Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

NORMAN W. GETSINGER

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview has not been edited by Mr. Getsinger]

Q: Norm, could you tell me when and where you were born, and then something about your parents and their background.

GETSINGER: I was born in Detroit, Michigan on May 9th, 1919. I was kind of a child of the postwar generation. Since I had a German last name, Getsinger, it was important to inject some kind of un-Germanic middle name. So, I became Wilson Getsinger, deriving from my Scotch ancestry. My father was in the automobile business. He had been born on a farm in New Jersey and as some people could at that time, he put his worldly goods in a handkerchief on the end of a stick, and went west.

Q: Let me stop you here. Your father was off.

GETSINGER: Yes. He went west, from New Jersey. He got on a boat in Buffalo, and came to Detroit, where he was fascinated by the beauty of that town, as it was then. He was a self-made man. He became a secretary to Harvey Firestone, and worked his way up, studying nights. Finally, he was recognized by Henry Ford, who was starting the horse's carriage industry at that time. Dad finally became a sales manager of Lincoln, and finally ran his own motor car company, for a while. But, anyway, he wanted me, very much, to go into the family business. He stopped working for Henry Ford, as most people did at that time, because Henry would wake up with dyspepsia and fire a lot of people. He was a very difficult man to work with. There was not much future there. He was fairly successful. He set up his own business, in time, as a middle man in the automobile business. He wanted very much, for me, as the second son, to go into the business with him. I was fortunate enough to go to a good prep school, Cranbrook School.

Q: I was going to say, Cranbrook is the one I always think of, in that area.

GETSINGER: I then went onto Harvard, and enjoyed Harvard very much. My father was concerned that the radical proclivities, which quickly surfaced at Harvard, and at one point, he was known to have declared, "I didn't send my son to Harvard to become a Communist." I had said some things favorable to Eleanor Roosevelt, and Franklin D.

Q: I would like to go back to that. First, tell me about your background of your mother.

GETSINGER: Mother was also a kind of self-made person. She came from a little farm in Wisconsin. They came to Detroit, and she was also a secretary, as my father was a

secretary. They met as two secretaries. Neither my mother nor my father got beyond high school. My father was very proud of the fact that he was able to send two sons to Harvard, and a daughter to Wellesley and another son to Williams. That's what happened at that time.

Q: I'm getting ready for my 50th reunion at Williams, this June. In the first place, a little bit about the automobile society. What I have read about it was that it was a really enclosed people; people lived around Grosse Point, and all they talked about were automobiles. It caused them some problems. In particular, there were labor problems, and all that. They had a very narrow view, but a very important one. Did you find that at all, as a young man?

GETSINGER: Yes, I think you could say that the leaders of the automobile business at that time were kind of primitive capitalists. I remember that I was scandalized by the fact that in my father's country club locker room, the most fun they had were telling jokes about Eleanor Roosevelt. That scandalized me. While I was in prep school, in Cranbrook, there were the sit-down strikes in Detroit, which were just the beginning of it.

Q: Walter Reuther.

GETSINGER: Walter Reuther and the battle of the overpass at Ford Motor Company. We, as young sons of capitalists, would sometimes drive by these automobile plants where the workers were encamped inside in sit-down strikes, and would taunt the workers.

Q: At Cranbrook, what sort of subjects interested you?

GETSINGER: I was, very much, at the beginning, interested in foreign affairs. I, with a couple other Cranbrook students, formed an organization which we called "The Aeriopogis Club." It comes from the Greek for work shop. We were determined to study The New York Times, Sunday edition, and debate issues of foreign affairs. It started right back then.

Q: How about at the dinner table at home? What topics were discussed there?

GETSINGER: The dinner table at home was kind of monopolized by my older brother, Ralph, who was much more the intellectual. I was kind of the performer, the little boy who stood up and recited poems, to the delight of guests. My father had been concerned about this lack of intellectual activity. He thought it was an important thing to have. At one point, when it was time for me to go to college, I told my father that I decided that I didn't want to go to Harvard, but I wanted to go into burlesque. Burlesque was where you learned timing and comedy. If I was going to be an actor, which I thought I was going to be, that would be the place for me. My father was very wise, and he said, "Why don't you go to Harvard first?" So, that is what happened.

Q: Did you ever get to tread the wards of the gaiety, Scully's school?

GETSINGER: Yes, I have tread the wards. I have been to, for many years, the summer theater. Although I had an interest in foreign affairs, I thought my career was in the theater. Unfortunately, that desire to be in the theater was compromised on December 7, 1941, because I was in the naval reserve at that time. I had appeared in a show in Fincks Junior College, in New York. The theater business being what it was, you had to be in a show in order to have an agent. You couldn't get into a show unless an agent had recognized you. It was a catch-22. But, I was in a show. It was a Noel Coward show and afterwards, several of the agents from New York came back and said that they could use me, but Uncle Sam had priority. So, I went into the Navy.

Q: Well, let's talk a bit about Harvard. You were in Harvard from when to when?

GETSINGER: From 1937 to 1941. The banner year was 1941 because none of us were unemployed.

Q: What was Harvard like when you went in in 1937? Here you came from Detroit, right out of the center of capitalism, and not renowned as an intellectual, it was more for other attainments. The greatest attainment was probably the automobile. You had gone through Cranbrook, but this was a little bit different.

