

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

AMBASSADOR GORDON R. BEYER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Education and War Experience	
Bangkok, Thailand	1957-1959
SEATO	
Personnel Operation	1959-1961
Living conditions in Poland	
Finding a special assistant	
Yokohama, Japan	1961-1964
Job responsibilities	
Somalia	1967-1972
Living Condition	
Paying pension to sea merchant's widow	
Ethnic strife and separatist movement	
African Affairs	1967-1972
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	1972-1975
Villagization process	
AID program	
Egyptian Desk	1970's
President Sadat	
East African Affairs	1970's
Travel to Ethiopia	
Uganda	1980-1983
President Carter	
Security in Uganda	
Political situation	

Embassy staff
President Obote and Oyite Ojok

Conclusion
Foreign Service as a career

INTERVIEW

Q: Ambassador Beyer, we are very happy to have you here with us today, and I would like to go over your career, in general. I wonder if you would start out by telling me a little about how you first got interested in foreign affairs and how that resulted in your winding up in the Foreign Service.

BEYER: I was at college at Harvard, and my oldest brother also went to Harvard and to Harvard Law school. He was interested in public service. He eventually did work for the government for a time after he graduated from law school before going into private practice. I suppose it was his influence, more than any other single individual, that got me interested in foreign affairs.

After Harvard, I went for a year to Northwestern, where I got an M.A. in history, and was thinking, in fact, of not going into foreign affairs, but teaching. The Korean War was still on, however, and I was married and we were running short on money. So I enlisted in the Marine Corps and was eventually commissioned and then sent overseas.

With my battalion in Japan, which was a training battalion for Korea, I was made the S-2, the intelligence officer. I went to intelligence school at Camp Drake in Tokyo and then went back to my unit. One of the major jobs that I had at that time was talking to Japanese prosecutors about our young Marines who got into trouble. I found that I seemed to work a little bit better with Japanese officials than some officers in our unit. So that interested me once again in going into a profession in which it would be necessary to work with foreign officials. It wasn't that I particularly liked foreign officials; I just found that I did it a little bit better than some others.

So, after the Marine corps, I came back to Washington, joined the Bradley Commission, the President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, headed by General Bradley, took a variety of exams including, finally, the Foreign Service exam, passed the written and eventually had an oral exam, passed the oral, and came into the Foreign Service.

Q: That is the proper way of doing it, but not the easy way as some of the rest of us got into the Service. Do you want to start then and outline generally where you went to begin with, and what your major duties were, and what kind of a life you had for the first year or so? I think you started out by going to Bangkok, didn't you?

BEYER: That's right. After the A-100 course, which all the young officers took at that time, I was assigned to Bangkok, Thailand as our first post. My wife and young daughter, Theresa, and I took off for Bangkok. It was a pleasant trip in those days. We went by railroad from Washington to Florida, to Chicago, to Minneapolis, to Seattle by train, then Northwest Airlines from Seattle to Tokyo, to Hong Kong, to Bangkok. In those days it was a prop plane and we traveled with beds on this plane.

We arrived in Bangkok and there were three junior officers assigned to Bangkok, Thailand. I was assigned, perhaps in those days considered the least desirable post, as consular officer. In fact, it turned out to be a marvelous job where I was in charge of our little consular section, had an American assistant, an older woman, and two or three Thais. No one, really, was terribly interested in what we were up to as long as things went along all right.

Two things that I remember are, when I arrived, Mr. Donovan was inspecting the post, and the consular section had had some troubles because a traveling rodeo had gone broke in Bangkok, Thailand. I had been working part-time on the desk, when I was in the A-100 course, with one Mr. Rolland Bushner, who was the desk officer. So I was somewhat familiar with the problems, as seen from Washington, with this rodeo going broke. One of the problems was, that the consular officer did not immediately find out what the Americans were and what their passport numbers were.

So, as this rodeo went broke, the horses were sold and the Americans dispersed, but there was never a very clear accounting of who was who, and so on. Washington was quite distressed.

Mr. Donovan, an old consular hand, was very upset. When I arrived, he decided to take me under his wing and tell me how this should have been done so that, if it ever happened again, I would be able to handle it properly. He was a fine teacher. I learned a great deal about consular work from him, and kept in touch with him for many years afterwards.

So I did that for nine months. I was then assigned to the economics section, and had a pleasant time there, doing a variety of things. Robert Cleveland was the head of the economics section, and I learned a great deal from him about Foreign Service life and the style that we, as young officers, should maintain.

Then finally, I finished up for the last year or so on our delegation to SEATO. So, in that first tour, I had a good exposure to life in the Foreign Service--the consular business, the economic side of our affairs, and then the diplomatic side and working on our delegation to the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization.

Q: Was SEATO, in those days, a viable and growing concern that was really, that you felt, was doing something useful in building our defense posture in that area?

BEYER: I thought it was quite viable, but it was not a NATO. It didn't have forces assigned to it. It had a disparate membership and, therefore, was never a defense organization as such, as NATO was.

On the other hand, these were the early days of SEATO. For example, Ambassador Jack Lydman was in charge of the secretariat at SEATO in those days. Mr. Hill was in charge of our delegation--another fine and vigorous officer. What SEATO did do, I think, is it was more of a cultural organization in many respects. It permitted a great deal of conversation between the European members--the U.K. and France--the US, and the members from other parts of the world--Pakistan and Thailand. So, though never a NATO, I think it served a very good function in those days, and it certainly was very interesting for all of us.

One aspect of life in Thailand in those days was curious. I was, of course, a third secretary. There were a goodly number of other third secretaries who were there, including the today's ambassador from Australia to the United States, Mike Cook, Bruce Harland of New Zealand, and Ali Alatos of Indonesia. Ali today is the foreign minister in Indonesia, and Bruce Harland is up at the U.N. in a significant post.

But, in any event, we third secretaries decided that, since no one else wanted to talk to us, we'd talk to one another, and we got together for lunch every couple of weeks. It became very interesting because we felt we could invite anyone that we wanted to, and we began to invite people that, I think, our ambassadors began to wonder about. In any event, all of our ambassadors heard about this, after about six months. We were called in and asked what we were doing and what we were up to. [Laughter] We explained that this was just a social club and that we were having a good time.

The ambassadors that I had there, first was Ambassador Max Bishop who I didn't get to know very well. As I said, I was down in the consular section at that point. The next ambassador in the second year was Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, and his DCM was Leonard Unger. Both became friends that I kept in touch with throughout my career in the Foreign Service, and both were outstanding officers.

Mrs. Johnson became very fond of my wife, Molly. Molly wanted to teach English to Thais and asked Mrs. Johnson if that would be all right because, in those days, it wasn't too common for wives to work. Mrs. Johnson said this was fine as long as she attended the American wives' meeting at the residence once a month. That was the only requirement she put on Molly.

We, of course, in those days, did work very closely, both of us, with the staff of the embassy and the ambassador, and so on. We tried to be as helpful as possible.

Q: You had, at the end of that period, a couple of years in the Department. What did you do? You did personnel work?

BEYER: That's right. I was assigned to the personnel operations division. I had been off on a trip up-country in Thailand, and I returned and found that I had been assigned to the personnel operations division. I was really depressed because I didn't think that was a very good assignment. But it was the personnel operations division for Europe, and I found out more about the Foreign Service than I ever had known before or since, and perhaps more than I really wanted to know. But it turned out to be a marvelous job.

People who I kept in touch with ever afterwards--Galen Stone was the head of the office. Freeman Matthews was in charge of one division, the division that I was in, and Sam Gammon was in charge of the other division. Sam, of course, is now the executive director of the American Historical Association.

Q: You met most of the movers and shakers in your first couple of years, in other words. [Laughter]

BEYER: That's right. It was really remarkable.

I found out a curious fact however. You couldn't see your file in those days except if you were assigned to personnel, because you had to deal then with the files. So I was shown my file, and just before I left Bangkok, Thailand, we were inspected again. The inspector mixed up my wife with another wife and described her as a dizzy blonde.

As I said to Galen Stone, "She may be dizzy, but she's not blonde. [Laughter] What do we do about that?"

So we got that corrected right away. Otherwise, I suppose it could have been quite detrimental. But that was one aspect of being in personnel.

Another aspect of being in personnel and in the operations division--this is the assignments division to Europe--was that I never had so many friends.

Then there was one last aspect to it. I was in charge of staff personnel in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. One of the jobs that we had as personnel officers in those days, when the cold war was at its height almost, was to interview our staff people to see if they really were competent to go to these difficult countries. We also interviewed people as they came out of the countries, and I'd like to tell two stories about that.

One about a young man who wanted to go as a communicator to Poland. We never assigned a communicator to Eastern Europe in those days if they hadn't already had one tour overseas. This young man had not had a tour in the Foreign Service overseas, but he had served with the military in communications overseas and had an excellent record. So I convinced my bosses that we should assign him to Poland.

After he had been there about six months, we found that the Poles had drilled a hole into his bedroom, which was up on the third floor of the embassy building, and young ladies of the

night came and visited him. When this was found out by the security officer, he was pulled rather rapidly.

They said, as they looked into this, "How in heaven's name did he get assigned there since we only assign people who have served in other foreign posts."

I was to blame for that, I'm afraid. [Laughter] He was a nice young man, though.

Q: But you recovered. [Laughter]

BEYER: The other aspect of the story that I would like to tell is about talking to people as they came out of post. Poland, in those days, was really one of our happiest posts behind the Curtain. Yet, as I began to talk to staff people as they came out, there were lots and lots of complaints, and these complaints got worse and worse. And I wrote them up, and I sent them first to Bob Falstead, who was immediately in charge of my office.

He said, "Well, that's interesting."

And he sent it back to me.

I said, "I am really worried about this. Would you object if I showed it to Galen Stone?"

He said, "No, not at all."

So I showed it to Galen.

Then Galen called me in and said, "Well, I've read this. It is kind of worrisome, but what do you think?"

I said, "I don't know. Something is going on over there. I don't know what it is, but the comments from the staff people have gotten very harsh about the post. They are not very happy, and it's a variety of little things, such as, the wives get first chance to go to the commissary. The secretaries and others, who are working, don't get there until after working hours. Therefore, the wives have picked things over. Or the food in the canteen has become more and more Polish and less and less American. These young people are not very happy about that. Thirdly, the service is bad, and so on and so forth. It is a variety of little things that we never used to have as a problem in Poland."

So he said, "Well, I'm going to show this to some of our security people and have them check and see if they can find out what's going on."

Galen did that. They did check, and this is when they discovered that Mr. Scarbeck, who was the administrative officer, had been compromised.

Q: He was, obviously, not paying sufficient attention to his job.

BEYER: That's right. Yes. As he got and more involved, he did less and less of his job. That resulted in a decline of administrative service, particularly for the lower-ranking folks in the embassy.

Q: Having never done it myself, I always felt that personnel work, at some point, was a very useful thing to have in one's file. I did, of course, serve on selection boards and things of that sort, so you get a little bit of it.

