing authoritarianism by an elected official. In other words, the corrupting of democracy within by a democratically elected regime, that was one of the concerns that was to be addressed by the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

*Q: Well, I mean where was the initiative for this coming?*

DeSHAZO: It was a mandate from the previous Summit of the Americas -- from the heads of state. The OAS had been working on it during good bit of the course of 2001 and the negotiations were completed by the end of summer. Looking back, it was quite remarkable that consensus was reached on the document. Perhaps a year later it would have been impossible to have done that. But consensus was reached and the Peruvian government hosted an event in which the charter would be signed by the foreign ministers of the member states. The date chosen to sign this document was September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. And the place was Lima. By then I was a member of the U.S. delegation and we all traveled to Lima for this event. There was a reception held by the government of Peru the night before, September 10<sup>th</sup>, which there were some last-minute problems resolved. Secretary Powell arrived in the late afternoon that day -- the 10<sup>th</sup>. Our delegation was gearing up for process of actually approving the Charter the next day. The following morning, as the delegates arrived for the meeting of foreign ministers, the news and video from New York were being broadcast, providing a very unexpected backdrop for the event.

*Q: Boy. Well, was there general agreement as the people were looking at it that terrorism was not only an American problem, but a worldwide problem?*

DeSHAZO: Well, at first, at first nobody really knew what was going on. I remember at first thinking that a small plane perhaps hit the World Trade Center --picturing a Cessna that had been flying around towing a big sign with advertising that had crashed into the building. But it soon became apparent that this was something very different. And by the time the meeting was convened -- the starting time was delayed because of what was happening in New York and Washington-- it was clear that there had been a delivered attack, a terrorist attack in the United States. Secretary Powell was recalled to Washington by the president. We worked with the other delegations to allow him to address the foreign ministers as quickly as possible -- he did not want to leave Lima until the Inter-American Charter was approved. And he gave a very emotional and poignant statement pointing out that the United States was under attack, that this was a very grave matter and that required immediate attention and excused himself. But he underscored that he didn't want to leave until the Charter was approved because democracy was so central to governance in the hemisphere. The tone of the meeting was extremely serious -- somber - but enormously supportive of the United States. There was an outpouring of solidarity and support from the other delegations. The approval of the charter was speeded up via a motion for immediate consensus approval. Secretary Powell thanked the other delegates and departed. Our delegation stayed behind to complete the Democratic Charter meeting and then began consulting with other delegations on steps the OAS

could take to deal with the threat of terrorism. Because of the disruption of air service to and within the U.S., it was days before we could return to Washington.

*Q: Well, was there pretty much solidarity on, you might say, sympathy for the United States at this point?*

DeSHAZO: Enormous. And it was something that carried over for, for a good period of time. When we returned to Washington the OAS was called into special sessions repeatedly in the course of the next couple of weeks. The government of Brazil invoked the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, called the Rio Treaty, that basically declared that an attack on one nation in the region was an attack on all. So, there was a formal invocation of this mutual defense treaty, and the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, (CICTE) was in essence reconstituted – it had not been particularly active in the past. The member states charged it with the mission of coming up with plans to strengthen hemispheric defense against international terrorism. So, the Americas responded in a more robust and, and practical way than perhaps any other region of the world.

*Q: Well, what -- to what do you ascribe this feeling coming from the Americas?*

DeSHAZO: There were citizens of many countries in the region who died in the events of 9/11. Secondly, the attacks came at a time when there was particularly strong consensus among the countries on the value of democracy -- the juxtaposition of an event that took place to proclaim and strengthen democracy with a terrorist attack only magnified the, the importance of regional consensus. Again, in hindsight, this was sort of a culmination point in the process of inter-American cooperation that started with the Summit of the Americas during the Clinton administration – the peak of inter-American cooperation and consensus. That consensus began to break down afterwards.

*Q: Well, what did we do? I mean did we, were we able to tap this feeling of solidarity?*

DeSHAZO: The idea was that we would be able to strengthen different mechanisms for improving efforts within the region to promote security. CICTE began focusing on issues such as passport and document controls, airport and port security, and financial controls. In this regard I think the response was practical and useful. Plus, the climate was one of considerable solidarity.

*Q: Well, did we feel -- well, how -- I can't remember how things were in Venezuela at the time? Was Chavez -- were things -- how stood things there?*

DeSHAZO: The relationship between the U.S. and Venezuela was deteriorating, but at a relatively slow pace. The Venezuelans signed on to the Inter-American Democratic Charter, although they were anxious that their concept of participatory democracy be underscored. While I don't think they were enthusiastic about the Charter, they did sign on. A major factor in the deterioration of the relationship was the moment when the United States began military action in Afghanistan and the Venezuelans objected. In one

instance Chávez appeared on TV showing pictures of dead Afghan children and, and began strongly criticizing the United States, which drew a very negative reaction from the Bush administration.

*Q: Well, were we sort of pointing a finger at Chavez or were we ignoring him or concerned, or what?*

DeSHAZO: There was a growing concern that the relationship was deteriorating but again, this was a process that unfolded in phases over a couple of years. There were different incidences where Chávez refused to cooperate with the United States on certain issues that again began to alienate people in the Bush administration, plus the growing anti-U.S. rhetoric. Again, all of this was relatively low key compared to what would come later. But to any observer it was clear that bilateral relationship was heading in a downward direction.

*Q: Were there any other places -- I think in Bolivia or Ecuador -- were they changing in that time, or?*

DeSHAZO: The deterioration in the U.S. relationship with Ecuador and Bolivia came later. Venezuela until about 2005 was unique in the vehemence of its anti-U.S. sentiment.

*Q: Mm-hmm. Well, how long were you on this job?*

DeSHAZO: Two years.