GETSINGER: Yes, and then I had an older brother who had gone to Harvard, was in Harvard, when I was a freshman, he was a senior. He had introduced me to Harvard when I had made the normal tour of college institutions in the east. I looked at Williams and Amherst, and Harvard and Yale. He took me to a lecture at Harvard. I saw one of the great professors deliver the lecture. Then, I sat in my brother's dining hall and listened to the intellectual discussion that took place at the dining room in the Harvard house. I thought, "This is probably where I belong." One of the things that happened when I was at Harvard is that they took voice recordings of the entire freshman class, the class of 1941. This was done in order to try to determine whether there was such a thing as a Harvard accent. Then they rerecorded us our senior year, to see if we had acquired any. The conclusion was that there was no such thing as a "Harvard accent," but there is a "St. Grottlesec" accent. It was the influence of the fellows from the prep schools in the east.

Q: St. Paul's, Groton, and St. Mark's. Somebody referred to it one time as "Mid- Atlantic chalk talk." Well, what courses were you taking in Harvard?

GETSINGER: I was a major in American History and Literature. I was not a very good student, because I still had this conflicting idea that I really wanted to get into the theater. Although, Harvard didn't have a good theater program, all of the girls' schools from around Cambridge came to Harvard, for the male leads. So, I got very busy, on the Wellesley, Wheaton, Simmons, Radcliffe circuit, being in all of their shows. I didn't attend to my books to well.

Q: Not only were you getting great thespian experience, but I can't think of a more delightful way to get it.

GETSINGER: Sometimes I was the only male on a girl school's campus in the spring.

Q: What about the hasty pudding club? But, that is a club, that is not a...

GETSINGER: Harvard does have these clubs. I was on the lampoon and enjoyed that very much. We did a lot of stunts around. As a matter of fact, we were guilty of climbing the Supreme Court flagpole and putting up a red flag, a communist flag, and then greasing the pole on the way down. The Supreme Court had to miss one session. The grease dried out. We were very politically conscious at that time. We could see that there was a war coming. We knew very much that fascism had reared its ugly head. In fact, in my junior year, I was arrested as part of a demonstration on the Boston Tea war. We went down on the anniversary of the Boston Tea party and we dumped boxes of goods marked "war goods for Japan," and we dumped those over. We were wearing Indian suits. Of course, the press was invited, and then the police intervened. That was the whole purpose. But, we could see it coming. Also, there was recruitment for the Abraham Lincoln brigade.

Q: Spanish Civil War.

GETSINGER: Spanish Civil War. I was very close to going over in that.

Q: When you get down to it, the Abraham Lincoln brigade... George Orwell's memoirs of that period are superb. It was very much on the left. It was basically leftists' organizations, and somehow signs of a Detroit automaker and Harvard graduate don't sound right together. What attracted you to that?

GETSINGER: All of us were very concerned because we could see that we were going into a war situation, and we were going to have to fight sooner or later. The best way to do it was fight it sooner. If you could defeat the fascist powers in Spain, you might head off the second world war. We were wise enough to see that.

Q: How about your faculty? Where would you put the ones you were running across, on the political spectrum of things that were happening at that time?

GETSINGER: I think there was a very good balance in the faculty, so you could go to one lecture and then another lecture, and find a counterbalancing hue. They were kind of in the middle.

Q: How about the New Deal? By the time you got there, the New Deal was well underway. I'm sure, where you were, at home, it was "that man in the White House." But, where did you come out on the social issues in yourself?

GETSINGER: I was fascinated by the New Deal. I helped to organize a reception for Eleanor Roosevelt when she came to visit the campus at Harvard. I went down into South Boston to organize for Franklin Roosevelt's democratic party to take the lame, the sick,

and the halt to the polls, to vote for Franklin D. As a result, I was permitted to sit on the platform when he came to Boston and spoke at the Boston Garden. I remember watching him and his wheelchair coming up that ramp, behind the stage. Then, the curtains parted. It was as if God the almighty had come to address the gathering. There was so much respect and so much love there.

Q: Did you run across Mayor Curley, during your time?

GETSINGER: Oh, you know about the Boston group.

Q: I went to Boston University for a year. He addressed our class. He had retired many years before, but it was his last, last hurrah. Did you get involved, at all, in the Boston machine?

GETSINGER: No. I think the problem we always had at Harvard was the "town gown" relationship. I remember there were a lot of raised eyebrows because I strode across the border and dated a young lady from Cambridge. She was not in school in Cambridge; she just went into the town. That was really bad.

Q: You were in the Naval ROTC?

GETSINGER: Yes.

Q: You joined that as soon as you got to Harvard?

GETSINGER: Actually, no. It was about 1940 when the pressure began. Whenever the draft began, Stu, I was 1A in the draft, and I felt I had to line up sometimes with it. I wound up in the trenches. I went down to the recruiting office and said, "I'm a Harvard man and I would like to get in the Navy. I like the commission in the Navy." They said, "Sorry, we have used up all of our commissions for the week, but if you would like, you can join the Naval Intelligence Reserves, and you will have to drill once a month, until there is no problem." So, I was in the reserves. I went down to drill at the building at the corner of Broad and Wall, in New York, to get myself ready to serve.

Q: Then, you graduated in 1941?

GETSINGER: Right.

Q: By this time, we were still not in the war. What did you do?

GETSINGER: I got my apartment down in Greenwich Village, and proceeded to build my career in the theater, hoping there would be no war, and actually achieve my ambition to be in the theater. I was in a number of amateur productions, including the one that kind of gave me a debut on December 7th. My career began and ended in one night.

Q: What kind of play was this?

GETSINGER: This was Hay Fever.

Q: Oh, yes. Was there a way of getting into the theater, outside of doing this? There weren't actor studios and things of that nature, were there?