In spite of having been assigning people to Europe, you seemed to have assigned yourself to Yokohama next. [Laughter] How did that happen?

BEYER: As I had mentioned, I had been in Japan during the Korean War, and I was intrigued by Japanese affairs. I had studied under Reischauer at Harvard. Reischauer was the ambassador to Japan; he had just been named. So I had myself assigned to the Japanese Language Training School.

Actually, right before I left personnel--one little story if I may. President Kennedy and his whole new staff had come in and, as you may recall, he said that State is in charge of foreign affairs.

Then three months later he said, "State is not doing the job."

Well, it wasn't quite as bad as it sounded, but what had happened is, we had people that worked with the Eisenhower Administration. When the Kennedy people came in, we had people that could work with them, but they weren't in Washington. And so, the effort in personnel was a tremendous turnover to try to get people back into Washington that could work with the new Administration.

And so the director of personnel asked for a special assistant. We sent one young man up, and he lasted one day and was bounced out. So the director wanted someone else, and he wanted someone talented, and so he talked with Mr. Jova, who was in charge overall of the personnel operations division. I was called into Jova's office, and he told me what they wanted, and he told me that I had to stay up there and I had to do a good job. [Laughter]

So I went up there, and I became the special assistant. That was a fascinating--

Q: The special assistant to whom?

BEYER: To the director of personnel who was Hermann Pollack in those days.

Q: Oh, yes, I knew Hermann well.

BEYER: So we did start shuffling people around, trying to get people back into Washington that could work with the new Administration.

One Saturday morning, when we were involved in doing this, Hermann had all of his staff in, and I was there. The request came from the White House for someone to work closely with the President that the Service had confidence in, who had served in two areas, and was 30 or under.

So we went through our files trying to find someone like this. We could meet all of their requirements except the "30 or under."

So we went back to the White House and we said, "We can meet that requirement except for the '30 and under.' Why is there that requirement?"

They said, "Well, Bobby is only 32, and Ted Sorensen's 30, so it has to be 30 or under."
[Laughter]

We didn't meet that requirement.

Q: Did they take somebody, though?

BEYER: Oh, and the last requirement is "30 or under and had to have been in the Service about ten years." That was the problem.

Q: You didn't have anybody.

BEYER: Actually, it was impossible. Yes.

Q: Let's touch briefly on Yokohama and what you did when you got there. I take it that, having known Reischauer, you probably had some contact with him, even though you were at a separate post somewhat removed.

BEYER: Yes. First of all, the school was in Tokyo. So, when I was up at the school, he would have language officers over from time to time, and we would chat with him. I was not the best language officer in the world, and I decided that maybe I didn't want to spend a whole career in Japan. So we were just initiating a six-month course. So I switched with another officer, who had been assigned to the six-month course. I went into the six-month course, and he went into the full two years--Bill Clark by name, who is now Deputy Assistant Secretary in East Asia. Bill was a marvelous linguist and went on to become one of the better Japanese linguists in our Service.

I went on into the six-month course, and then after that went down to Yokohama, where my first job was as a visa officer and an administrative officer--not visa, passport and citizenship, and administrative officer. And I did that for six months. It was quite a large consulate general in those days. It had nine officers and about fifteen folks--a big place.

After six months, it was reduced to three officers--a consul general, who lived in Yokohama but worked in Tokyo, a passport and citizenship officer, a shipping officer, and an administrative officer--he did all those things--and me, who became the reporting officer. So the next year I did reporting, and then the third year it was reduced to one person, and that was me. We just did the shipping and what reporting we could.

Q: So you were gradually being phased out of existence.

BEYER: That's right. In fact, what happened, of course, is--you probably know--the school was moved from Tokyo to Yokohama. I was all for this because I thought that the young language officers could live in some of the smaller villages around Yokohama, such as Kamakura, or so on, which are very lovely places, and would really get into the Japanese ways and the Japanese society. In fact, of course, what happened is that the language officers lived right in Yokohama, went to the Officers Club, and didn't get involved as much in Japanese life during those days that they were in the school as they might have.

One other thing that happened in Yokohama, by the way, is--we had a child born there who died after two weeks. That was supposed to be our last child because Molly was Rh negative. This results in having to change the blood of the child. So we had been advised by the doctors down in Yokosuka not to have any more because it would be tough for the mother and for the baby. But, having lost this child--it had a congenital heart disease, lesions in the heart which, in those days, they really couldn't fix and I'm not sure they could have fixed her even today.

But, after three months, we went back to Yokosuka and decided we would try one more time. The folks in Yokosuka said that they would do everything they could to bring the baby out in good shape. So that is when our youngest was born--Tom. He was brought on after seven months. He had a variety of little things to get fixed up, including a complete transfusion of his blood, and so on. But both he and mother survived, and both are doing quite well today.

Q: Isn't that great!

BEYER: Yes.

Q: Actually, our second was an Rh-negative one, too, except it was very early in the procedure and they didn't do that complete drainage and oil change that they do now.

BEYER: Of course, I really have to put in a plug for the Navy doctors in the hospital in Yokosuka, which was made available to Foreign Service people in those days. They did, really, just a marvelous job. It couldn't have been better.

Q: I remember years ago that you told me that you were seriously thinking of resigning from the Foreign Service about this time, until you got this wonderful chance to open a new

post in Hargeysa, which always amazed me that you would stay for that. [Laughter] It certainly showed the stuff you were made of. Do you want to touch on that a little bit?

BEYER: Well, it is true. Every couple of years, I think, in those early days I used to think I ought to resign from the Foreign Service and do something else. The head of Mobil Oil Company in Japan, became a friend. We belonged to the same little club in Yokohama called the "Martini Taster's Society." It was 12 men, eleven Americans and one Dane. We met once a month, and the only thing that you had to do was to have at least one martini for lunch, which always led to very bad things. But it was a nice group. The consul general had traditionally been a member of this group. So, when it was reduced to one person, they decided that they would invite me to join, and that's how I met this man.

He called one day. It was in the spring.

He said, "Let's go play golf."

I said, "It is a little difficult for me because I have to get someone to cover here."

He said, "Well, see what you can do."

So I called the embassy in Tokyo, and they said, "Yes. Go play golf. We'll cover for you."

So, during the golf game, he said, "Why don't you join Mobil Oil Company?"

Well, two things really had happened. One was this possibility of opening a small post in Africa had come up, which I was very excited about, and I'll come back and talk about that. But also, Molly's parents had died and left a little money, which made it possible for us not to have to worry about schooling of the children. The president of Mobil commented that, working for the Foreign Service, I would not be able to send my children to the same schools that I had gone to because they didn't pay well enough.

Well, with this little bit of extra money, that burden was relieved, and we were able to look forward to being able to send the children to whatever schools they could get into. So that was important to not leaving.

Then, after telling him that I wasn't going to leave, he then said, "Well, you know, I don't blame you at all. I wish I had stayed in the Navy." [Laughter]

He really enjoyed the Navy and wished that he had done that.

As far as the post is concerned, just a day or so before we had this golf game, a classified telegram had come from Washington, explaining about the opening of this post in Hargeysa, Somali Republic, why they wanted a post there, and so on. Since it was classified, someone had to bring it down from Tokyo because we didn't, by that time, have classified facilities in Yokohama. We were out that evening and when we came back, this

communicator had the telegram and left a message for us to come up to his apartment and take a look. Good soul that he was, he had opened an atlas to show us where Hargeysa was and, indeed, where Somalia was. [Laughter]

We were very eager to do this, and it wasn't until some years later, we learned that five people had turned it down while we had been eager to go.

Q: Well, it was a fascinating job, I guess. Anyway, we were delighted to see you when you arrived. I might interject that I was in Mogadishu, so we welcomed you there. How did you get, by the way, from Yokohama? Did you go home in between?

BEYER: We did. But, as you may recall, you were very interested in having someone get there sooner rather than later. So, despite having been in Yokohama for two-and-a-half years and three years in Japan, and watching American President Line Ships come in and out of Yokohama, and getting to know the shipping agent for a couple of years very well, who had promised us that--

Q: That you could have the royal suite.

BEYER: That's right. [Laughter] The basic first-class suite would be a really good suite. But we didn't take the ship, which is--I mean, it was in those days--a marvelous two-week cruise, we flew back. We flew to Washington and on down to my parents' home in Florida, and then off to Africa.

Those were wonderful days to travel to Africa. We took, I believe, East African Airways, but it was being run by the British. They'd set the plane up in compartments, like they have on trains in Europe. They gave us a whole section because, by that time, there were five of us. It was just a marvelous trip to Nairobi.

Nairobi was a lovely city, though I remember Ambassador Torbert saying, "Don't think that the rest of Africa is like Nairobi, because it is not," which was absolutely true.

Then we went on to Mogadishu, and we were there for ten days before going up to Hargeysa.

Q: Do you want to paint a little picture of Hargeysa and what you did there--which was really the end of the world, I must say.

BEYER: Yes. In those days, it was quite hard to--it took about eight days to go by truck from Hargeysa to Mogadishu, and it was a fairly long plane ride because Somalia is in the form of a seven. You couldn't go directly because that was going across Ethiopia, and Ethiopia--in those days and, perhaps, until today--was the enemy. So the planes had to go around the corner, and that took quite a long time in these old prop planes--these DC-3s.

The post had been established in the sense that a house had been found, an office had been found, and so a lot of the tough, basic decisions had already been taken and had been, I think, taken very well by a more senior officer who had done this. But there still were a lot of things to do in the sense that we didn't have furniture for either the house or the office, at that point.

I still remember Wayne Swedenburg, who was the administrative officer of the embassy in Mogadishu. I talked to Wayne and said, "What should we do about trying to get some things out of Washington for the office, in particular?"

We had gotten the desk and a credenza--a credenza is, I found out, something that you put against a wall. But we didn't have any couches, or chairs, or coffee tables, or rugs, or draperies.

So Wayne, being a very practical man, said, "Why don't you go to Aden, which was just across the Gulf of Aden, the town of Aden, buy what you need, have it shipped over?"

This was far and away the simplest, the quickest, and the cheapest. So I went over to Aden and went to a Norwegian store and bought some very nice things, had them shipped, and put in the office at Hargeysa. The furniture had a wine-red back of cloth and white leather seats, and then light wood on the arms. That was the two chairs and the couch. The table was also of light wood. The rug was gold, and the draperies were, again, wine red. I asked Molly, when this was all finished and set up, to come down and take a look at the office and see what she thought.

She opened the door, took one look, and said, "Metro-Goldwyn Mayer." [Laughter]

However, the Somalis were lively people, and they heard about this new office. For the next two weeks, I had a steady stream of Somalis coming into the office, for one reason or another, to take a look. [Laughter]

We also set up a library, and we showed films. So I was very much involved with our United States Information Service people in Mogadishu that first year because they would send us materials, and so on and so forth.

After that first year, we had assigned to us a wonderful USIS officer, who had been in London, named Savalas. He was the brother of--Telly. The Savalas who is on T.V. He did a marvelous job, and I realized what a good USIS officer can do, which I really hadn't been doing--but we tried. It was fun.