*Q: What did you see as your main sort of task at the time?*

DeSHAZO: Building hemispheric support for counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthening CICTE was the key order of business at the beginning of my tour. Venezuela – including the coup against Chávez in 2002, Colombia, and also Haiti were also issues that got a lot of attention. Fidel Castro’s sudden crackdown on the political opposition in Cuba thrust that country into the OAS limelight in 2003. I also chaired an inter-American meeting of the OAS in Miami on civil/military relations. For me personally, I devoted a considerable amount of time to the administrative and financial reform process of the OAS. I was elected Chair of the Permanent Council’s committee on Administration and Budget in 2002, with a mandate to streamline OAS administration, strengthen the financial outlook, revamp infrastructure, and find funds for key OAS objectives such as promoting democracy, human rights, and good governance. We were fortunate that during my chairmanship that the U.S. paid some \$23 million it owed in arrears, which helped facilitate the reform process and build a strategic reserve fund for the OAS.

*Q: Well, how much money, what percentage was the United States supposed to contribute?*

DeSHAZO: -- I think it was about 59% of the regular fund budget.

*Q: How was that working out?*

DeSHAZO: There were conversations about the redistribution of the quotas. Some countries were in arrears. The quotas hadn't been updated for a long time. The economies in the region had changed, some of them dramatically in terms of their GDP. And so, you know, there was always a lot of discussion as to who should pay what – although no change took place in terms of quotas during my tenure – there was no political consensus for it.

*Q: Well, did you feel that things were basically going well at the OAS during this period of time?*

DeSHAZO: I think the OAS was generally effective. The quality of the delegations was high and the OAS received considerable attention from the Bush administration – particularly from Secretary Powell. We had an effective USOAS delegation – a really good team. The OAS is often criticized as a tool of the U.S. or as a do-nothing organization, which was far from the truth. There was still considerable consensus within the OAS on many key issues during my time there and – when necessary and often on a daily, behind-the-scenes basis - the OAS made important contributions to the well-being of the Hemisphere.

*Q: Well, you were saying I think at one point that 9/11 really took sort of the interests of the United States off to the Middle East.*

DeSHAZO: For sure.

*Q: And how did this affect your operation?*

DeSHAZO: Clearly the administration's focus moved very quickly from Latin America to the Middle East and to Afghanistan. Remember that the Bush administration had come into office saying that it was going to give priority attention to the Americas, and especially to Mexico. When 9/11 took place, there was a strong response of solidarity from the region and a determination to channel this response in a positive way. Leading up to and after the invasion of Iraq, however, the consensus and good will began to deteriorate. The Iraq invasion was a watershed.

*Q: Well, did you have -- I mean personally looking at this, did you have a problem with the move to Iraq? Many of us didn't see, you know, despite the connection didn't see the real connection between Iraq and 9/11.*

DeSHAZO: I remember going with OAS ambassadors to a briefing by Condoleezza Rice at the NSC just before the invasion took place and walking out the ambassadors were sort of shaking their heads and saying, "Is this really happening?" I could hardly believe it myself.

*Q: Was there much of an effort that you got involved in of trying to get Hispanic boots on the ground?*

DeSHAZO: There were efforts -- more on the bilateral side than through the OAS -- to promote solidarity and to draw the Latins into the “coalition of the willing” by contributing troops – but without much success. A few small countries sent small contingents of troops. But there was very quickly a pushback, especially in terms of the United States trying to get support at the UN. Mexico and Chile were members of the UN Security Council at the time, and both refused to support the invasion.

*Q: Was there any overall connection between the OAS and the United Nations. I mean was there sort of consultation or were they each going, almost going their own way?*

DeSHAZO: There was a certain amount of conversation between them -- some issues overlapped – such as Haiti, for example, where the UN sent in a multilateral mission after Aristide left the country in 2004.

*Q: Well, what was going on with Aristide and Haiti when you were there?*

DeSHAZO: The OAS had passed several resolutions in support of democracy in Haiti responding to the confrontation and political impasse in the country between Aristide and his supporters on one hand and the growing political opposition on the other. The OAS sent a series of delegations to the island to try to broker greater consensus – and to support a climate conducive to free and fair legislative and local elections – which had been postponed for a long period of time.

*Q: Well, was Aristide -- did he have much personal support within the OAS, or --*

DeSHAZO: Some countries were traditionally very involved with Haiti, such as Venezuela that had reached out to Haiti for many years and supported Aristide – and the CARICOM nations – of which Haiti was both a member but also an outlier for not having been a former British colony. Canada and the U.S. followed events in Haiti closely. And France – as an observer delegation to the OAS.

*Q: Speaking of the Canadians, how did they -- during this time, how did they fit in this essentially Hispanic organization?*

DeSHAZO: Canada was playing an increasingly important role in the OAS. The Canadian delegation was of high quality, was a very active and effective delegation. The Canadian government made some important investments in OAS activities in terms of resources -- especially in the governance area, democracy-building, human rights. I knew that Canada’s role had been increasing and was really pleased to see the high profile and very effective role that Canada played in the OAS – but I hadn’t fully expected it.

*Q: Did we get into any sort of, I won’t say clashes, but it almost seems like in foreign policy Canada has used Cuba as sort of an area which to tweak us or something.*

DeSHAZO: Cuba had been suspended from the OAS during the Kennedy administration. While Canada had diplomatic relations with Cuba and we did not, both delegations condemned the crackdown on dissidents by the Cuban government in early 2003 when the issue was taken up by the OAS. This was the one time that I can recall that Cuba was discussed by the OAS Permanent Council – with Canada and the U.S. taking similar positions. But Cuba did not figure much in terms of the U.S. – Canadian dynamic at the OAS, which overall was very positive.