GETSINGER: Not really effective. If you were going to be cast in a show in New York, the directors of the show would go to the agents and say, for example, "I need a comedy juvenile, send me around two or three." That is the way it happened.

Q: On December 7th 1941, you were in the Naval Intelligence Reserves?

GETSINGER: They caught up with me on December 8th. I reported for duty on that day. I put away my makeup kit and that was the end of my theatrical career.

Q: Let's talk about your time in the military.

GETSINGER: Exciting to be a Harvard man, and yet to be an enlisted seaman, was a little difficult, because when the war started, I was mixed in with the regular Navy types. They spoke a language which was the English language, but I couldn't understand, and certainly couldn't speak myself. I was on the receiving ship in the North River in New York, and guarded those piers on icy nights. The reason I was on the receiving ship is because it didn't take me long in the Naval Intelligence Reserves to realize that in intelligence, the job that I had was a kind of job, if you will excuse the phrase, "any woman could have done." I went to the admiral and said, "I can't do this. Old ladies would come up to me on the subway and see in my sailor suit and tell me that they had a son out in Corregidor, and how proud she was." I left the Intelligence Reserves, and went into the kind of Navy that went on ships.

Q: So, let's talk about your time in the Navy. When did you move over to the seagoing Navy?

GETSINGER: It was still in December of 1941. I was assigned to, among other things, the Normandy draft. Well, we didn't get very far with that, because the Normandy burned and sank.

Q: This was the French liner.

GETSINGER: It was being reconverted into a troupe ship, and it went down. In early spring, they finally put me into a converted yacht. It was called a "YP," a yard patrol. They had decided that because we didn't have a Navy, to make this into a sub chaser. So, they punched a hole in the hull and put in a sonar gear. They mounted two 50 caliber machine guns on the forward bridge, and put two racks of depth charges on the stern. This was a fancy yacht that had never been out of Biscayne Bay, until we got it. We went to sea in that. None of us were trained, but this is what we had.

Q: So, what did you do? For the German submarines, this was called the "Golden Time." Can you talk about what you were up to?

GETSINGER: On the first day at sea, the captain called me up to man the helm. I had never manned a helm, not even a sailboat on Lake Erie. But, I took the helm, and did what they call, "chased the lubber's line around the compass, because we were forming an "S" pattern up and down. We were off Atlantic City. The only person who had any training was the man on the sonar gear. He reported happily to the bridge that he had discovered a submarine off the boardwalk and Atlantic City. Well, the skipper was a Yale man, therefore, was very resourceful. Since we couldn't have dropped a depth charge without blowing ourselves up, he called the coast guard, and they came out quickly and chased after that sub. We got safely into Delaware Bay.

Q: How long did this last?

GETSINGER: We went down the inland waterway, and then we were 18 months in the West Indies, safeguarding liberty ships. These were eight and one-half knot convoys. We had beautiful Caribbean nights. That was before radar, and the way we kept stationed was to look at the propellers on these big ships turning up the phosphoreus that is in the water. It made kind of a white track and you could see where the ships you were shepherding were.

Q: Is this what you did until the end of the war?

GETSINGER: No. My father went to work in Washington with congressmen and senators. There was some pressure put on, and some notice was taken, and finally, after nearly two years as an enlisted man, I came back to Norfolk to receive my commission. I became a lieutenant, junior grade. Since I was a mustang, I did some training to be a clerk at Yale and at Princeton, where personnel were brought in to start their training. I then went out to the west coast and worked on a destroyer out there for the last two years of the war. Although I kept putting in for it, I never got into the kind of picket line destroyer group. I wanted to be out there on the front lines and fighting it out with the Japs [Japanese]. For some reason or other, those assignments never came through. I spent a lot of time aboard ships in the Pacific, but never in direct contact.

Q: Did you get any taste of foreign life at all while you were in the Navy?

GETSINGER: Not a great deal, until the end of war. At the end of the war, because they had too many ships and not enough officers to man them, they were letting people go. They said that if I would extend for six months, they would send me to any theater in naval operations for duty. So, I extended. I already had enough time in the Navy to be discharged, because I had four years, but I could see that folks were just hanging out in bars back in the states, so I decided to extend. I asked them to send me to Japan, because I wanted to get in on the occupation. So, they sent me to mine sweeping school. I went to Japan, and spent four months there, sweeping mines in the Yellow Sea, and going ashore and liberating the population.

Q: That was interesting duty.

GETSINGER: Oh, it was great, and I enjoyed that period tremendously. Before leaving San Francisco, I met some guy in a bar who told me that the thing for me to do was to take a suitcase full of things that are most wanted out there in Asia, and sell them. Then, pick up some local goods, and travel by the only means of transportation, down to the next place in Asia, and keep working your way around the world, until you get to England, and then come back on the Queen Mary. It sounded like a great idea. So, I packed up a suitcase of pocket 51 pens, and Ronson lighters, and waterproof watches with Swiss movement. This guy had told me that is what they wanted. My time was finally up in the Navy when my ship went to Shanghai, and I declared I was getting out. I went ashore with my little suitcase full of lighters and things. The American consulate in Shanghai said that they couldn't approve of my making a trip around through this area. They said, "Ho Chi Minh is down there, raising hell in Vietnam and we can't have American civilians loose in the world, if you want to see something of Asia, why don't you stay here in China?" I said, "Well, I have never had a job, I have just been in the Navy." He said, "UNRA, the United Nations Relief is recruiting and they have openings in their American contingent, why don't you go down to the Bund, and check that out?" So, I did, and UNRA said, "Well, you were in the Navy, you were an officer, you were in intelligence, why don't you become part of the United Nations inspection corps?" For two years, I traveled around China.