One other thing that we had to do in Hargeysa which was, I think, a little bit unusual is, the British at that time did not have relations with the Somali government. Therefore, we represented British interests.

Somaliland, which is what it was called--was a British protectorate before it became independent in the Somalia Republic and joining the south, which was an Italian colony. But many of the Somalis in the north had relations with the United Kingdom in one way or another. They were retired from the Somali Camel Corps, or they'd been in the maritime business and were receiving modest pensions or stipends of one sort or another. So one of our jobs every month was to pay these folks these modest amounts of money.

After we'd been there about six months, we got a communications from the U.K. government saying, "We understand that you are still paying a pension to the widow of this man who was a merchant seaman, and we figure that she must be about 102. We wonder, is she really alive and do you really give the money to her?"

Well, I had to write back and say, "No, we didn't give it to her. We gave it to her sons."

Her sons were in their sixties and seventies. They were old men themselves. Then the word came back from London, "Well, we appreciate your problem, but you have to see her and see that she is still alive before you give out any more money."

So, when her son came in the next month to get his check, I said that I couldn't release it until he brought his mother in. He said, "Do you realize that my mother is a three-day walk into the Ogaden?"

This is a grazing area in, in fact, Ethiopia, but is inhabited by ethnic Somalis most of the time.

So I said, "I am terribly sorry, but those are my instructions from London, and I really have to follow them. I realize that this is difficult."

He said, "Do you have any idea how old she is?"

I said, "Yes, I think I do. I gather she is really quite elderly."

He said, "Yes. I don't know whether she can make the trip."

I said, "Well, those are my instructions."

So he disappeared, and he reappeared about a week later with a woman that he said was his mother, and I believed him. She certainly was the oldest-looking person I have ever seen. So I gave him the check and reported this back to London, and they said okay. [Laughter]

Q: Interesting. Now, at that time we had a Peace Corps, as I remember it. At least we had it for a while until there was some border trouble which came up. During your stay there, you had quite a few border troubles, didn't you, with Ethiopia?

BEYER: Yes. We had border troubles, but we also had ethnic troubles between the clans. The Habr Awal and the Habr Yunis got into a fight. These were two major Ishaaq clans, Ishaaq being the large clan overall. Two thousand men were killed. I couldn't believe that the Somalis could get in such a fight with themselves. It was just unbelievable to me.

At one point, a young man came in, who was a teacher, and showed me where he had been shot, and it had gone right through his pants cuff. There was just a little round hole.

I said, "Well, this is just silly."

He said yes, he realized that, but that it had just started and these things did happen from time to time. There was never any reporting in the Western press, to the best of my knowledge, on this kind of killing.

When we first arrived in Hargeysa, the Ethiopians had just bombed the town. The Somalis did not believe that the planes that were flown could have been flown by Ethiopians. The thought they were flown by Americans. We were, at that time, very close to Ethiopia and had been for many years. Haile Selassie, of course, was a legend in his time, and well and favorably remembered here in the United States.

I was really received with a certain coolness--indeed, more than coolness, perhaps some hostility. I can remember that the road from the airport into town had to go around a corner where young Somalis lounged at a local gas station and would always shout at the Americans as they went by, sometimes even throwing stones--which was a sort of Somali trait because that's the way they kept track of their herds. So they learned to throw stones very early.

Q: And there were plenty of stones available.

BEYER: That's right, because in Hargeysa--and, I guess, perhaps the rest of Somalia--it was like Arizona or New Mexico in the sense that it was quite dry. It only got five or six inches of rain a year. That usually came in the big rains in the spring. There were small rains in the fall. Then we'd go for as long as six months with no rain at all. The climate, however, was very nice and very healthy because of this lack of moisture.

So there was, for example, a large Peace Corps contingent in the northern regions because, of course, the Somalis in the northern regions, being a former British protectorate, the language of instruction in their schools was English. It was English rather than Somali because, in those days, Somali was not written. It was not a written language. It was just a spoken language. So English was used in the schools, and it was very easy, therefore, for our Peace Corps to be of assistance, teaching in their schools.

There was a doctor assigned, because of the number of Peace Corps folks that we had in the northern regions, but that doctor had really very little to do because, as I mentioned, the kids just didn't get sick because of the nature of the climate. It was a marvelous climate in

the sense that, for three months of the year, it was cool enough to wear a jacket, and the summers, though warmer, were very dry. Therefore, you didn't feel the heat so much.

We had in the backyard in Hargeysa four horses, and so we did quite a bit of riding. There was also an institution called the Hargeysa Club, which was the old British Club in the northern regions. The Club had a place to stay, it served meals, and it had grade-B movies a couple of times a week. It was an interesting facility.

Q: I might mention, of course, that Hargeysa was about, as I recall it, 7,000 feet up in the air as opposed to Mogadishu which was at sea level. Therefore, the climate was quite different, indeed.

Didn't we have to, as I recall it, evacuate the Peace Corps while you were there?

BEYER: Not while I was there.

Q: I remember doing that at one point. Maybe it was before you came.

BEYER: Well, that's right. Right before when I came, the Peace Corps, the first group, they bombed Hargeysa. The Somalis were quite antagonistic to Americans. The volunteers in the northern region just scattered, and it was very hard to find where they were because the deputy director, who lived up in the northern regions, was not a consular officer, was not alert to keeping close track of his volunteers. So his volunteers just left the country and never told him where they were going.

So one of the purposes, I believe, of establishing this branch office of the embassy in Hargeysa was to be sort of a lightning rod for any hostility towards Americans so that they could be hostile towards this facility rather than at any particular volunteer.

Similarly, we had a somewhat better feeling for how to keep track of folks, and we did that. In addition, there were certain separatist feelings between the north, which was a former British protectorate, and the south, which was a former Italian colony. The northerners were beginning to feel that maybe they shouldn't have been so quick to jump into a republic with the folks from the south, because a lot of the money they felt they were earning for the government was going to Mogadishu and, therefore, leaving the northern regions and not coming back.

A couple of incidents that were interesting to me at that point--President Aden Abdullah Osman at one point came to Hargeysa. With the other consuls or vice consuls, we attended a dinner with him and had a long talk with him. I thought the embassy might be interested in this, and so I wrote a long telegram, which was classified, and took it down to the local--we had a one-time pad and classified it in that manner--took it down to the local post office, showed it to the telegraph man, and he said, "This is in code."

I said, "Yes, it is."

He said, "I won't send it."

I said, "You have to send it. It's a telegram. You just have to send it." [Laughter]

So he did send it. It got back to Washington, and they spent two or three days trying to decipher it, could not, cost \$180, and a rocket came out to the Embassy saying, "Tell that consular officer in Hargeysa not to send anymore classified telegrams. If he's got anything classified, to send it to the embassy by pouch, and they can send it on to Washington."

This is what we did from then on.

Q: We were, I guess, pretty well cleaned up, up in Hargeysa. By this time, my contact with you had a temporary break because I left Mogadishu, but you later came down to Mog as political officer.

BEYER: That's right, political officer.

Q: Do you have anything more to say about Hargeysa?

BEYER: Just two things. One is that Mohammad Egal, a former minister in the government--and to become a minister again, indeed, to become prime minister--was from the northern regions. We lived in a house of his first wife, and so we got to know Mohammad Egal quite well because he would come up and visit his children.

At one point, he told me--after he'd been up in Hargeysa for three weeks and we were drinking at the Hargeysa Club bar, which he enjoyed very much--he commented, "You know. You never really do get divorced from a wife."

So he still saw quite a bit of Asha, his first wife, and his children.

The other thing that I remember is, Ambassador Torbert--two things. One, when we first arrived, that little boy that was born, Tommy, you had us to lunch, and I remember we came--this is a very Foreign Service story. You had the whole family, including little Tom, and we had him in a crib, a portable crib. We whacked open that crib and dumped Tom in it. You were impressed by that. [Laughter] The other two kids behaved themselves, but this little guy, we just put aside and he slept.

The other thing that I remember is, at one point you were worried about the separatist business. We had left Hargeysa to take a boat, believe it or not, from Djibouti down to Mombasa as part of our R&R holiday. We had talked the Department into permitting us to do this rather than going to Athens, which was our R&R post, because we wanted to go to the game parks. We convinced them that this was a significant change in climate, etc.

As we came down in that Lloyd-Triestino Italian Line, we stopped in Mogadishu, outside in the ocean. People would come and join the boat and be lifted up in a bag. We were watching this operation and, at one point, the bag dropped, and there was Bill Sandals, who was the political officer and quite an impressive, older officer, quite proud of his dignity. Being hauled around in a bag, he didn't enjoy it at all [Laughter]. So I went running down.

I said, "For goodness sakes, Bill, what are you doing here?"

He said, "Well, the ambassador sent me out because he wants to know whether, in your view, there is any truth to these rumors that we're hearing down here about a separatist movement in the north."

I said, "Well, when I left the north--which was about two days before--things were still very quiet, and I didn't think there was anything to those rumors." [Laughter]

So he went down to the deck, and got back into his bag and went back ashore. I still remember that.

Q: The bag actually was a wooden platform with canvas sides that collapsed. That's the way I arrived in Mogadishu. My ambassadorial dignity was somewhat threatened. [Laughter]

BEYER: Well, it was the way everybody arrives. I didn't see why he should have been so upset. [Laughter] But he was.

At any rate, after you left, sir, Ambassador Thurston arrived. I was getting to be known in the embassy as an expert, just because I was bouncing around in the northern regions. So he asked that I come and replace his political officer after my two-year tour in Hargeysa, and so I did that.

Alex Johnpoll was the DCM when I went down, and I learned a great deal from Alex, also. He became a lifelong friend until he passed away. He was replaced by Hal Joseph, who was also a first-rate officer and a good tennis player. He and I used to play tennis.

Q: Very important there, too. That's one game you could play.

BEYER: Right.

Q: Do you remember anything particular from your Mogadishu days? What was going on by that time?

BEYER: I think the thing that I remember the best is what a democracy Somalia was in those days. They had elected a president twice and the parliament three times in open elections. Dalka was the political journal. It was in English and was the first, probably the best, political journal being published in Africa in those days.

I was at the embassy for a year. In the last days of that tour at the embassy, there was an election. President Mohammed [Ibrahim] Egal became prime minister, and Abdirashid Shermarke became the president. So there was a switch there.

Q: Abdirashid, having been prime minister before, then he was replaced by Abdirizak Haji Hussein, and then Egal replaced him.

BEYER: That's right, and then Egal replaced Abdirizak Haji Hussein.

Q: It seemed quite idyllic.

BEYER: Right. I remember Ambassador Thurston saying to me--we had a beach house at that point--"I want you to see Egal before you leave and find out what kind of government he's going to have and what he wants to do."

So I called Mohammed, and I said, "I'm leaving in a few days. I would be very grateful if I could talk with you, perhaps at the beach house."

He said, "Gordon, I'm really very busy. Well, all right."