*Q: How about Peru and Ecuador? What was going on while you were there?*

DeSHAZO: The OAS had played an important role in helping Peru transition from Fujimori's failed attempt to rig a third election as president in 2000 to the regime of Alejandro Toledo. Under Toledo, Peru's delegation at the OAS was influential and active – Toledo received strong support from the United States and from other countries. Ecuador during my years at the OAS was going through a very difficult period of political flux, with presidents resigning or forced out and replaced by Congress – years of considerable turmoil.

*Q: Did you find within the State Department and all almost, at least at the top levels, NSC and all, considerable disinterest in Latin America?*

DeSHAZO: I wouldn't say considerable disinterest. Secretary Powell came many times to the OAS, many of his appearances related to post-9/11 follow-up. He attended all of the OAS General Assembly meetings – both the annual meeting and special meetings – when I was on the delegation. Colombia got considerable attention and support and Venezuela was in the spotlight as Chávez became more stridently critical of the U.S. – especially in the wake of the failed military coup that briefly removed him from power. But without doubt, Latin America had less of a profile after 9/11 and especially after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 than it otherwise would have.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about what the Venezuela issue was?*

DeSHAZO: By early 2002 the opposition to Chávez in Venezuela was ramping up its protests – against Chávez' increasingly authoritarian rule and his politicization of the state oil company – PDVSA. In the midst of a massive protest in Caracas in April 2002, the military intervened to remove Chávez from power – sending him to a military base on a small Caribbean island. An interim government led by a civilian businessman took power, abrogated the constitution and suspended Congress, but was quickly forced out by military forces loyal to Chávez and Chávez returned to power. All this took place during a three-day period.

*Q: Well, what were we doing in this period?*

DeSHAZO: As political tension grew in Venezuela, the U.S. had been very clear in public and private dealings with Venezuela that we supported democratic rule and would

not support any unconstitutional move. The protest and the coup against Chávez unfolded quickly and for a time it was unclear if Chávez had resigned or not – it turned out that he had not. As the conflict was unfolding, the OAS called an emergency meeting where the U.S. joined consensus on a resolution condemning the break in constitution order calling for respect for democratic rule. Unfortunately, while events were unfolding, spokespersons at the White House and the State Department reacted with statements which basically blamed Chavez for what happened, tried to provide detail about unclear events, spoke about him in the past tense and -- even while things were unclear, implied that he deserved what he got. This gave the impression that the United States at least condoned the removal of Chávez. By the time we joined with others in condemning the breach of constitutionality in Venezuela, it was too late. While there was clearly not much sympathy for Chávez in the Bush administration, our policy was nonetheless to support democracy and constitutional rule. Our public statements in this case helped fuel Chávez' later false claims that the U.S. promoted the coup.

*Q: Well, did you get involved in this, or had somebody grabbed the ball and was talking off with it, or what? What was happening?*

DeSHAZO: I was traveling while these events unfolded. By the time I returned to Washington, it was a done deal.

*Q: Well, when you got back to Washington did you find yourself trying to excuse, make amends, or do something about this with your OAS colleagues?*

DeSHAZO: The U.S. had already joined consensus at the OAS on a resolution in support of democracy and dialogue in Venezuela. We then began working with the OAS to deal with the aftermath. Chávez after the coup was accommodating. He vowed he would reach out to all Venezuelans and that he'd learned a big lesson about the need for consensus. But over time he came to blame the United States for the coup. Meanwhile, confrontation between Chávez and the opposition continued to grow – resulting in a general strike of state oil company PDVSA workers against the government – followed by a lockout. The U.S. played a key role in producing a new OAS resolution calling for a peaceful, democratic, political and constitutional solution to Venezuela's political confrontation and eventually sending an OAS mission to Venezuela to help promote those goals. The Carter Center also became involved in this effort – which took on even greater visibility as the opposition attempted in 2004 to bring about a recall referendum against Chávez.

*Q: Did you go down at all to Venezuela during this?*

DeSHAZO: Not while I was at US/OAS. I did when I was DAS.

*Q: What sort of role did you find Brazil playing?*

DeSHAZO: Brazil was a big player at the OAS. It was a regional leader in South America – a role that would grow larger over time and played a leading role in the UN stabilization mission in Haiti. In the case of Venezuela, Brazil chaired a “friends of



Venezuela” group that included the U.S. and several other OAS members and observers to help facilitate political dialogue and consensus.

*Q: What about Mexico? How did it fit in? It was the other sort of big power and all. Did it sort of stand on -- have its own agenda, or was it one of the boys, or what?*

DeSHAZO: Mexico was an important player at the OAS but not always in sync with the United States. Mexico had traditionally used the OAS as a means of asserting its differences with U.S. policy in different areas.

*Q: Did you find that you had pressure from Congress, or interest from Congress, in what was going on there?*

DeSHAZO: Sure, there was interest from Congress -- often reflected in questioning the value and effectiveness of the OAS given the large share of dues paid by the U.S. Given that in the past Congress had held up dues payments to the UN and OAS, we were always concerned about budgets and funding.

*Q: Speaking of money, did you run into any events when Venezuela was apparently, you know, acting as bag man with money to get its way in various areas?*

DeSHAZO: Venezuela had used oil diplomacy as an important tool in its overall foreign policy for a long time. It’s not something that was new. This began back in the 1970s when Venezuela was determined to play a much more active role in the hemisphere and was awash in revenue from higher oil prices. And Chavez increasingly used subsidized oil sales and other kinds of economic support to given countries in the region – especially Cuba, the Caribbean and Central America - as, as a way of increasing the influence of Venezuela.