Q: You ran into Harland Cleveland...?

GETSINGER: Of course.

Q: I just finished a long set of interviews with him.

GETSINGER: Really?

Q: He is out past Herndon, a place called Falcon's Nest, I think it is called. It is an Air Force retirement place.

GETSINGER: That is very interesting. I always feel that that is the great untold story, at least I have never heard it told, or seen it told, about the great United Nations effort in China.

Q: Yes, let's talk about this. Let's go into as much detail as we can, because I have gotten something from Cleveland, but I would like to get your story. You were there from 1946 to 1948?

GETSINGER: Yes. I left just as the communists were coming in.

Q: How did your job work? What were you doing?

GETSINGER: I thought UNRA did a magnificent job. We had our own shipping line, and we had our own Air Force, our own trucking company. Of course there was no infrastructure, and if we were going to move relief goods into the interior of China, we had to do it with our own equipment. There was nothing to depend on. We had this vast supply line to supply our forces in the Pacific, which was abruptly cut off after the bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. You couldn't cut off the supply line, so what they did was redirect the supply line to Shanghai. Supply ships were just crowding the Bund and unloading the vast quantities of goods for our troops; ship loads of spam and dried milk. It was kind of dumped, and UNRA had to organize it and prepare it in a way that could be used. One of the first jobs I had as an inspector was to go up into Hangzhou, into the area above Hangzhou, and check into the fact that one of the reporters found some UNRA flour in the Russian cake shops, on Nanton Road in Shanghai. They said that what had happened is the flour had been put on the black market, instead of going to relieve the Chinese, it is going to the most natural consumer, the Russian cake shop.

Q: These would be white Russians.

GETSINGER: These would be white Russians and they made these marvelous cakes. It had to be investigated to make sure this was not the case. So, I went on an LST shipment up to Hangzhou, 500 miles up the Yangtze, and began to check out on the dykes to see what had happened. We had shipped this flour 500 miles into the interior of China. How did it get back to the Russian cake shops? This flour was Milwaukee, grade A flour, and it was so rich, that the average Chinese would get sick trying to use this flour, in any way, shape or form. So, the flour would be distributed to the Chinese working on the docks, repairing the docks. They had gotten into disrepair during the Japanese period. Then, they would sell the flour to Chinese merchants, who would come all the way up from Shanghai, following this flour. For one bag of Milwaukee flour, they would get three bags of the flour that they could use, the rough and ready Chinese flour. It made the kind of cakes they could eat. That flour had been brought down, all the way from North China by these merchants. So, then the flour was reloaded into junks, and taken all the way back to Shanghai and sold to the Russian cake shops. I destroyed the theory that UNRA flour was leaking into the black market in Shanghai.

Q: Regarding this, by the discovery that the flour was really too rich for the Chinese market, was UNRA learning how to dilute it with the local...

GETSINGER: There was no time, Stu. We had this vast amount of material and we were getting it out. The idea was that if you could get it out into the countryside, one way or another, the market would work in order to relieve the Chinese.

Q: It really was, when you get down to it. The dyke workers were getting paid. It wasn't the way we wanted to regulate it. What was your impression, at that time, of China right after the war that you saw?

GETSINGER: It was broken apart and bleeding, and the kinds of remnants were being fought over by the armies of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. I was quite conscious of

the military situation, because I was operating in seven different provinces of China. I had a jeep. At one point, I had a Harley Davidson with a side car. I was traveling around, trying to keep the UNRA supplies from going to either one of the armies, because of course they were the force in the countryside. They could commandeer anything that UNRA put out there.

I'll tell you one story. There was a negotiation in Tientsin with the Chinese communists, who felt they were not getting enough of the UNRA supplies. We were supposed to send supplies both to the nationalists and the communists. Representatives of the so-called "liberated areas," south Tientsin, came to this meeting in Tientsin, in the hotel. I was the UNRA representative at this meeting. We were putting together 50 barges of supplies to go down the Grand Canal and into the liberated area. This was a big shipment for the communists. I met with these communist representatives and we would work out the details; administrate the details of this shipment going down. But, in the evenings we would go out to have dinner together and drink together. I would argue with these communists about what America represented, and what they represented, and how we were the wave of the future. They thought they were the wave of the future. I may have been one of the first Americans to be involved in negotiations with the communists in China. It didn't work. They used to be so proud of the fact that they were blowing up the nationalists' garrisons, and there was no way you could argue with them. You would just start talking with them for a while, and then you would reach a point where there was no understanding, no way to compromise our views. We were so opposed to one another in what our view of the future was.

Q: What was the impression that you, and maybe your colleagues were having of the Chiang Kai-shek government?

GETSINGER: My impression was that the Chiang Kai-shek government had done a pretty good job of trying to get China back on its feet again. There were some dedicated nationalist officials. I remember that the industry in Tientsin was getting back on its feet. In fact, these were beginning to operate again. It looked as if some progress had been made; a lot of progress being made. But, they couldn't get very far, because the communists were pressing in on them all the time. One would often wonder what it would have been like if the Chiang Kai-shek had been able to prevail, what a different China we would have today. Would it be more like Taiwan? I think it probably would be.

Q: What about the problem of corruption?