So he came over about 4:30 to the beach house, and just the two of us talked for about an hour or two hours. I then reported this back to Ambassador Thurston, and his policies were very much what we hoped they would be. He became a very close friend to the United States, as did the Somali government, in those days.

Q: He shortly thereafter came on a visit to the United States, I remember.

BEYER: Right. By this time he had married a second time, Edna.

Q: The beautiful Edna, yes.

BEYER: Who was a lovely gal and a nurse. I remember the headline when he and Edna visited the United States. It said in the Style section of the Washington Post, "Second wife and midwife." It was an article about Edna. [Laughter]

Q: You came back then in 1967 to the Department for quite a long tour.

BEYER: That's right--five years.

Q: Was that entirely in African affairs?

BEYER: Yes, it was, except the last year. Ambassador Thurston wanted me to go back onto the Somali desk, unbeknownst to me. I guess I'd been considered for the secretariat, which would have been fun, but I didn't mind going on the Somali desk. I did that for a couple of

years, and then became the deputy in what was, in those days, called Northeast Africa and included the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The last couple of years I was the deputy in that office under Matt Loomam. Matt was an outstanding officer, who served in Europe, and then, as a matter of fact, was to be an ambassador in Somalia.

Q: Yes. Matt worked for me way back in Western Europe days.

BEYER: So I did that for four years, and then went to the National War College as a student, which was a great experience in those days--1971-1972. I graduated in the class of 1972. In those days, the students visited for three weeks the five geographic areas of the world, and the Air Force assigned planes so that each group had its own plane which meant that it would leave when you were ready to leave. You didn't have to meet schedules. It would take whatever you bought and just put it on the plane.

Another officer, Dave Simcox, and I were the only two Foreign Service officers who were selected to go to the Middle East. This was, of course, an area of great interest to the military because they foresaw troubles there. So they only took two civilians, and Dave and I were the ones that got onto this trip.

There was a great deal of talk about buying things in the Middle East. I wasn't very interested in this, but our first stop was in Tunis.

All the military folks said, "Well, in Tunis you are supposed to buy bird cages."

They were white and blue bird cages. So we went running into town, and I thought, "Well, I might just as well get a bird cage, too."

I must say that, once you start buying like that, the bug does sort of get you. I was as bad as they were. But when we came back to the plane, we hung up on the ceiling all our bird cages. So that was the beginning of a plane filled with things--the bird cages all the way down the top of the ceiling. [Laughter]

Those were happy times, and I regret that the War College is far different from what it was in those days.

Q: We can get into that later when we get to the time that you were there in the management thereof. You then went back to northeast Africa in 1972 as DCM in Dar es Salaam.

BEYER: That's right. Bev Carter, who was named ambassador--one of the black officers in the Foreign Service, who had come up through the United States Information Service, USIA, and was then a deputy in AF under Ambassador Newsom. He was assigned to Tanzania and asked if I'd like to go as his deputy. I agreed to do so.

That was an interesting assignment but, in fact, Tanzania was a difficult country for me. It was the greatest disappointment of any of the countries I think I've served in in the Foreign Service in the sense that--the intellectuals in the academic community of both America and Europe considered Julius Nyerere something of a philosopher king, and I felt like I was going to the philosopher king's kingdom. In fact, of course, as I was to find out, Julius Nyerere was a ruthless, autocratic ruler, who stayed in power by being very tough, indeed. Indeed, I found that the term "disappeared" was a verb--such as, "Mohammad was disappeared yesterday." This happened often to those who got too close to Americans. We began to realize that, the only way we could have Tanzanian friends, or see Tanzanians, was in large groups so that they could not be identified as being particularly close to us Americans. This made it very hard.

The first year and a half was a very disillusioning experience. It was really like living behind the Iron Curtain, from everything that I've talked to of folks who have lived behind the Iron Curtain.

The country was not doing well. For example, they had a policy called "Villagization"--Ujamaa was the term in Swahili, and the effort was to move people into government villages. The advantages from the government's point of view would be that they could provide a modicum of health care, a modicum of education, and clean water. In fact, what it did is it broke the identification of a family or family unit to a particular piece of land and forced them into these villages. Then they would have to walk to these pieces of land, and slowly the identification of that particular piece of property, private property with a private individual, was broken.

This Ujamaa was not going as fast as it was hoped. Therefore, they decided to speed it up, and they used the Army to transport people and to knock down villages and move people, sometimes as little as five miles, to this new village.

We found out that this moving of people was going on because I went with the family down to the Selous, which is a game park down in the southern part of the country. As we drove down there, we saw this happening. We saw people--it looked like a picture from the Second World War, with people streaming along the sides of the road, carrying their belongings on their head or their back, and carrying long poles to build new houses in the new village sites.

I got back to Mogadishu and I said, "We've got to report this. This is just terrible, and we also ought to get some newspaper guy--"

Q: You got back to Dar es Salaam.

BEYER: Dar es Salaam. I'm sorry. Dar es Salaam. And we ought to get some newspaper folks down from Nairobi to report on this. We told reporters in Nairobi about what we thought was happening and that this was really quite a major story.

They came down to Dar es Salaam, drove down towards the Selous, got about 50 miles outside of town, were picked up by the government, returned to the airport in Dar es Salaam, and told they could never come into Tanzania again.

This was a very efficient way to control the news. As the newsmen said to us, "You know, Tanzania is kind of important in East African political affairs, and to be barred for life from a country is rather severe. It really does restrict our reporting on this country."

Nevertheless, the story eventually did get out. There was an article in Time, and so on, and we estimate that six million people were moved in this villagization process. It was really quite harsh.

The thing my wife remembers the best is going past a village that had been knocked down and burned, and a woman--and the smoke slowly going up--was poking through the rubble, looking for her favorite utensil to take with her to the new Ujamaa village or the villagization policy, the new village.

Q: What was the total population?

BEYER: The total population at that time was about 20 million, so it was an enormous amount of people, just an enormous amount of people--couldn't believe it. All over the country, apparently, this was happening, and we wouldn't have known about it in the embassy except--because we didn't travel that much in the country.

Q: Were you restricted in travel?

BEYER: No, we were not. We were permitted to go and see this business. The officials didn't like it too much, and we were often questioned rather closely--where we were going, what we were doing. But, since we were going down to the Selous for a holiday, they could hardly keep us from going there. It is a fine game park area. Indeed, Tanzania has, I think, the best game parks in East Africa, but the facilities today are--they were going downhill then, and they are even worse today, I am told by those who have visited. On the other hand, the facilities and the parks in Kenya continue to be quite impressive.

Q: What kinds of programs did we have going in Tanzania at that time? Were there AID programs of one sort or another?

BEYER: Yes. We had a large AID program. It was about \$10 million a year.

Another interesting story to me is, at this time--now this was the last years, this was during the Nixon Administration, Nixon-Ford. An official came out, an AID inspector came out, and he spent a couple of weeks in Dar, talking to folks, and so on. Then he spent another week, traveling around the country.

He came back, and he said, "I don't think our economic assistance is going to help this country, and I don't think we should be here at all."

Because of the socialist nature of the government, he felt that our aid would not be helpful, and he said--Tanzania in those days was getting more assistance per capita from countries around the world, particularly northern Europe, than any other country.

He said, "If the countries of northern Europe think that they can help Tanzania, fine. But I don't think we can. I don't think we should."

That particular report was buried by AID, but I kept a copy for years because I found it so fascinating. Also, the Tanzanians would tell you, "Well, we're doing this in health, and we're building these many schools, and so on and so forth."

Then he would go out and look and, of course, the statistics that the Tanzanians would hand out in Dar es Salaam, and the reality out in the field, was not comparable at all. These were just misstatements. They were just errors. They were lies, in fact.

So the cooked figures of the government departments in Dar es Salaam were just a scandal, and he discovered this. In its own way, it is kind of unfortunate, I think, that we didn't recognize the lesson right there--that there are some countries we can help, and there are some that we cannot. Perhaps Tanzania was one of those countries that we really can't help.

Q: Well, perhaps our own bureaucracy has something to do with this.

BEYER: Yes, indeed. Actually, Ambassador Thurston was opposed to this policy. He used to call it "the policy of 'pays choisis'," the chosen countries. He said that there were some in Washington who didn't want to help Somalia but wanted to help Ethiopia. He felt that this was wrong, and that there were many reasons to help Somalia, let alone that it was an operating democracy in those days. I agreed with him.

But now, in retrospect, I really think that there are countries that we can help in the developing world. But there are also countries we can't help.

Q: Was there any change in the political situation in Tanzania while you were there? That's when they began to have border difficulties with Uganda, wasn't it?

BEYER: That's right.

Q: Did you get involved in that at all at that time--as a forecast of your future operations?

BEYER: There was the abortive effort in the southern part of Uganda by Tanzanian troops, and Nyerere pulled back from that. But there wasn't much political change because Nyerere had an iron fist on things in Tanzania and ran a very tight organization. So there was no

political change in the three years that we were there, really--except, as I say, that, if anything, things got a little bit worse.

Q: I have sort of lost track of things there. When did Nyerere finally disappear as a factor?

BEYER: I don't know whether he's disappeared yet--in the sense that he has given up the presidency a couple of years ago and he's no longer president of Tanzania. But he is still head of the party.

Q: He's still ___ machine?

BEYER: That's right.

Q: Incredible. I remember that, in my day when we had Soapy Williams and Wayne Fredericks. Wayne was very devoted to Nyerere. I always considered Wayne was a bit of an ideologue, anyway. [Laughter] Never having met Nyerere, I was a little suspicious at the time.

BEYER: Soapy Williams came through when I was the DCM, and because, of course, he is a well-known Democrat, it was given to me to entertain him rather than the ambassador. [Laughter] That was sort of interesting.

Q: Those tend to happen. Eventually you left in 1973.

BEYER: Yes, 1975. In 1975, it came up what I would do next and, at this time, Free Matthews was on the Egyptian desk and he was looking for a deputy. Sam Gammon--I had kept in touch with him--was in the executive secretariat. So word came out, "How would you like to go on the Egyptian desk?"

I said, "Fine."

It was, I think, probably the most exciting job that I had in the Foreign Service in the sense that, in those days, Kissinger was the Secretary of State, Ford was the President, and there was this tremendous effort for the United States to get along with Egypt. We had had a break in relations that lasted about seven years. We reestablished relations in December of 1973. I went onto the desk a year and a half later.

In that year and a half, the Egyptians were trying to get established here. There was an effort to bring Sadat, who was the president of Egypt, to the United States on a visit. We had never had a chief of state from Egypt visit the United States. He was the first. Because, as the deputy in the old AFNE, and in AFE, I had handled a number of state visits, when it was arranged for Sadat to make his first visit, which was in November of 1975, Free said, "Okay. You handle the administrative arrangements of this thing"--which I did do.