*Q: As an organization, what did you take away with you as far as its effectiveness?*

DeSHAZO: A sense that the OAS was effective in given areas and not so effective in others – but often its accomplishments were not easily seen. Public attention and the media tend to focus on the meetings of heads of state or the meetings of the foreign ministers and speeches rather than on what the actual committees do or what the working groups accomplish – the on-the-ground results. The case of the Summit of the Americas process, for example, where the OAS was in essence the secretariat and charged with follow-up. For example, on promoting efforts to counter corruption or organized crime and on strengthening security against terrorism. Or on issues such as greater civil-military cooperation through confidence-building measures. Or the daily activities of the Inter-American system on human rights. Or on the promotion of democracy. The OAS election observer missions are of high quality and do a great job. None of this gets much attention but it adds up to a large contribution.

*Q: Well, it strikes me that you’ve, you’d been sort of around Latin America for a long time and that you’d really seen this as, I mean not just the OAS, but also the*

*government's beginning to act more really regionally as opposed to, you know, coup, counter-coup, sort of absorbed in their own governmental problems. But acting what we call responsibly.*

DeSHAZO: During my years at US/OAS, we were still riding the sort of crest of the inter-American cooperation of the 1990s and early 2000s - the post-Cold War cooperation that was strengthened by the fact that all the countries of the region except Cuba were democracies. After 9/11, however, consensus in the region began to erode. Chávez played a role in that – as did reaction to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. But I don't want to overstate it -- consensus didn't dissolve, it didn't disappear, but it began to weaken. At the same time, however, countries in the region continued to expand their own international outreach – playing a larger role in global affairs.

*Q: Well, by the time you left where did you see -- you know, this is a horribly big question, but Latin America going, I always think of Harry Kissinger once used to say, "Latin America is a dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica."*

DeSHAZO: He was referring to Chile.

*Q: You know, sort of a dismissal. And I never served there and it always seemed like a faraway place, it was kind of interesting. But basically, good climate and that was it. But how did you see Latin America? I mean were there strong positive developments as far as economically and governmentally working away at it, or was it still sort of fractious?*

DeSHAZO: There were macro-trends that were extraordinarily important. I mentioned the consolidation of democracy throughout the hemisphere. The 1980s had been pretty much a lost decade in Latin America in terms of the economy in most countries in the region. There'd been a few exceptions. But the 1990s, the region was beginning to grow again – with more consistent growth in the 2000s. There was considerable consensus on adhering to liberal, open-market economic policies – some exceptions for sure, but the general trend was toward an orthodox macro-economic policy. Other factors had begun – the shift in the relationship of the region to the United States – away from the image of the U.S. as a hegemonic power toward greater balance. The rise of China as an economic player in the region had a large role in this regard – but also the strong economic performance of many countries in the region, the end of the Cold War and the consolidation of democracy. Much of this pointed toward a more mature, balanced, and positive dynamic in the relationship of the U.S. to the region.

*Q: Well, what about from the OAS perspective, the war on drugs? How was that going?*

DeSHAZO: Right. The OAS was very much involved in trying to promote strong counter drug efforts through CICAD, its committee on counternarcotics. CICAD had worked very hard over the years to help the countries in the region to coordinate their domestic legislation with UN guidelines and to promote cooperation between different counter drug forces in the region and would look at specific issues as needed. For example, while I was there the OAS conducted a study on the effects of spraying herbicides against coca

plants in Colombia at a time when U.S. counter-drug support was based on large-scale aerial eradication efforts.

*Q: How did the study come out?*

DeSHAZO: The study was triggered by complaints and claims that the spraying was causing skin problems among children, that it killed animals and caused deep environmental damage. The study basically found that the charges were without merit.

*Q: Well, did -- I mean did you spend a good deal of your time sort of defending the fact that the drug problem was essentially an American problem, or had that -- they realized that drugs had spread to beyond just being an American market problem?*

DeSHAZO: By the time I was at the OAS, public opinion was well aware of the fact that the drugs were a problem for everybody in the region. Certainly, demand in the United States was a major factor in driving the drug trade, but, given all the terrible difficulties that Colombia suffered from illegal narcotics, people were taking the problem very seriously and not simply writing it off as an American phenomenon or U.S. problem, and not expecting the United States to be the only force for solving it.

*Q: What did you do after you left OAS?*

DeSHAZO: I was deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs.

*Q: Who was the assistant secretary?*

DeSHAZO: Roger Noriega.

*Q: All right. Well, let's -- you were doing that from when to when?*

DeSHAZO: 2003 to 2004.

*Q: Okay. Well, let's talk about Noriega first. What was his background?*

DeSHAZO: Roger had been a staffer in the Senate – working on foreign relations – but had worked at the OAS in different capacities as well before he was named as U.S. Permanent Representative. From USOAS he was named Assistant Secretary for WHA.

*Q: Well, what was, what was your particular area of responsibility?*

DeSHAZO: My, my portfolios were the Andean region and the Caribbean.

*Q: All right, let's talk about the Andean region first.*

DeSHAZO: Mm-hmm.

*Q: What areas really absorbed your time and concern?*

DeSHAZO: Well, of the five, the five countries in the region, the three that absorbed most of my time during that period were Venezuela, Colombia, and Bolivia. With Colombia, the focus was on the implementation of Plan Colombia and U.S. support for Colombia's efforts to consolidate legitimate state authority – roll back the FARC and the paramilitaries. In the case of Bolivia, to provide support to the government of Carlos Mesa after president Sánchez de Lozada was forced out of office by street protests. In Venezuela, the immediate objective was to tone down the microphone diplomacy – to avoid responding to Chávez' strident criticisms of the U.S. and look for some common ground – and also to support the efforts of third parties – especially the OAS and the Carter Center, to promote dialogue and avoid conflict between Chávez and the opposition in Venezuela. By 2004, the prospect of a recall referendum on Chávez continuance in power – a constitutional mechanism – became the key point of focus.