GETSINGER: All over the place, of course. All over the place, and the communists were lean and mean. They were not corrupt in their daily duties, they were only corrupt in their ideas and their ideology. I ran into an area up above Hangzhou where some of the Chinese peasants told me about their temporary occupation by the Chinese communists. The People's Liberation Army had come in there and captured an area and held it for almost a year. The people said they despised the communists because the problem was that they were completely regimented. They were told what to do, from the time they got up, until the time they went to bed. They were put into work groups and made to do this

and that. They completely lost their independence. There we were. This was a Chinese reaction to the communists.

Q: Outside the American consul, did you run across Shanghai? Were you getting any flavor of the American official presence in China, diplomatic?

GETSINGER: Yes, I met a number of people. I dated, at one point, the daughter of one of the consular officials in Beijing. They were doing their best. As a matter of fact, one of the stops that we made as we did our inspection trips around China, was the executive headquarters in that region. It was set up by General Marshall. There would be a communist colonel and a nationalist colonel, and an American colonel, all sitting in offices down the hall. In order to plot what I would do in the way of my inspections, I would go to the communist colonel and say, "Which areas do you control, so I will know how to introduce myself when I go in?" Then, I would go to the national security of the nationalists afterwards, and of course, they didn't intermesh very well. You were always afraid in operating in the countryside, that you would run into a communist group which would not be one of the organized PLA groups. A lot of people were destroyed because they ran into a group and couldn't identify themselves in time. We had identification, on one side was a passport, signed by a nationalist, Chiang Kai-shek, and the other side, Mao Zedong had signed the back of it. The idea was that when you were traveling in the countryside, to figure out which group you were running into so that you would show the right side of the passport.

Q: UNRA was the United Nations effort. How much of it was American, would you say, as far as the personnel?

GETSINGER: It wasn't very much American. I forgot what the distribution was, but it was truly a United Nations effort. Stu, the people who impressed me the most were the Australians. The Australians who volunteered for UNRA were the hardest working, the longest working, and the most enthusiastic, and really felt they had an objective in China. When we all were working in UNRA, we really had a feeling that we represented 57 nations, and we were proud of what we were doing. We were doing a big job. We kept millions of Chinese alive during the first terrible winter after the war.

Q: What developed into the Cold War was not there yet, that spirit?

GETSINGER: No, it wasn't, except that if you were operating in the nationalist area, you could identify yourself as an American. When I was operating in the communist areas, I would make sure... The first Chinese I learned was, "I'm not an American, but I am an Englishman." So, quickly using Chinese I identified the fact that I was not an American, and I wouldn't be shot on-site.

Q: Was America seen as the enemy by the Chinese, at this particular time?

GETSINGER: By the communists, yes. In the nationalists' areas, the kids would come out in the street and would say, "Dinghai," meaning good, and when you would go into

the communist areas, they would say "Dingboohai," meaning "not good." When we finally got the American goods down into the communist areas, they got them into a warehouse, and spent too much time removing all of the tags on these goods that said, "This is a gift of the American people, one of the United Nations." We had put tags on these bundles of clothing. They had to take all of the tags off, so that the people who got them wouldn't attach the fact that they came from America. While they were busy removing those tags, the nationalist army pulled a raid, and we captured all the goods.

Q: Was the UNRA effort working strenuously to keep out of the way of both sides?

GETSINGER: Yes, and operating in a violent civil war, as there was in China at that time, was very difficult. We lost people.

Q: You were saying there was no infrastructure.

GETSINGER: It was all destroyed by the Japanese. We operated only in the area that the Japanese had occupied. This was the war area. There was nothing left. They had torn up all the railroads, the roads, everything, but because we had brought with us, the infrastructure that was needed, we did the job. That was UNRA's great success. Somebody was wise enough to do that.

Q: While you were there, it must have been extremely satisfying work.

GETSINGER: Yes. I think, as I look back over all the years of my life... I'm now 81. I think that two years I had in China, working to keep the Chinese alive was the most satisfying.

Q: Were you observing how the two sides were fighting the war?

GETSINGER: Not a great deal. Although, I was operating across the lines, I never did observe any battles. It was quite clear to us that Chiang Kai-shek was making a great mistake in trying to defeat the communists in Manchuria. We all could see that. We could see these great masses of military equipment, and the best trained troops, being put on the train that went up the coast, along the Yellow Sea, into Manchuria. It was the only rail line that would operate. He would get his armies up there, and then the communists would cut the rail line, and attack the armies. The armies would surrender and the communists would get all this material. That is why Chiang Kai-shek lost. When they were ready to go south, they went south in American trucks.

Q: What were you thinking of doing while you were there? You had Harvard, the Navy, and now UNRA, wither Norman Getsinger?

GETSINGER: I did get my trip around the world on the way back, went to Vietnam, and to Thailand, across India, up through the Middle East, and finally back across the Atlantic. But, I was so impressed with China. The China bug had bitten me, and I had the China fever. It became clear to me that the future of Foreign Affairs in this country was going to

be the future of the relationship of the United States and China. Other things were important, but clearly, that would be the most important. So, I thought, "How wonderful it would be to be involved in administering that relationship." So, I decided when I got back to the states, I would get into the Foreign Service.

Q: So, how did you go about that?

GETSINGER: I went to work first in the ITU conference.

Q: ITU being?

GETSINGER: International Telecommunications Union. It was a conference down on Pennsylvania Avenue, in that building, on the corner there. But, I kept applying in the department, and actually through an introduction my brother gave me to Meryl Blevins, who was running the Office of Security in the department. I went over and was interviewed, and taken on as a staff officer in the department security office.

Q: This was when?

GETSINGER: This would have been 1949.

Q: Were they giving the Foreign Service exam, at this point?

GETSINGER: Well, they were, but I was anxious to go right to work as a staff officer, and then try to do a lateral entry later.