The only substantive thing that I really added to that visit was, there was a great deal of talk about the peace process--this effort to bring peace to the Middle East--that it was an ongoing thing, that it would take many, many years and, therefore, it was, indeed, a process. The thought was that President Ford would be reelected, but we knew at that time that President Sadat had a bad heart and had had a heart attack. So we thought that he probably would not continue, and the effort to establish peace in the area would fall by the wayside at some point.

So the thought was, after the official visit here in Washington, I suggested that we get these folks out of Washington--the two principals and the two secretaries of state or foreign ministers and their families--to talk about the future--how things should go forward if either of them falters. So some wealthy Republican contributors in the Jacksonville, Florida area gave up their houses. After the official visit, President and Mrs. Sadat and Foreign Minister and Mrs. Fami, with President and Mrs. Ford and the Secretary and Mrs. Kissinger, went down to these homes in Jacksonville and spent a long weekend. I think it was two-and-a-half or three days. They talked about the future.

We feel that this did work because, when President Ford was not reelected, the transition, as far as the Middle East is concerned, to President Carter went quite smoothly, and it led, of course, eventually to the Camp David Accords.

Q: So you really started that whole process.

BEYER: Well, no. It was just a part of the whole thing. I didn't really, because there were too many people involved to take sole credit for that, but it was the one little thing that I did suggest and that they did agree to, to talk about. I think that was good because we then saw Sadat here several times.

Q: There's a note here you were at the US-U.N. in 1977. Was that a full assignment or just a detail?

BEYER: It was a detail. We were on holiday up at Cape Cod at a family place. The telephone rang--this is after I'd been on the desk for two years and I was up for an assignment somewhere--and it was the special assistant to Roy Atherton, a fellow named Abington by name, who said, "Roy would like you to go to the U.N. to be with this new delegation that Andy Young is going to head."

The Department of State always assigns one officer from each of the geographic bureaus to the U.N. for the General Assembly. The idea of that officer is to meet with the senior members who come for the General Assembly.

Both Molly and I had always wanted to live in New York, and so we said, "Terrific. We'd love to do that."

Other folks said, "Why don't you want a permanent assignment?"--because this was just for the General Assembly. It would only go from September through December. But we said, "That's all right. We get to go to New York and we really want to do that."

So we did do it. It was great fun.

Q: By that time they were able to pay your per diem.

BEYER: They paid marvelous per diem, yes, as a matter of fact. So we didn't have any money problems at all.

Q: I suppose there was a time there when New York was just another home assignment and you didn't get paid anything.

BEYER: That's right. No, the per diem was excellent, so we were able to live reasonably. Actually, it was an interesting job because I wasn't reporting on the Assembly. I was supposed to talk to these folks, these senior members of the delegation, and so on. Many of the secretaries would sit all day, waiting for the officers to come back and report on what had gone on at the General Assembly. The officers couldn't get back until the General Assembly closed, and that usually wasn't until five or six o'clock at night. Then they'd come back and dictate their telegram.

I would come back and forth during the day. I'd run over and talk to somebody, come back, and the girls were just sitting there. So I was able to turn out all this material. Then, when the other fellows came back who were reporting on the assembly, I was done and away. So it was a great setup.

Q: Do you remember anybody particularly that you met there that was important or significant?

BEYER: Two things that were significant, I think, to me. One was--as you may recall, President Sadat went to Jerusalem. Right up to the very day, he got out of the plane in Jerusalem, the head of the Saudi delegation, who I had gotten to know, told me, "Sadat will never go. He simply will not do that." [Laughter]

Of course, Sadat did do that. Sadat was one of the most unusual political folks that I have ever had anything to do with, and a remarkable man.

For example, one story about him--Hermann Eilts was the American ambassador in Cairo in these days. He got very close to Sadat. He used to go with him to his villa down on the Nile, and he said that sometimes he'd talk with Sadat, and Sadat would stop talking and would just think for 40 minutes. He just wouldn't say a word. He'd just sort of go into this haze and just think out a problem. Then he'd start talking again.

Hermann said, "I'd just sit there and wait." [Laughter]

He was that kind of fellow. Anyway, that's one thing I remember about him that occurred.

The second thing that I remember distinctly was, the number two in the Israeli mission had been there for a number of years. People said that he knew more about how the U.N. operated than anyone else. I wanted to get to know him, so I kept working and working at it. Finally, I invited him to lunch at the Harvard Club in New York. I joined the Harvard Club through some friends, and it wasn't very far away. It's 24 West 42nd Street, just on the other side from the east side--

Q: Right by the public library.

BEYER: That's right. Right by the public library, not too far away. Anyway, I finally got this fellow to come to lunch with another Israeli and there was another American there. There were four of us. He had never been to the Harvard Club for lunch. It was quite an impressive place to eat, and he enjoyed it. He talked a lot. When the lunch was over, he was enjoying it so much and was feeling so much at home, that they gave him the check.
[Laughter]

Q: What was his name? Do you remember?

BEYER: I don't remember his name. I'm sorry.

Q: Then you went back for another fairly long spell in the East African--

BEYER: Yes. Actually, what happened is, I went back to Washington and Roy Atherton said, "I want you to go out to Cairo to be the political officer."

I said, "Okay, I'll go to Cairo and be the political officer, but I would really like some Arabic before going. I just don't think that, you know, I'm so new in this whole Middle East business that I really ought to have at least some Arabic."

As a matter of fact for the month of January, Roy and the head of public affairs were in the Middle East, and so I ran that office--the public affairs office. Then when they came back, we talked about what I should do.

So he said, "Why don't you go to Cairo, and if you want Arabic training, I'll arrange it for you at FSI."

Well, it's the best language experience I ever had. I must say, a marvelous teacher, an Egyptian. We would work from eight in the morning until twelve, and then she would say, "That's all you can do. What you should do now is listen to tapes and work on the script. Then we'll go on with it the next day."

So I said, "Okay."

So I came home at noon, had lunch, took a nap--got in bed, took a nap--then sat up and listened to tapes and worked on the script until about seven o'clock at night. I did this for several months. Molly said, "I don't know anyone else in the Foreign Service who could work things out where they spend all afternoon in bed." [Laughter]

In fact, it was a marvelous language experience, and the language was going better than any foreign language I think I ever studied, even though it was supposed to be a difficult language.

But, about March or April, the fellows from AF, Bill Harrop by name, came to me and said, "We need somebody to head the Office of East African Affairs--which, by that time, was twelve countries--We don't have anyone to do it. We don't have very many people who know anything about Africa, and if you do this for a couple of years, we'll try to get you a mission at the end of it."

So I thought that sounded pretty good. [Laughter] So I went to Roy and I said, "You have a lot of good Arabists."

And he did. There were a lot of good Arabists.

"And I'm sort of Ezzat Arabist, at best. Africa is really hurting, and it seems to me that it is in the best interest of the country and the Service that I take this job. Would you object?"

He said, "No. We'll catch you the next time."

But, as you know, in the Foreign Service there are routes that one gets on and never gets back. So I left working in the Middle East and never really did return.

The job, as AFE, we had eight officers at that point and a variety of secretaries and, as I say, these twelve countries. The thing that was interesting to me about those twelve countries is, no one really cared about them too much. They just wanted us to have reasonable relations with these folks. But the thing is with these twelve countries is, one of them is always falling off the table. So you are always running to catch it before it went splash. [Laughter] So there was a lot of weekend work, and we were being called often by the secretariat folks to work on one aspect of a country or another. But it was an interesting experience.

Q: It was about to disappear down the drain. Now that included all of the countries of the Horn of Africa except Egypt, did it? Did it include Sudan?

BEYER: Yes, Sudan all the way down to Malawi and all of the islands--the Seychelles, the Comoros.

Q: Some nice vacation spots.

BEYER: That's right. Madagascar and so on.

Q: Were there any particular high points of that period that you remember?

BEYER: There was one. Right at the beginning, as I mentioned, there was a little extra time before my predecessor left. So they said, "Well, why don't you go visit the area?"

So the first place I visited was Ethiopia. The tradition in the old days in Ethiopia was on Sunday, to go down to the lake--I forget the name of the lake--

Q: Tana?

BEYER: No, further south. But in any event, and have a lunch at the hotel, and either do some swimming, or some bird watching or whatever, and come back. So the political officer said to me, "Why don't we do this--even though Mengistu had taken over and our relations with Ethiopia were not so good--why don't we do this? Would you like to?"

I said, "Yes, I'd love to."

They were bird watchers. This is Andre Navez, I think his name was, and his wife. The three of us went down in a big carryall. Well, we had a nice lunch.

We were driving back, and Andre said to the driver, "Stop. Look at that bird."

And there was a little bird, sitting in a puddle. So we got our glasses, and we were looking at this bird. Suddenly, we began to realize that there was a certain hubbub. We looked around the vehicle, and it had been surrounded by Ethiopians. As we raised our glasses up from the puddle, we realized we were looking right down the runway of Debrazite Airbase.

Now we had given most of those planes to the Ethiopians but, nevertheless, these folks were very unhappy that we had the glasses and that we were apparently looking at the base. So they made a citizen's arrest, and they took us in to the base.

We were presented to the officer of the day, who was very suspicious of us, and then heard the story. It was so silly that we were bird watching, that he realized it probably was true. He had been trained in the United States. He was a pilot. So he told these folks he would take care of it, and then relaxed with us and was quite pleasant. But we went up the chain of command. Each time, a more senior officer talking, the same sort of thing--initial great suspicion and then realizing nobody but Americans would go bird watching next to a military base with glasses--field glasses are prohibited to the normal Ethiopians--until we got to the head of the base.

Now the head of the base was a political appointee, and he was a Galla. Now, the difference between the Galla and the Amhara are, as you know, very significant. I mean, one is quite Negroid, as are the Gallas, and the Amhara are not. So we got to this fellow, and he heard our story. He didn't think it was very funny, and he didn't get very warm.

But he realized that Andre and his wife were diplomats, so he said, "You two can go, but you," pointing to me. I did not have my passport. He said, "You are going to Addis Ababa, and we will take you."

So Andre and his wife took off in the carryall, and got outside of the base, and then waited for me to come out. They put me in a Volkswagen with a trooper with an AK-47 behind me and a driver. We took off, going about 60 miles an hour towards Addis Ababa--a little bit nervous on that drive, I must say. But the driver was a nice fellow. He was, again, an Amhara pilot.

So we got up to Addis Ababa, and there was a large wall to this facility and a big, metal gate.

I said, "Is this where all the government people were killed a few months ago, eight or ten months ago?"

And he said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, this is where it happened."

So the gates opened, we drove in. Andre was behind us. He had to stop. They closed the gates, and Andre took off for the embassy to alert them.

I, meanwhile, went in and talked to the officer in charge. Eventually--he again was an Amhara--told the story. He said, "Oh, my God! You've just come out from Washington and they've arrested you! We'll never get our relations with this country going in any better way." [Laughter]

I said, "No, you shouldn't be upset. They did exactly what they should have done. It did look very suspicious, and no one but Americans would go buzzing around this country with field glasses, looking at birds. It was probably not a very good thing for us to have done."