*Q: Well, you know, you keep -- you're talking about you want to stop the confrontation, you want to lower tensions and all. But wasn't this, as often was the case, what kept Chavez in power? In other words, you were saying no, don't use this very anti-American weapon?*

DeSHAZO: Chavez's rhetoric would run hot and cold, mostly pretty hot. He clearly felt that it provided him with political gain - that it enhanced his standing inside Venezuela and internationally.

*Q: Well, I would think, you know, you're, you're sitting there, you want to try to lower tensions and all, and you've got for example this campaign to remove Chavez through a petition and all. But the proclivity of the United States to get farther into local issues than maybe is warranted, I, I would think this -- they would -- the Venezuelans would see the hands of the United States all over this sort of recall campaign.*

DeSHAZO: That's of course what Chavez was saying. During the early part of 2004, when he sought to neutralize efforts by the opposition to collect and register enough signatures on petitions to hold the recall referendum, Chávez painted the National Endowment for Democracy, USAID, and the U.S. Government as the villains pushing for a plebiscite to oust him.

*Q: Well, did you find that you were trying to tamp down turning Chavez into the beast of the month? He was --*

DeSHAZO: We tried to tamp down the rhetoric.

*Q: Well, you know, when you -- rhetoric gets going, politically obviously Chavez was gaining some points or at least he thought he was. But people in the United States who's - you know, you have a dictator who got a pretty loose mouth, I would think that there are*

*a lot of politicians who would sort of get into -- and American politicians who'd love to get into the brawl.*

DeSHAZO: For sure there were plenty of people in Congress and in the administration who saw Chávez in a very negative light. Chávez' strong and growing relationship with Cuba played a role in this mix. As oil prices climbed in late 2003 and in 2004 and money began to flow into Chavez' coffers, he launched the *misiones* (missions) programs in poor and working class neighborhoods in Caracas and other major cities that carried out large-scale cash transfers, economic subsidies, and provided educational and health services using Cuban doctors and teachers – programs that greatly enhanced Chávez support with these voters and paved the way for victory in the recall referendum that was finally held in August of 2004.

*Q: Well, did we see Cuba as a spent force or growing force in the area?*

DeSHAZO: It was clear that Cuba was becoming an important player in Venezuela and that Chavez had a strong personal relationship with Fidel Castro. So there was no doubt that Cuba's influence in Venezuela was considerable and was growing. In return, Venezuela provided Cuba with much-needed oil shipments on very favorable terms – so the relationship was symbiotic.

*Q: Yeah. Well, how stood the, the Cuban lobby in Miami and New Jersey and elsewhere at this point?*

DeSHAZO: Well, go back to, to 2000 with the close election in Florida. I'm sure everybody was counting every vote. There were a lot of Venezuelans who were leaving the country and resettling in Miami. And the Cuban American population certainly took note of the fact that the Cuban regime was getting very close to Chavez. And so there was a considerable amount of criticism of Chavez that came out of that sector.

*Q: Well, did you feel it particularly? You and the rest of the people on the desk?*

DeSHAZO: We saw the relationship with Venezuela in terms of a country that had generally enjoyed good relations with the United States, a country that was the fourth largest supplier of imported oil to the United States, a country that had close cultural ties to us -- but was now drifting sort of inexorably away from the U.S. and led by someone whose rhetoric about the United States was getting more and more strident. This trend was clearly seen as unpromising.

*Q: Did -- as we looked at Chavez and his policies, did we see -- I mean was there any -- you might -- did we see a good side of this? I mean one of the things we've talked over the years with people who served in Venezuela was the concern about the tremendous gap between the wealthy and the poor there. And did we feel that maybe with all its faults Chavez was sort of taking care of some things?*

DeSHAZO: The fact that Chávez was elected underscored the wave of dissatisfaction of people with traditional politics, with an economy that had deteriorated so dramatically since the early 1980s and with the status quo. Voters wanted change and Chavez was a leader who spoke the language of the urban poor, who reached out to them like no Venezuelan politician ever had. And so he was able to develop a strong power base in this section of the population and build on that. Plus, the effect of rising oil prices, that increased his ability to deliver state largesse to his supporters.

*Q: Well, did we -- would you say our support of, or lack of support, or our policy towards Chavez was a little ambivalent, you know, as far as some of these things were -- sound from the sidelines kind of good, you know? Trying to do something about the poor.*

DeSHAZO: You can argue what kind of economic policies really do help create jobs, reduce inequality. There are lots of things that Chavez could have done that he didn't do. His rhetoric against the private sector and his moves to greatly expand executive authority to capture the judiciary and the legislative branch were disturbing trends. One could argue that Chávez could have used the oil windfall to promote sustained economic growth that would have positioned Venezuela to be in a much stronger position than it is now. But he took the populist and authoritarian path, which was not unknown to Venezuelan politics. Other governments in the past had used oil largesse to build up political support. Chavez just did it on a grander scale – and headed in a more authoritarian direction.

*Q: I mean I assume we felt okay, we've got this guy doing this. We'd sure be happier if he weren't.*

DeSHAZO: Well, the idea that a country that is important to the United States as a major provider of energy and that borders on Colombia, which is going through a severe security challenge from illegal armed groups fueled by drug trafficking and that is the recipient of more than a billion dollars in U.S. aid – that this country is led by a figure who is stridently critical of the United States, was disturbing.

*Q: What about relations with Colombia? Colombia was our major area of concern in the region, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: Colombia was seen as the key country in the region but by the late 1990s was in a very worrisome state. Was very clear that the Colombian government did not exercise much authority over vast amounts of Colombian territory. There were perhaps as many as 17,000 order of battle fighters in the FARC who were capable of defeating the Colombian Army at battalion level combat. There were very large paramilitary groups – armies really - of paramilitaries forming that were a great threat as well to the Colombian state, even though some people in Colombia considered them a positive force against the, the guerillas. Colombia's economy took a huge hit in 1999. The peace process with the FARC that President Prastrana had put in motion had failed. So, Colombia's stability was a big concern for the U.S.