Q: So, how did you start out there?

GETSINGER: I was a security officer. My first real assignment out of the country was to run an inspection of all of our posts in Canada. At that time, it was permitted for me to take my Ford convertible, and I drove out to the west coast, and inspected all of our posts in Canada, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. It was a remarkable experience.

Q: Oh, gosh yes.

GETSINGER: I had a great time. We were doing both personnel and building security, but mostly personnel.

Q: I can't remember, but when did the big spy case break in Canada? The code man, or something? The name sounded like Gromyko, but it wasn't.

GETSINGER: Stu, the security that we started to impose, we were working on a complete blank sheet, because there was no security. There was no security consciousness. When I checked all of our posts, across Canada, one of my jobs was to check the Foreign Service locals, the Canadians, who were working in our posts, across Canada. I wasn't quite clear what I was supposed to be checking. I would work with the

Royal Canadian mounted police, and use their records, and our records, to see if, by any chance we had missed somebody had obvious communist connections.

Q: By this time, communism was...

GETSINGER: Indeed, we were conscious of the iron curtain. But, obviously, the operation of our posts in Canada was in the hands of the Foreign Service local. The Foreign Service officers were just people who were on top, but the day-to-day workings of everyone, issuing visas, was a job for the locals. We really had no way of checking the locals, except depending on the Royal Canadian mounted police... If the Canadian government wanted to find out what we were doing, it was so easy for them.

Q: The McCarthy period was starting about the time you went. Were you sort of one of McCarthy's agents, almost? Were you going at it with a crusading zeal, to clean these "commies" out?

GETSINGER: That came a little later. There is a sad story involved here. From being a security officer on this side, I was sent to Cairo, and I was part of the regional security office in Cairo. Cairo was where I met my wife. She was a Foreign Service secretary. We were married in a church with Ambassador Jefferson Caffery, giving the bride away.

Q: Oh, boy. He is one of our last imperial ambassadors.

GETSINGER: Oh, he was so impressive. He was a converted Catholic, then which there is no more Catholic person. I was one of his embassy officers. My wife was an embassy secretary. So, it was two people on his staff. She was Catholic, and we were being married in a Catholic church. So, he sent down word to me that he would be prepared to be the father of the bride. I tried to call the wedding off. It was too late. He was part of the official wedding party.

Q: Can you describe the security apparatus? You mention Catholics, and I came in in 1955, and I remember snickering with a friend, walking down the corridor that had the security officers in it, and almost every person's name, who was male, had an "X" as a middle initial, which usually meant Xavier, which invariably meant they were Catholic, an Irish Catholic at that. How did you find it when you came in?

GETSINGER: Let me jump in here and say that after I finished my tour in Cairo... I want to go back because I have a historic thing that happened with the burning of Cairo, and then go back to that. But to get into the question of security, when I came back from Cairo, I decided to get into the Chinese language program. I wanted very much to get into this program. This was my life work, to be in China, and the Chinese affairs. So, I succeeded. They put me into the language program, and I went to Yale. We were sent to Cornell for advanced Chinese training. Then, about that time, Mrs. Shipley was combing the files of the department. She had her own security.

Q: She was the head of Passports.

GETSINGER: Yes. She had her own records. McCarthy had declared that there were a certain number of communists in the Department of State. So, she would help him find one or them. Going through the records, she discovered that on my way back from China... I had been at an embassy party in Bangkok and had told one of the secretaries there in the consul's office, who reported to Mrs. Shipley, that I made remarks to the effect that Chiang Kai-shek was guilty of corruption and nepotism. This had gotten in the records. Strangely enough that was enough to lead the department to call me out of Chinese training and put me into administrative duties while they checked on whether or not I should be discharged as a procommunist in the department. For about a year, I was working on forms' control, down on the ground floor of the department. I knew, of course, that they didn't have anything that they could really use, but I couldn't get a hearing. Douglas MacArthur, Jr. was counselor of the department at that time. He had been a friend of my brother's. My brother had been in the Foreign Service. My brother importuned him to get a hearing for me. He was big enough in the department to force a hearing. I sat down as we are sitting here, with a microphone and a couple of security interrogators and we went over my background in China, and my relationship with the nationalists and the communists, and I was cleared. But, it took them about nine months to clear me. Every morning, I would get up during those nine months and say, "This is ridiculous. I'm going down and resign." But, then I thought that if I resigned from the Foreign Service they would think that I was one.

Q: I am interviewing someone else, who had almost the same thing happen. He was called out and called back, and leaned on to resign by Scott McCloud. He did not resign. Eventually, they found out that he was not the person they thought he was. It was somebody else. But, this was very much the atmosphere of trying to get as many scalps as possible. One of the ways was to pick people, and then hope they would resign. Then, you could claim you caught one.

GETSINGER: That is exactly what I was part of. Of course, I didn't resign. I was eventually able to get the hearing. If my brother hadn't had connections with Doug MacArthur, I might have eventually given up.

Q: Well, let's go back to Cairo. You were there as a security officer, from when to when?

GETSINGER: From 1951 to 1953. This was a marvelous travel opportunity, I must say. Being a regional officer for security in the Department of State, I traveled in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Ceylon, and five countries in Africa. I went around and checked on the security of personnel and physical security. It was the beginning of some security consciousness. We were really beginning to button things up. When I got to Afghanistan, the embassy code room, in Kabul was separated from the outside by a mud wall. Anybody with a spoon and a little moisture could have dug a hole through the wall and entered the code room. When I got back to Cairo, of course, I gave them a report, and they put in a steel plate inside the mud wall. That was the kind of situation we had.