So he said, "Okay. Well, you'll be meeting with the foreign minister tomorrow. I'm sorry this incident happened."

By this time, of course, it's about 11 o'clock at night. "But we'll drive you back."

So I said, "Thank you very much."

They opened the gate, and there was Andre. So they put me into his car, and we went back to the chargé's house. The ambassador was not there.

He said, "What are we going to do?"

And I said, "I don't know. It's your post." [Laughter]

I don't know whether they reported it or, if they did, how they reported it.

But the next day, the foreign minister was very apologetic, and once again I said, "It really was my fault, not yours, that we got into this scrape."

After that, we had really quite a pleasant talk.

Q: Great. What a way to break the ice! We haven't got much left on this tape, but let's see if we can get you started in Uganda. I take it that they made good--a rare experience in the Foreign Service, perhaps, that they made good on their suggestion that they find you a post.

BEYER: Yes. Quite a credit, and an interesting assignment, really.

Well, we had selected a man to go to Uganda. He served primarily in Europe. He had never served in Africa, and he had cleared all the hurdles that one does in the Department of State.

His name had actually gotten over to the White House, when he decided, "I don't think I want to go to Uganda."

He had found out enough about Uganda that he decided that he didn't want to go to Uganda. So, suddenly, we were without an ambassador to go to Uganda. The assistant secretary at that time was Dick Moose, and this was about six months before my two years was up.

He said to me, "You have told me that you didn't want to go someplace dull and boring in Africa. How would you like to go to Uganda?" [Laughter]

I had never thought of it, but I said okay. Actually, I had picked the fellow to get us started out there, Dave Halstead, who had been there as a junior officer and was doing a fine job of getting the post started. So that's how I--

Q: The post had been closed for how long?

BEYER: The post had been closed for about seven years. Dave opened it with just a couple of folks, and then slowly we were building the post up.

Q: Amin had already left when you got out there.

BEYER: That's right.

Q: When did you get--you got there in 1980, what time?

BEYER: June of 1980.

Q: What was the state of play? They changed presidents or prime ministers about every three weeks.

BEYER: This was the third government, I guess, and it was called a military commission. It was to hold elections. That was its only job was to hold elections.

The one thing that I thought was sort of interesting about that particular appointment is, I was asked by one of the fellows on the political side of the White House if I would like to talk to the President, call on the President.

I said, "Oh, yes. We would be very pleased to do that."

And so he said, "Would your wife like to do that, too?"

I said, "Yes."

It was just a photo opportunity, obviously, but we thought that would be quite fun. So he arranged it. We met--

Q: This was still Carter.

BEYER: This was still President Carter, yes. We met in Ham Jordan's office, and he showed me the briefing paper that he'd sent to President Carter so I would know what the President might ask, which was very generous of him. Then we went into the President's office.

So we talked a little bit about Uganda, and I was astounded how much he knew about Uganda, I must say--very bright.

At the end of it, he said, "Well, I want to wish you well and, because you are part of my family, I want you to know that, if you ever get into any trouble with the Department of State, and they are not being responsive, I want you to come to me directly."

I was astounded to hear this, because it wasn't in the briefing papers.

So I said, "Well, thank you very much."

Then he kissed Molly, shook my hand, and off we went.

So this fellow--his name has slipped my mind--said to me, "Did you get that business about the family?"

I said, "Yes. What is all that about?"

He said, "Well, you may not remember this, but a couple of years ago, when he first took power here and I came to the White House to work, I called you over to give me a brief--Beard was his last name--to give me a briefing on Somalia."

Tom Beard, I think it was. He was on the political side. He had raised money for President Carter and the Democratic Party.

He said, "I called you over because the Italians in New York were putting pressure on us to do something for Somalia. I called you over to talk about Somalia, and you did. You gave me a very good briefing on Somalia. At the end of that, you told me about the problems that Hermann Eilts had had in the sense that the Libyans had sent an assassination team to kill Hermann, and between our people and their security folks, they were caught, just after they crossed the border. You said to me, 'Get Billy disengaged from the Libyans. They are really bad folks.'"

Tom said, "Well, I sent a note to this effect to the President and, as you may recall, Billy disengaged from the Libyans, and it caused very little trouble to us. That's the kind of thing the President never forgets, and that's why he added this little comment to you so that you'd know."

Q: That was interesting.

BEYER: Yes. It was interesting, wasn't it? Actually, I needed--

Q: Ambassador Beyer, when we were so rudely interrupted by the end of the tape, we had just finished your interview with President Carter on your way out to Uganda. Do you want to get yourself to Uganda, and tell a little about the hard situation you found when you got there?

BEYER: Well, I should begin by saying it was our favorite post, Molly and mine. It was difficult in the beginning in the sense that security conditions were really quite bad. We had a dusk-to-dawn curfew for our staff, and that lasted for a year and a half. I am pleased, if not proud, that in the three years that I was in Uganda, despite the mayhem going on, we did not have one person injured or one person killed in those three years, despite the fact that, in all of the countries surrounding, Americans were hurt or killed. We feel quite proud of that.

Q: Did you have special security precautions that were responsible for this?

BEYER: No. We just had a disciplined staff. Indeed, a newspaper reporter at one point came, after we'd been there six months or a year. We were in the back of the British High Commission Building--quite a large building--and we occupied the back half of it, on an alley.

He said, "I don't understand this. Nairobi is a big embassy. It looks like a fort, and it's got lots of Marine security guards. Why don't you have any Marine security guards?"

And I really didn't know what to tell him. But, having been a Marine officer myself, I knew that we could not handle young men, young Marines. They just didn't have the discipline that was required to live in that situation. Obviously, I didn't want to tell that to the press. [Laughter]

So I would say such things as, "Well, when we get into permanent quarters, maybe we'll have Marines then, but we don't have them now. We are in, after all, what is a British building, and it wouldn't look proper to have Marines."

The real reason was, we felt that it was too dangerous a situation to have Marine guards.

Q: So what did you have for security?

BEYER: We had a security officer from the Department of State, who was a first-rate fellow. His wife was the GSO, as a matter of fact. All the women at Uganda worked, either in the embassy, for USIA, or at the international school. It was called the Lincoln School.

Indeed, my wife taught at the Lincoln School, and the wife of the USIS officer, who had at that post--his name slips my mind--Mary Lee was the head of the school. It was about 60 per cent Ugandan and about 40 per cent foreign. Our folks were helping it get back on its feet.

Q: This all was taught in English.

BEYER: It was taught in English because that's the official language in Uganda. Uganda has very strong tribes, and I use that advisedly in the sense that you can look at a person, you can look at a Ugandan, and tell what part of the country they come from because the Nilotics of the north are very black and very Negroid in feature, and kinky hair, and so on. The people from the west, the Ankoli, are Semitic in origin like the Masai. They are tall, light colored, straight hair, and aquiline features. Then those of the Baganda around Kampala look like American Negroes. So the differences are really very distinct.

One of the reasons that we were as safe as we were--I talked to Bob Keeley, who closed our post, when I was going out there. Bob was Deputy Assistant Secretary in African Bureau.

I said, "Bob, how dangerous is it?"

He said, "I don't think it's too dangerous if you identify yourselves as Americans. The Ugandans have tried, because it was a British protectorate, not a colony, to keep foreigners out of their political problems. Therefore, they always considered that those who came to the protectorate, whether it was teachers or administrators or medical folks, have come just to help. Therefore, they have no antagonism towards you as an American. You are quite identifiable because you're white."

I said, "Thank you, very much."

Actually, that was a principal aspect of our security--indeed, to the point that I told Washington I didn't want any black Americans assigned to the post. That didn't go down too well in Washington, needless to say.

But, at one point, they did assign--Eddie Dearfield, the head of USIA, when he went on leave, they assigned a young man from Howard University, who is black. When he came into the office, I told him why I didn't want him there but, since he's here, make sure he identified himself as an American so that they would know that he is an American and not a Ugandan. He said he would do so. He was very careful.

But, after a few weeks, we had a plane that brought in supplies and the pouch every week, and we had people go out on that plane to Nairobi for holiday or for a few days' break. So he said he'd like to take the pouch and have a few days in Nairobi.

We said, "Fine."

He didn't have a lot of money, so he decided to stay in an Indian-run hotel in Nairobi. That hotel happened to be near the radio station, and that was the weekend that there was the attempted coup in Nairobi. He spent most of that weekend on the floor, as the rebels tried to take the radio station and were firing right through his hotel.

So when he came back, if anything, he was a few shades lighter and said that it is even safer in Kampala than it is in Nairobi. [Laughter] At any rate, he did a fine job and left at the end of the summer when Eddie came back. He had done a good job.

But service in Uganda was interesting. I looked at the residence, and I thought it was the worst residence I'd ever seen because it had been used as a French school and had run down terribly. We fixed it up, and Molly worked very hard on it. By the time we left, we considered it one of the best residences we'd ever served in because it was a real, working house, built on the side of a hill, actually near the top of the hill. We could see Murchison Bay from the house. We could look down on the rest of Kampala. It was really quite lovely.

Kampala, of course, is built on hills, much like Rome, and is a very lovely city. It has a climate which, I think, most people forget about. Because it is high, just under 5,000 feet, it seldom gets colder than 65 or warmer than 85, so it's a climate somewhat like Southern California.

Q: We spent some time up there, so I'm familiar with it. It is one of the glory ports of the world, that African highland.

BEYER: It really is. Yes, just lovely. The one thing that I do remember is, I arrived a week before Molly. So I arrived on Friday, and on Saturday I was invited out to the Gayaza Girls'

School. The Gayaza Girls' School is a boarding school, out about 15 miles from Kampala. They were celebrating their 75th anniversary.

So I went out there and was put with the rest of the ambassadors and started to chat with the fellow next to me. It turns out that he was the ambassador from Burundi.

He said, "You know, sometimes the reason the Ugandans are so difficult is just because of this thing."

I said, "What?"

He said, "Well, here we are, celebrating the 75th anniversary of a girls' boarding school. You know, in Burundi we are lucky if we have a school that is ten years old."

That was really quite true. The Ugandans were very highly educated, Makerere University, one of the biggest, one of the best universities in Africa and of long standing. It was a fine school which Amin ran into the ground, but they were building it back up when we were there.

Q: What was the government situation as you got there and as you progressed?

BEYER: When I arrived, the military commission had just taken over. Their job was to hold elections. I appealed to Washington for assistance, and they flew in ballot boxes to help. The economic conditions that I mentioned, I think, were as bad as the security conditions. The black market was rampant, and so on.

At one point, I talked to the head of the military commission, and I said, "You really better do something about the black market because it is impossible for an American to do business here, or anybody, to do honest business here."

He said, "I realize that, but that kind of a decision, what kind of an economy we have, we have to put off to the new government. That is a decision they will have to make."

The political parties were reestablished. The Uganda People's Congress was the party that [Milton] Obote headed, and the Democratic Party, the other major party, was headed by Paul Semogerere. Then there were two other parties, the Uganda People's Movement, UPM, which was headed by Yoweri Museveni, and who is currently the head of the Uganda Government, and the Royalist Party, which also didn't do very well.