*Q: Did we -- how did we see the government of Colombia? I mean it sounds like it had to have some very brave people to be in it.*

DeSHAZO: We recognized that leadership in Colombia, starting with President Pastrana and then President Uribe, was focused on turning Colombia's situation around and that Colombians were making a huge sacrifice. The Colombian Armed Forces were being ramped up in terms of size and quality – the same with police, with considerable support from the, from the United States. President Uribe had levied special taxes on Colombia's wealthiest citizens and businesses to pay for part of the ramp-up and was taking a much more aggressive line against the FARC, moving out with a strategy aimed at controlling key parts of the country, protecting infrastructure, promoting citizen security, and trying to break the stranglehold that the FARC had over some Colombian cities.

*Q: Well, did you have any problems with the Drug Enforcement Agency being maybe overly aggressive or in that nature, or?*

DeSHAZO: Drugs was a central component of the problem in Colombia. Large-scale coca cultivation was promoted and protected by both the FARC and the paramilitaries. And the profits from the drug trade were feeding both of those illegally armed groups, both of which were considered by the United States to be terrorist organizations. And U.S. support for Colombia under the support package for Plan Colombia passed by Congress during the Clinton administration in 2000 was packaged as a largely counter-drug plan.

*Q: How was our embassy at the time?*

DeSHAZO: Was one of the biggest embassies in the world.

*Q: Yeah. I mean was it under threat, or?*

DeSHAZO: Our Embassy had extraordinary resources at its disposal and enjoyed a very good relationship with the Colombian government. The security situation in Colombia was difficult and the Embassy took very significant security precautions. That made for a challenging working environment for our people.

*Q: During this time things were basically improving?*

DeSHAZO: Things were getting better. Things were definitely getting better. The FARC was pushed back on its heels. There had been important improvements under President Pastrana in terms of the quality and size of the armed forces. Uribe built on this and broadened the scope when he took office in 2002. As Colombians saw that their security situation was improving – at first in the cities and then smaller towns, political support for Uribe rose steadily.

*Q: Were we putting quite a bit of effort in the judiciary there, for example?*

DeSHAZO: The situation with the judiciary was extremely challenged in Colombia. The wave of violence that had crested during the 1990s as a result of the surge in the paramilitaries and FARC, added to the power of the drug industry, overwhelmed Colombia's not particularly strong judiciary. It reached the point where most cases of major crimes never made it into the judicial system. There was widespread impunity for murder, for massacres. It was an extremely difficult time for Colombia's judiciary. Part of the U.S. Plan Colombia assistance package included support for the judiciary for improving the quality of the Attorney General's office, the prosecutor general, and the justice system in general, as well as for the promotion of human rights. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) financed judicial centers in poor neighborhoods where free legal advice and judicial services were provided. But clearly there was a need for *huge* investment by Colombia in improving the rule of law and the administration of justice.

*Q: Did the Colombian emigrate groups in the United States, were they a factor or not?*

DeSHAZO: Hundreds of thousands of Colombians left the country during the very worst times, but the even larger-scale departures that one might have expected from Colombia didn't materialize when things started getting better.

*Q: What about the -- Peru and Ecuador, had they sort of disappeared from the focus of things, or you know, their dispute? How stood that?*

DeSHAZO: Peru and Ecuador were important countries in the Andean portfolio but I personally spent more time on Venezuela, Colombia and Bolivia when I was DAS – given the circumstances at the time. Ecuador had gone through a cycle of political turbulence from the late 1990s until about 2005. Among our top concerns were to encourage democratic stability and cooperation on regional security matters such as counter-drug efforts. Peru was in the process of consolidating democratic governance in the post-Fujimori period and in solidifying economic growth.

*Q: Well, in Ecuador the, there was a -- developed sort of an anti-American element there. How stood that at the time?*

DeSHAZO: Well, I mean there was -- every country in Latin America had an anti-American element. Some from the traditional Marxist or proto-Marxist left, others who, who saw the United States through the mold of the anti-imperialist argument. But mainstream thinking was more moderate.

*Q: Did you feel a certain amount of almost frustration in dealing with hemispheric affairs because of the preoccupation of the Bush administration with the 9/11 and the war with Iraq and all that?*

DeSHAZO: It was pretty clear that the image of the United States had been tarnished by the war in Iraq. The war was not supported in just about any circle in Latin America. You could see it in the polls – the image of the United States was negatively affected – and



President Bush's ratings in the region fell. The reason was not U.S. policy towards Latin America but because of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

*Q: And this is more on sort of the Foreign Service and more personal side, but how did you and say, the colleagues you talked to feel about this concentration and involvement in Iraq?*

DeSHAZO: Attention and resources go to where U.S. military forces are sent – so the Middle East was the focus. That did not necessarily undercut efforts in Latin America – but it certainly moved the region onto the back burner.

*Q: Well, this is of course always a problem that we are a power with interests all over and all of a sudden a crisis somewhere will mean that our attention is moved over in that direction and sort of waivers from other areas.*

DeSHAZO: Right. Well, we did make an investment in Colombia at a key moment. At one point Colombia was I believe the third largest recipient of aid support from the United States after Israel and Egypt. And while in terms of Latin America, the money we spent in Colombia was considerable, it was a small investment compared to spending in the Middle East. And it was very well spent -- produced a very positive result – certainly a good return for the American tax-payer.

*Q: In the Bush White House, who was looking after sort of hemispheric affairs?*

DeSHAZO: The senior director of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the NSC was Tom Shannon.