In New Delhi, I made a lunch time check on the embassy and I found the top secret safe

of the agency wide open. I reported it to the agency, the CIA rep. I expected that the officer who had been responsible for leaving that open would be fired, but he wasn't. There was a way they protected themselves. A Foreign Service officer with that same kind of incident would have had a black mark on his record that would follow him. The CIA did nothing, and that safe was wide open.

The incident that I wanted to tell you about was on January 27, 1952. That was the day Cairo burned.

Q: At Sheppard's hotel?

GETSINGER: Sheppard's hotel went down. The other security officers were away on inspections. I was the security officer in the embassy at the time. The chief of police warned me that there was going to be rioting. I told the ambassador and we got all the embassy staff out of the embassy, and back home. We got them out in the morning. Well, the rioting did take place. It got worse and worse. That was the day when the mobs were led through the streets by trucks, and in the trucks were containers of gasoline. The night before, they had gone through the city and put Xs on the doors of the places that were to be burned. This was the day when the British were coming out of their club, I think it is called the Jockey's Club, and thrown back into the burning building by the mob. There were a number of Brits burned alive. My bride was on the roof of our honeymoon apartment in Gazira Island, across the Nile. Of course, our communications were cut. But, she could hear the shots and see the smoke billowing up in the city from her place on the building across the Nile. The chief of police said the problem was that the king would not call in the army, and the police were not going to be able to contain that mob. I told the ambassador. The ambassador said, "Well, we have to get to the king and have him call in the army, because otherwise, the whole city will go." There were going to be mass murders. All communication had been broken between the embassy and the palace. The ambassador told me if I would get a jeep or two of the police, who would lead the ambassador across the city, then he would go to the palace, through the mob, and get the king to call in the army. We did that. We got a couple jeep loads of police, and the flags were unfurled on the embassy limousine. The gate was open and Ambassador Caffery drove through the burning city, through the mob, to the palace, got a hold of farouk, and told him that unless he called in the army, the city was gone, and his reign was over. The king told the ambassador that he could not call in the army because his intelligence had told him that the army officers were planning a coup against him, and if he brought in the army, they would never leave. Caffery told the King that if he would call in the Army, he would use the power, the might, the majesty of the United States to make sure the military would withdraw and would support its contingency rules. So, the king got on the golden phone and called out to the Army, which was out beyond the airport, and called in the Army. The ambassador returned to the burning city with the American flag flying on his limousine, to the embassy. We shut the embassy gates. The Marines pulled out their sidearms, and we began to burn classified material on the roof of the embassy. It was top-secret stuff that was being burned in the incinerator, because the first elements of the mob were coming down, through the alleyway, between the British embassy, across the street, and the American embassy. They were actually scaling the walls of the embassy.

There I was with half dozen marines, and we were going to have to be prepared to defend the embassy. Just at the point where the first members of the mob were crossing over the wall, the first elements of the Army, the squad cars of the Army, came through and scattered the mob, and we were saved. Of all the experiences I had in the Foreign Service that was one of the most remarkable, that our ambassador could do that.

Q: What was the cause of this riot?

GETSINGER: Cairo was in terrible shape in those days, because there was a lot of agitation about the British control of the Suez Canal. This was part of the build up that finally lead to the surrender of the canal by the British and French. There were a number of conflicts between Egyptian police and the British in Ismailia, and all through the canals. There had been several riots. It was to get the king to put the pressure on the Brits to line up with the nationalist forces. It said that Egypt should control its own canal. The rioting was so bad, and the uneasiness was so bad in the city, that my wedding had originally been planned in the Catholic Church in Cairo. It had to be moved to the little Catholic church on Gazira Island, which is separated from the main city of Cairo, by a couple of bridges. It could be defended by the police and kept calm. So, I was married on the island in the Nile, instead of downtown in Cairo.

Q: What's the background of your wife?

GETSINGER: She was a marvelous lady who was born in a coal town in Pennsylvania, and decided she wanted to see more of the big world. She went to Pittsburgh and took some courses and became a secretary. Then, she was recruited by the Foreign Service, assigned first to Prague and then to Cairo. She was the secretary in the regional security office.

Q: Starting in the security office in 1949, did you find a gradual build up of both the security which you were after and, I don't want to use the wrong term, but almost a lack of tolerance for behavior that would have been acceptable at Harvard. I'm really talking about McCarthyite type thinking. I always thought that the security force in those days was not a very sophisticated group of people. Did you find this with your crew or not, or is that fair?

GETSINGER: I think there was. I think we used to, in the regional security office, say, "Well, wait a minute, we can't go around and talk to the Foreign Officers and ask them whether they had ever had a homosexual experience." Yet the directive that existed at that point was that we were supposed to try. It wasn't a "don't ask and don't tell." It was, ask and see if you can find out. That was one of the reasons I got out of security. It didn't make any sense to me. We always knew that there would never be really good security in the Foreign Service, unless we could do as the Russians did, and make sure that in the Russian embassy, the only people who were there were Russians. They could check each one of those and know. But, as long as the Foreign Service depends on Foreign Service locals, there is no way you can have real personnel security.

Q: With the advent of Scott McCloud, did that change things? When Eisenhower's administration came in, was there a palpable change?

GETSINGER: Yes, I think so. The important thing was to get rid of the divided security responsibility that existed between Mrs. Shipley's organization and the security office itself. Security was a new notion. It just came in with the Cold War, and we were just learning how to operate.