Museveni's party only won two seats, and he himself was not elected in the election. The election was close. It was disputed. The Democratic Party maintains that the UPC stole the election.

Obote said, "If I was going to steal the election, I wouldn't lose all the seats," which he did, except one around Uganda.

I think, in fact, that probably the UPC did win the election and, though a disputed election, it was probably a better election than Mayor Daley ever ran in Chicago. [Laughter]

Q: Out of that came what?

BEYER: Out of that came Uganda People's Congress government, headed by Milton Obote. He, as president, was elected. It works like the British system. They elect people to the parliament, and then the parliament elects its officials. Obote was elected by his party as president. There was also a prime minister and a vice president.

Paul Muwanga, who had headed the military commission and was a Ugandan, was the vice president. The prime minister was from the north, and his name slips my mind.

Q: The Baganda is the tribe around Kampala?

BEYER: That's right, and a very wealthy, and a very highly educated tribe, as a matter of fact.

Q: Then you began to run--for instance, I note that there was a rocket attack on the Kampala barracks in 1982. Was that a significant event, or was that just something that happened to hit the summary that I read about what went on?

BEYER: The significance of that attack is, the government maintained it was from the Catholic Church, which overlooked the barracks. The rocket people--guerrillas--went into the Catholic Church and used that grounds to fire from. The government couldn't respond to the fire because they were afraid of hitting the church. So they were very unhappy.

Uganda is rather like Ireland, in the sense that I've never been in a country where religion is as much a political factor and where it is so identified with parties. The Uganda People's Congress, the UPC, the party of Milton Obote, is a Protestant, Church of England, party. They have those colors. Anglican officials are part of the party, and so on.

The Democratic Party is a Catholic party and, of course, the Democratic Party was the party of opposition, and they also felt that they'd lost the election unfairly, so on and so forth. So you had this thread going through Uganda.

Q: Are those two Christian elements the vast majority?

BEYER: Those are the vast majority.

Q: In other words, there are no animists--well, there must be some Muslims out there.

BEYER: There are some Muslims. The Arab ambassadors maintain that their Muslims in Uganda were about 22 per cent. Paul Muwanga, for example, the vice president of the UPC, maintains that it was less than ten per cent. So I am not really sure.

But Yoweri Museveni, when he established this new party, this UPM party, Uganda People's Movement, he wanted it to be non-sectarian. He wanted to get away from this political party being identified with a religion. He talked to his father. He was from the west himself. He was an Ankoli. He talked to his father, who was a sub-chief out in the west, to join UPM.

His father said after a long time, apparently, but right before the election, "Yoweri, I can't join your party because I don't want to give up my religion." It was that kind of a feeling. It was really quite strange.

Q: My wife would say the Christian church has a lot to answer for.

BEYER: It was curious in Uganda because the largest number of foreigners were not British or Asian. They were Italian, and they were Italian because they were brothers, and fathers, and sisters, and so on, who taught in these various schools. It was that kind of a difference, too, because the Anglican schools maintained that they were training people to lead the government. The schools of the Roman Catholic Church were schools to teach trades. So there was that kind of a difference--almost a--

Q: Proletariat.

BEYER: Yes, between the two. Very, very strange. Very curious.

One thing that I did want to mention, though, was about this business of President Carter making this comment about help if I needed it. When I was there just a couple of months, the director of AID, who had a very good reputation, was married to a French woman and had a farm in France. So he took off for his farm in France and did not administer a \$3 million program to assist some folks who were starving in Uganda in the far northeast of the country. These were very primitive folks, but we had gotten this money but he didn't administer it.

I was very upset, so I sent an eyes-only telegram to the head of AID saying, "This officer is the kind of fellow who puts off until tomorrow what he should have done yesterday."

This telegram made the circle in Washington and created a great brouhaha, to the point where the deputy director of the Foreign Service sent me a telegram saying that I had to apologize to AFSA, to AID, and so on--

Q: To AFSA!

BEYER: Yes, AFSA got into this because the AID folks in AFSA said, "You are disparaging all of AID people and, therefore, this is really very bad."

So they said that I had to--finally, the deputy director general of the Foreign Service sent this telegram, saying I had to apologize. I had decided that I would resign rather than apologize. So I wrote a long letter to Tom Beard, not to the President, to Tom Beard. I outlined the situation.

I said, "This is what happened. I will not apologize and I will resign, however, if this is what I should do."

But I said I felt really badly about this because I don't know how many people died as a result of not administering this program, but probably thousands and maybe tens of thousands.

I said, "That's pretty hard to live with."

The next thing I knew, everything stopped. I didn't hear anything more from the Department. I didn't hear anything more from AID. I didn't hear anything more from AFSA. It just stopped.

So, eventually, I came back when the new administration came in. They wanted to see who this fellow was, if he had two heads, or whatever.

So I saw Tom and I said, "Tom, what did you do?"

He said, "Well, I got your letter. It made sense to me. I went in to see the President, told him the story. He said, 'Tom, take care of that for me, would you?' So I just called the Secretary of State and the head of AID and told them to knock it off." [Laughter]

I said, "Thank you, very much!"

Q: I must say, that's quite a story--how to have a little backside protection. I take it this AID director was the only AID official there.

BEYER: No. There were other officials, but he did leave within another month or so. He quit AID, got a job working on the Ivory Coast as a consultant, for over six figures--or high six figures, I was told.

I was then very fortunate to get a young AID director named Buck, who was simply first rate and did a marvelous job in the three years that he was there--just a wonderful officer, and we worked very closely together. I was very lucky.

As a matter of fact, one of the things that surprised me most when I left the Foreign Service is, the people in Uganda--in AID, USIA, and the embassy were very close. We depended on

one another for safety and security. Every night, in those early days in particular, we were on the radio, checking with everyone to make sure everyone was okay.

That kind of closeness and that kind of support extended even into the American community. There were a group of missionaries there. We were all very close. As a matter of fact, I was able to convince the American community--once we got the pool working. It took us a year and a half to get the pool at the residence going--to use the pool, and they did so.

But when I left the Foreign Service and went down to this lovely place in Lexington, in this lovely museum and research facility and library, and so on, I couldn't believe how the people didn't get along. Here it's this idyllic situation, and they couldn't get along, and yet in a place like Kampala, which particularly for the first year and a half was wild, they got along fine.

Q: I think you can tell a lot of stories about this. The more danger it is, the better--or the more isolated it is, or the more rundown.

BEYER: But also, part of it is the Foreign Service, I think.

Q: Depending partly, but also it is true that it is much easier to coordinate things in the field than it is to get them to coordinate it in Washington, which goes on. How did our relations with Uganda develop over these years?

BEYER: Well, I was fairly close to Obote, because he had been exiled in Tanzania for nine years and, during that period, I was there in Tanzania, also, for three. So we used to talk about our experiences in Tanzania.

When he took over the government in late December of 1980 and from then on, we expected that we would see a form of African socialism. He was, after all, one of the original African socialists. He did a 180-degree turn, however, and became a free-marketeer. He got the government out of all these parastatals and various economic activities. He would either sell them or just give them up, and he would encourage the Ugandans to produce as much as they could and sell wherever they could.

Of course, by that time, selling food just to a place like Kenya was lucrative. So the economic development in those three years that I was there--the two and a half that he was in charge--it was a miracle. Talk about an economic miracle, that really was one, and it was a marvelous thing to see.

Obote maintained that it wasn't as big a change as we thought it was.

He said, "You know, when I took over in 1962, when I was first president--prime minister of this government--the economy was controlled by the British and the Asians. The Africans were nowhere to be seen. I had to do something to get the Africans into the

economy, so I would just nationalize some industries and give them to Africans, give them to Ugandans, and let them run it.

"When I came back, Amin had taken this policy and distorted it to the extent that he had driven the British out. He had driven many of the Asians out. He had confiscated their property. And I realized that we needed those people to come back to help us because we needed their skills."

This goes back to what Bob Keeley had said about the need for skills, that the Ugandans were not unhappy about having foreigners come and help them.

So Obote said, "That's why I pushed through parliament a law to give back to Asians, and the Brits, and anyone else who had had property confiscated, we would give it back to them. We knew we wouldn't get everybody back, but we did get some"--which was true. He did get some.

"We opened the economy because now it was not a question of getting the Africans in the economy. There were too many of them, and they weren't very efficient. What we wanted to do was to get them off the government rolls. We tried to do that."

There is an interesting story, I thought, about this whole business. After the new government took over, Buck and I, the AID director and I, met with the acting minister of finance and the head of the commercial bank. These two men were close to Obote and gave economic advice to Obote.

So Buck and I said to these folks, "You've got to get rid of the black market, and you've got to get a team to help you get going. Wouldn't it be a good idea to bring in someone, perhaps, of a name who might do this?" [Robert] McNamara had just resigned as head of the World Bank.

I said, "Maybe it would be wise to get someone, if you could, like McNamara to come in and be sort of an economic czar and run this place, to help you get started."

They said, "Yes. That sounds reasonable."

So we agreed that they would report it back to the president and I would report it back to Washington. So I reported it back to Washington, and I sent a copy to Bill Harrop, who was the US Ambassador in Kenya at that point. Bill sent a rocket saying, "It's unreasonable to get the Americans so involved in Uganda. This is a bonkers idea." [Laughter] Well, Washington felt the same way.

They said, "Really, what you ought to try to do is get an IMF/IBRD team out there, to give them advice."

So I said, "Okay."

So the next week we had our lunch again with these same two fellows--Buck and I--and I said, "Well, Washington really thinks it would be smarter if you got a team from the IMF or the World Bank to give you a hand rather than a well-known American or a well-known anybody."

They went, "Whew! I'm glad you said that because that's the same way the president feels."
[Laughter]

So they did get a good IMF team to come out, actually, headed by a Frenchman but had a good reputation. That team would meet with ambassadors from donor countries about every six weeks, as well as the key economic officials in the government. They would explain what they'd done, and then they would ask donor ambassadors if they couldn't coordinate their programs to support this overall plan, which we did do.

The result was, it wasn't very much money that we put in, but it was in key areas, it was coordinated, and it was coordinated with some of the other things that the bank was doing. The result was this sort of boost to the economy really worked. The economic development just went forward very rapidly, and it was a terribly exciting thing to see. It really was.

Q: You were there a little longer than Obote. You weren't ousted until after Obote was ousted, I take it.

BEYER: No. I left in June of 1983, and Obote was toppled by the military the next year. Then the military was overthrown by this guerilla group that Museveni headed.

There's a story to that, really, because things were going along very well. Even the security situation was getting better. The Army, which was a rag-a-tag outfit was slowly, slowly coming into shape. We were all working on it. The Commonwealth had a training team, headed by a British colonel, who had served in East Africa, knew the Africans well. We were training folks, and so on.

The Army was headed by a fellow named Ojite Ojok, who had gone to Sandhurst and was not politically oriented at all. He was from the same tribe as Obote, so Obote trusted him.