*Q: And what was his background?*

DeSHAZO: Tom is a career Foreign Service Officer. I had served with him in Caracas when he was political counselor and I was counselor for public affairs and acting DCM. And I replaced Tom as deputy permanent representative to the OAS. Tom is a very capable, knowledgeable officer about Latin America, and later went on to be Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

*Q: And what's he up to now?*

DeSHAZO: He was ambassador to Brazil most recently.

*Q: Well, did you find that you had good, and whatever term you want to use, ambassadors in your area?*

DeSHAZO: I think they were of high quality. WHA produced and attracted a lot of talent. It was a Bureau where people knew each other quite well. There were many posts available for Spanish-speakers and so many officers had multiple tours in the region. It was a collegial and exciting Bureau to work in.

*Q: Well, did you find the media was paying much attention, America media to Latin America by the time you were deputy assistant secretary?*

DeSHAZO: They were paying attention. Probably Colombia got the most attention in the U.S. Chávez also got his share because of his vocal opposition to the U.S. But the coverage of Latin American in U.S. media was certainly dwarfed by was taking place in the Middle East.

*Q: Well, back to Venezuela. Did you sort of have the feeling that okay, Chavez is attacking us and all, but he's not really doing a very good job and eventually he'll go away and the main thing was that sort of to last him out without causing confrontation or making it worse. The main thing is to keep quiet about him and let him do his thing and let it go. I mean but, but not, not make him as much of an issue.*

DeSHAZO: Right. Well, I think it was pretty clear, especially when he won the recall referendum in 2004 by a wide margin that Chavez was not going anywhere. He had every intention of a very prolonged stay as president. The whole system was centered on him. At the same time, it was apparent that there wasn't much the United States could do to improve the relationship with Chavez and that we were going to have to live with that reality. But our energy relationship remained in place and up to my retirement from the Service in 2004 there was still some cooperation on counterdrug activities. That would later change.

*Q: What about terrorism in your areas?*

DeSHAZO: The real concerns were of the homegrown variety. The FARC, which had been around for 50 years, the ELN (National Liberation Army), and the AUC paramilitaries in Colombia, which the Bush administration put on the foreign terrorist list just before 9/11. One of the key issues was Colombia's attempt to get the AUC demobilized and to bring their leaders to justice. In general, however, Latin America did not present an important threat to the U.S. in terms of links to international terrorism.

*Q: There were at least Lebanese, there were some Middle East elements within Latin America, weren't there?*

DeSHAZO: In general terms, overall links between Latin America and the Middle East at the time were growing, but not at a very significant level. There were influential populations of Latin Americans of Middle East descent – mostly Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinian – most of them Christians – who emigrated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But in terms of terrorism, there was concern about possible local funding in certain places in Latin America for international terrorism and regarding links between international criminal activity – drug trafficking and money laundering – and international terrorism.

*Q: How about trade? How -- during that time you were there did you see that a growing trade connection -- I mean was, was Latin America becoming, becoming more a manufacture -- I mean, I don't know, a solid source of economic growth or not, or?*

DeSHAZO: By the time I was DAS, the region was beginning what would be a very significant period of economic growth – recovering from the downturn in the late 1990s. Many governments in the region were embarked on a liberal, free-trade model of export-led growth – the big commodity boom of the 2000s was getting started. An important driver of all this was the fast-growing presence of China in the region – as a customer for exports but also for financing.

*Q: How did you find being a DAS? Was this all time consuming, or?*

DeSHAZO: It was a very demanding job. There were a lot of countries – I think 18 -- in my portfolio, plenty of issues, and supervision of some key offices in the Department. Lots of inter-agency coordination. I traveled a lot, heavy contact with the media, briefings on the Hill. It, it was a very demanding but exhilarating experience.

*Q: How effective were the embassies of the countries in your portfolio.*

DeSHAZO: They varied. Several had very effective ambassadors and embassies. In the case of Colombia ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno was exceptionally talented and energetic, very skilled and with an extraordinary ability to work the Hill.

*Q: Yeah, it's, it's interesting. Some countries seem to understand right from the get-go how important it is to have a good ambassador. And Washington's not the easiest place to deal in diplomacy. There's so many power centers.*

DeSHAZO: That's right. And I think increasingly the Latin American countries began to realize that, one, they had to pay a lot more attention to Congress, and two, that it was not just the representatives and the senators that they needed to reach out to, but the staffers.

*Q: Yeah, I, I know at one point it was remarked how the Indian ambassador, the Indian embassy always wanted to see the top dog. And if didn't get it, it wouldn't come. Whereas the Pakistani would, you know, wine and dine the relatively junior desk officer, because they realized, you know, this was going to get them somewhere.*

DeSHAZO: For sure more embassies began to see that the framing of policy is done at many different levels and that relatively intermediate level people, or even junior officers sometimes make a really big difference in the different bureaucracies and on the Hill.

*Q: Yeah. Well, after you were -- after your tour there where did you go?*

DeSHAZO: I retired from the service and went to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, CSIS, as Director of the Americas Program.

*Q: Okay, well let's talk a bit about that. What's the history of this organization?*

DeSHAZO: CSIS was an organization founded back in the 1960s. It had originally been affiliated with Georgetown University and then became independent as a bipartisan, or nonpartisan, think tank whose specialty was political -military affairs, national security strategy and international relations. When I joined, CSIS was entering a really dynamic phase in its development and it was a great opportunity for me to stay involved in Western Hemisphere affairs. I particularly was drawn by the bi-partisanship – that ideology and political affiliation were not the driving forces of CSIS.

*Q: Yeah, I -- yeah, there are certain organizations and think tanks where you just sort of, you see somebody from American Enterprise or I guess Brookings or -- you kind of know where they're coming from.*

DeSHAZO: CSIS had people who had come out of Republican administrations, out of Democratic administrations, but the, the culture was seriously bipartisan or nonpartisan, depending on which way you looked at it.