When I left in June, they had almost overcome the insurgency. The Army was almost back in reasonable shape. Then in September, Ojok died in a helicopter accident.

Q: That was Ojite Ojok?

BEYER: Yes. It wasn't until a couple of years later, when I was in Rome--we were staying with the Italian ambassador who was the Ambassador in Kampala when we were there. This Italian ambassador maintained that Ojok had been killed by the East Germans. I don't know whether that's true, but the Italian Ambassador, Nichele Martinez, was convinced.

Q: Why by the East Germans?

BEYER: Because they had supplied the helicopters, or had supplied some of the people that worked on maintaining the helicopters.

Q: Sounds like an Italian conspiracy theory.

BEYER: Yes, it does, and I don't trust helicopters, anyway. But what it suggested to me is just how important one man can be, and with his loss, everything began to unravel.

Q: Has it unraveled since? I'm not up to date.

BEYER: Yes.

Q: As we leave, as the sun sets over the prairie and as we leave beautiful Uganda--which is beautiful because I've been there--do you have some thoughts about the possibilities of solving some of the insoluble African problems, and whether what we've been doing--trying, and making some progress, and then falling back--is worthwhile? You've already said that certain countries probably can't usefully use our aid. What are your recommendations for future generations?

BEYER: I've written on this because, as I've gotten to know more about the Marshall Plan, I've begun to see that there were certain basic principles in the Marshall Plan which, if we apply them in our AID program, I think they would work.

One of them is, you have to let the people decide what they need and how to go about implementing it. They can take advice from an IMF team, or from donor ambassadors, organizations, their AID people, etc., but they eventually have to decide what is required.

Then secondly, I think that, if a country doesn't follow a free-market system--if it isn't a market system that provides for private enterprise--I'm not sure that our aid is going to work. But I know that it does work in Africa. The market economy and private enterprise work in Africa and, if we follow that kind of line, I think our aid can be effective. If we don't, I don't think our aid works. It may work for somebody else.

I was talking to one official in the African Bureau, and he said, "Well, in Africa, most of the countries are going for market economies and private enterprise. Now we've just got to make sure it works."

There are reasons sometimes why aid doesn't work. I mean, the reason Uganda isn't working today is complicated, but Museveni has gone back to a socialist organization and to supporting the consumer rather than the producer, and on and on--not following what really were the basis of the Marshall Plan. So there are some principles there, I think, that, if we follow them, they will work in some developing countries.

Q: Museveni is still the president, is he?

BEYER: Yes. Nice guy, actually.

Q: The other problem that I have always felt we had was the inability to think in 20- to 30-year terms, and to finance it, which is, because of our budget system--

BEYER: Well, I would disagree there, also. You know, the Marshall Plan was for only four years.

Truman said, "I do not want this program to get involved in the 1952 election. Therefore, I want it to end before 1952." Actually, the program ended in December of 1951.

I think that five years is a reasonable period to assist a country economically. We were only on two-and-a-half years in Uganda when I left, and two-and-a-half more years of that and they were going to be able to be on their own. They weren't going to need any more help from anybody. Maybe something from the World Bank or something, but certainly not from any individual country.

I think our people would put up with a program that's limited--five years and we're out--but enough of a program to make it work. I think that that should be--in most countries that have any wealth at all--enough.

Q: Let's get you just briefly back, because you left Uganda and you went for a couple of years to the National War College.

BEYER: Yes. I was the international affairs advisor, which is the number two slot over there, and deputy to the commandant. The issue there was, when the college was established, George Marshall was the Secretary of State, and he was very instrumental in getting the National War College established. Kennan was the first deputy over there.

He established it because he said, "In the Second World War the Army didn't know what the Navy was doing, and neither knew what the diplomats were up to. Therefore, we ought to have a senior school, in a very relaxed way, where these three elements can get to know one another--the Army, the Navy, and the diplomats."

Now, of course, it includes the Air Force, and it includes some intelligence folks, and so on. But that was the idea--not very structured, study national security, travel together, and live together, and get to know one another so that, when you become generals and admirals and ambassadors, you will be able to talk with one another.

After three years--maybe four--no foreigners were sent to the National War College. Brits and Canadians were there the first three or four years, and then Ambassador Durbrow said, "No. We're not going to have anymore foreigners, and we're not going to have them because we want this to be an environment that is open and free--where a speaker can come

and talk about classified things, and the students can talk about classified things, and not have to worry about having foreigners there."

So there were no foreigners from that time, when Ambassador Durbrow was there, until I was the number two there. In the second year, foreigners were introduced. Well, I was very unhappy about that and wrote memos, and talked to the folks in the Army, talked to the folks at the National Defense University, talked to the people in State, and failed in getting the foreigners removed.

Indeed, at one point, I ran into Ambassador Durbrow and--he's only about that big--he got very excited and chewed me out for about 20 minutes for failing to get the foreigners out of there. After 20 minutes, he sort of leaned back and said--

Q: Took a breath--

BEYER: That's right. He said, "You know, I haven't been that angry in a long time."
[Laughter]

Q: But he can be way off. [Laughter]

BEYER: At any rate, I did feel unhappy, and I just couldn't get folks--either in the military or in the Department of State to listen. The reason was that our people wanted to send our best officers to the senior seminar, and the folks in the military wanted to send their best officers to the Army War College in Carlisle, to the Navy War College, and the Air Force War College. Therefore, NWC is no longer getting the best and the top folks.

Q: It wasn't true in my day, and I don't think in your day.

BEYER: That's right. So it was very frustrating. Indeed, not the year I was there, the year after that, three officers who had opened their windows, did not get promoted in the senior service and had to leave the service. There are people at the National War College. I couldn't believe it, but that was what was happening.

Of course, today, increasingly, officers don't want to go to any of these senior schools because they don't want to take that time out from getting through to the senior service.

So I'm not sure what the future is. I gather that at the NWC, there is thought of changing it to become a research center and not a school at all, which maybe is where it should go, frankly.

Q: This may bring up some questions of the talk, now that it's time to take another hard look at the Foreign Service Act, and some changes. Do you have any thoughts on this which, I think, has something to do with this because a lot of the things like the senior service, and the merit pay, and merit awards, and a lot of things of that sort, are in the Act now and, perhaps, should be reexamined.

BEYER: I'm sort of a mossback in this kind of business. I still believe that language training and area expertise is important. I still think that it is a good idea for young officers to serve in various divisions in the embassy--consular, admin, economic, and political. I still think that our best officers are going to end up in reporting jobs, and that that's where they belong.

I don't believe in cones. I don't believe an officer should be stuck into a cone, that he should, indeed, be able to go into various areas, and I believe that he should get his administrative experience as he goes along, by running little places. Therefore, I think that little consulates, small consulates, are a good idea because it gets your best people out into the country in which they are serving.

Certainly, after two years in Hargeysa, when I went down to the embassy, everybody thought I was the expert about Somalia. Well, maybe I was. You know, there weren't many people that knew much about Somalia.

Q: That's right. They've been out of touch with some of the Somalis.

BEYER: And get out, running around in the country. I remember you encouraged me to take trips. You know, every couple of months, get out and travel. So we tried to do that, but I think that, therefore, the Service, as I knew it, was a much better place to serve and work in then than it is today, where you get into these cones, where you have this merit-pay business.

I don't have any problem with the wives working, but there are lots of things that they can do overseas. My wife worked in her first post, as I mentioned, when Mrs. Johnson said, "Sure. You want to teach English to the Thais, go ahead."

I think that wives can find interesting and good things to do, and the tandem assignments, of course, is a problem, but it is not an insoluble problem. There are some women I know who were very fine Foreign Service officers, got married, decided--when they had kids--that it was more important to raise their kids, even though they were outstanding Foreign Service officers. Maybe one day they'll come back. I don't think the Service is as attractive a place to serve as it was when I was in there.

Q: Can you say a little something about what you've done since you left the Foreign Service?

BEYER: Sure. It was a year and a half that I was at the National War College when I got a letter from Andy Goodpaster, who was in charge of the search committee for the Marshall Foundation.

He said, "Would you like to be considered for the head of the Foundation?"

I had never thought about it, and maybe that's the best way to get a new job. But, as I mentioned, I was having troubles at the National War College because I couldn't get anybody to listen, and I was thinking, "Well, maybe I'm out of step with this new Foreign Service. Maybe I should be serious about this."

The more I found out about the Marshall Foundation--I had some interviews, and so on--the more I became intrigued with it. Ambassador Fred Hadsel was the director who I replaced, though they changed--

Q: Another old Somali hand.

BEYER: That's right, another old Somali hand. They changed the organization somewhat because they wanted the president to live in Lexington and be the senior person, paid employee, at the Foundation.

So, when they offered the job, I said, "Okay."

Since I've been down there, it's been fun, but it's also been very lucrative. It is very hard to leave now. You get used to this substantial pension plus a very substantial salary and, of course, they provide a house, and an entertainment allowance, and a travel allowance, and all sorts of things. So it is pretty hard to go back now. I'm not sure, also, that I could get up to speed to the pace that the Foreign Service officers work at.

Q: Well, on the other hand, it sounds, from what you've been saying, that you have been able to augment your Foreign Service experience with a little historical perspective here, and it's been a substantively useful thing.

BEYER: It's been very useful because retired Foreign Service officers, or even some still on active duty, have been very supportive to our programs. They've come down to speak, they've come down to run round tables. So it's really been very helpful. Having had some experience in the Foreign Service, so that you could call these folks and ask if they'll give you a hand--because we don't pay them anything to speak of--is really very useful. So it's been good.

Q: What kinds of programs do you run down there?

BEYER: Well, we have two aspects. One is sort of research and the museum, an archives of two million papers, a current library of political and military history, which we keep current with 25,000 books.

The other side is outreach programs to younger folks, and we run the Marshall ROTC Award Seminar in which we take the top Army ROTC cadet from the colleges and universities around the country and bring them to Lexington for four days. There are about 318 of these folks, and we have 20 round tables, and so on, and major speakers.

Then in the fall, we have the Public Service Leadership Conference, to which we bring in former Truman scholars, former Marshall scholars, and some Europeans, and then this fall some Asians, to study various problems.

Then we have an undergraduate program where we bring young folks from surrounding colleges and teach them to use original sources, which they've usually never done, to write a paper.

Then we have programs for high school kids and elementary school kids. For elementary school kids, the program is called "try on a piece of history," and we use some of the materials from the museum, and we let them try on shakos and jackets, and so on. Then we give them a tiny list of things to find in the museum. In this way, they learn a little bit about a museum, what it does, how it works, and so on and so forth.

So these are the outreach programs to younger Americans. The idea is to try to keep vital in American society Marshall's way and his ideals, and some of the things that he stood for. He was quite a remarkable public servant. I think many people feel he was one of the best, if not the best, public servant in the twentieth century.

Q: Thank you very much, indeed, Ambassador Beyer. I think this is going to be a major and most useful addition.

End of interview