*Q: What sort of things were you involved with?*

DeSHAZO: As director of the Americas program my goal was to help in framing key policy issues regarding the U.S. and its relationship with the region, in providing our audiences in Washington and around the Americas with better insight regarding key policy issues, and to promote the profile of the Americas, including Canada, in the policy community. My staff and I did a lot of research and writing. For the first time in my career, I could talk to the media as a private citizen and not a government official.

*Q: Well, speaking of Canada, I would think from Latin American types the inclusion of Latin America in, in the hemisphere would be sort of a wrenching process. I mean it had so long been considered part of Europe almost that it would be treated as kind of an intruder.*

DeSHAZO: Canada plays a very positive role in inter-American affairs. I experienced the importance of Canada's efforts in many different venues – the Summit of the Americas process, the OAS, on Haiti, and in their bilateral relations. I had considerable experience working with Canadian government officials and diplomats – as well as civil society and the media in Canada – both at State and at CSIS.

*Q: Did you find that Latin America -- sort of in the think tank's world, were you competing with the Middle East or Asia, China, the like? For example I would think that you'd have a huge residue of experts on the Soviet Union, slash, Russia, running around saying, "Hey, remember us?" and all.*

DeSHAZO: Everyone is vying for the attention of policy-makers in Washington. Reminding both the policy community and public opinion of the importance of the Western Hemisphere to the U.S. was something I tried to do every day. At CSIS, I

branched out into areas that I knew were of larger interest – such as energy, health, Latin America-Middle East relations – and where I got to work on topics that I had little previous experience in. Some countries – like Brazil – were of special focus to the business community – so I got more heavily involved with Brazil than I ever had at State.

*Q: Okay, just to sort of get an idea of how a think tank such as yourself works. What do you do? Do you sit there and look at the paper and say hey, let's work on this or do that or bring attention to this, or is there a board sit down and say, "Today is Ecuador's day," or something like that?*

DeSHAZO: When I was at CSIS, each program had to seek funding to support its activities. CSIS programs were almost all free and open to the public and its publications were readily available online – adding to the need for outside funding. We had corporate and individual supporters and would seek grants from foundations and other organizations to fund projects, speakers, seminars and research. Part of the planning involved addressing issues that were high on the public and policy agenda – but also to dig deeper into key issues that were not. So the work was both reactive and proactive.

*Q: Well, how did sort of CSIS work in sort of the governing level? Were there sort of thought sessions? Were people with say, let's do this or that and there would be a debate over this, or what?*

DeSHAZO: CSIS had a strategic approach to its work in terms of both focusing on the key current trends and issues and also identifying very long-term variables for analysis. John Hamre, the CEO and President, was a former Deputy Secretary of DOD and set the tone for this strategic vision. There were initiatives and important publications of the Center as a whole that all of the programs worked on – beyond the individual program efforts.

*Q: Well, so many of these think tanks act as repositories of the opposition. Was yours different?*

DeSHAZO: CSIS had experts who were constantly moving in and out of government, with major shifts when administrations changed. But the goal was to always strike a political balance – to maintain bipartisanship.

*Q: Did you find that people coming in from one administration or another had a little trouble adjusting to this sort of bipartisan look at things?*

DeSHAZO: No, because they knew that's what the culture at CSIS would be. For sure there were initiatives that drew applause from one political side or the other – but that didn't seem to be the purpose of the work. At one point, I knew that I was functioning well when two articles I wrote came out in the same week. One was a very strong criticism of U.S. policy on Cuba that drew a chorus of boos from my friends in the Bush administration. And another piece on Colombia that didn't sit well with folks on the left in the Democratic Party.

*Q: Well, how long did you do this?*

DeSHAZO: Six years.

*Q: Oh boy. And this must have been a real intellectual delight, wasn't it?*

DeSHAZO: It was very interesting. And I was able to really keep up on Latin American affairs, travel a lot to the region. I learned a lot. It was a very exciting job.

*Q: What were you seeing? Were you seeing any sort of trends -- or wither Latin America, I mean?*

DeSHAZO: Maybe I sensed more continuity than change in U.S. policy towards Latin America over time. In 2008 when Obama was elected the pundits were all saying, "There's going to be this sea change in Latin American policy." And I basically told everybody that I was talking to and in the media that they should expect considerable continuity. Except for Cuba – there was. But the big shifts were in the overall relationship between the U.S. and the region. Lesser imbalance economically with the growth of the Latin economies – the rise of China – greater agency in both domestic and international policy from the Latin Americans. The U.S. is no longer seen as the hegemonic power in the region and that is a good thing.

*Q: Well then, you -- from there you moved to where?*

DeSHAZO: Where I am now, at Laspau, L-A-S-P-A-U, which is a not-for-profit organization affiliated with Harvard whose mission is to strengthen higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean. And I also have been teaching at Harvard and at Boston University.

*Q: How do you find the students?*

DeSHAZO: I have taught both graduates and undergrads. Good students. They seem to be thinking much more pragmatically about their future -- in a more focused way than I think I did when I was their age, certainly as an undergraduate.

*Q: Do you find that public life, government, working as we did in the Foreign Service, is attractive to many students, or are they more to sort of the money areas?*

DeSHAZO: A lot of the students ask me about the Foreign Service and I try to bring to my teaching lessons from my experience as a U.S. diplomat. When they ask about life in the service, I think I paint a realistic picture of the extraordinary experience of being a foreign service officer – as well as the drawbacks. A number of my former students have gone on to U.S. government service.

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

DeSHAZO: Fine. Thanks.

*Q: Great, well I really enjoyed this.*

*End of interview*