Q: You had this very peculiar thing, where you had the passport office, which essentially is a clerical function. But, under Ruth Shipley and then Frances Knight, these two dragon ladies, they turned it into a very powerful instrument because of their contact with Hoover and with the right wing members of Congress. So, they were using the passport as a weapon.

GETSINGER: Yes, they were, and I was one of the victims.

Q: The hearing was when?

GETSINGER: It would be 1953.

Q: Did you know why you were before...?

GETSINGER: Oh, they had to. The objective of the hearing was to find out what the charges were, and to hear what I had to say about these charges. Of course, it was very hard for me to rebut them. The interesting thing though is that there was still such a fear of congressional pressures, of McCarthy and so forth, at that point, that even though I was cleared, they couldn't put me back in the Chinese language program. They somehow felt that was waving the red flag, if you will.

Q: Of course, the China hands were still undergoing persecution.

GETSINGER: That's right. So, what they did is, they said they would send me to Rome, to cool off there. So, I was given an assignment for two years at the embassy in Rome.

Q: Now the charge against you was that you said Chiang Kai-shek went for nepotism and was corrupt. This is like saying the Pope is Catholic. How do you say that he didn't use nepotism? How did you deal with this?

GETSINGER: It was kind of an indication, if you will, that I was a "red" because I had come out of China. I had contact with the communists. I was anti-Chiang Kai-shek, and the evidence that I was anti-Chiang Kai-shek, and had contact with the communists was all there. Therefore, how many people in the Department of State had that kind of a background? If there were communists in the Department, as McCarthy had declared, this guy would obviously be one of them.

Q: When you went before the board, the board consisted of people other than just the

security people, didn't it?

GETSINGER: Yes, that's right. There was a representative from McCarthy's office.

Q: What was your brother doing, by the way?

GETSINGER: My older brother went to Harvard and then I went to Harvard. When the war came along, he was already in the Foreign Service, at the outbreak of the war. He had been assigned to Hamburg. He was a little guy in the Foreign Service in Hamburg, but he was under suspicion of having passed information to the British about the defenses of Hamburg, against British air raids. He probably did. They said he did. It was at that time that we were picking up German consular officers in the U.S. So, it was clear that the Germans were going to try to pick up some of our own consular officers, including perhaps my brother. So, he was alerted by the department and went through Germany, into Switzerland, where they just missed him in pursuit. He managed to get across the border and spent the rest of the war in Berne. In Berne, he, on a ski slope, ran into a lovely blonde lady and they were married. She was a Swiss citizen. The department regulations, at that time, were that you couldn't marry a foreigner. He was so upset by that, and he submitted his resignation. The resignation could not take effect until the war was over and he was brought back from Switzerland. When he resigned from the Foreign Service, he went to work for my father in Detroit.

Q: You went to Rome. You were in Rome from when to when?

GETSINGER: I was in Rome during the Claire Boothe Luce period.

Q: This would have been 1953, 1954, or 1955?

GETSINGER: 1954 to 1956.

Q: What was your job?

GETSINGER: Murka Beeton had taken me from Personnel in the Department. I was assistant personnel officer. One of the jobs of the assistant personnel officer was to interview this string of young ladies who had come to Rome and dropped coins in the fountain, and were just in love with Rome. They would come to the embassy and would see if they could get a job at the embassy. We would have to inform them that, of course, they had to go back to the department to be hired as a Foreign Service secretary. But, another group of young ladies that would come to my desk, were the young ladies who had come to Rome as Foreign Service secretaries and had been mistreated by the Italian men. They were so upset with broken love affairs and so forth, they wanted to be sent back home. I couldn't interchange these two groups.

Q: What did you do? Were you essentially shipping the ladies back?

GETSINGER: You had to do it, if they were unhappy. Of course, there was an abundant

pool of recruits to be sent over. The movement back and forth between Rome and U.S. was accentuated by Mrs. Luce. During her three-year period, she made something like nine different trips back and forth to the United States. But, she was a political figure. She was a famous woman. It was a little difficult to have her sitting as an ambassador in Rome, attending to day to day affairs. Eldridge Durbrow was her DCM.

Q: Did you get involved at all in Italian affairs?

GETSINGER: Very much so. Italy was so interesting. Actually after Bertha Beaten left, I asked to be transferred to the economics section, which I did. Shortly thereafter, I was laterally entered into the Foreign Service, and became an FSO. I was reporting on the real beginnings of the attempt to unify Europe. It started with, as you may remember, the coal steel community. I was reporting that back to the department on these developments.

Q: These were weekly reports and monthly reports, sort of roundups.

GETSINGER: I was doing all this, Stu, with the background only of economics, an A in Harvard. I regretted so many times, as I did other times in the Foreign Service, that I had not taken that short course in economics that FSI gives.

Q: But that only developed, maybe 20 years later.

GETSINGER: I think that is right. I hope everybody gets a shot at that, because it's so important.

Q: But, it wasn't really until the 1970s that that course started. It was a very good one. I was an economic officer. I remember in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in 1958 or so, sitting down there in my off-time reading Samuelson's book on economics.

GETSINGER: Yes.

Q: I had a year of economics, which I had gotten a D- in.

GETSINGER: I still refer to Samuelson's book. I think it is the best book ever written. I reported on that for about a year and a half. I was working with a guy by the name of Stan Wolfe, who got divorced and left the post. I became the principal economic reporting officer in Rome, with no real good background.

Q: Did you have trouble dealing with the Italian economy? You have the official economy. Way back, in the late 1970s, I was consulate general in Naples. We were the leather glove capital of the world. There is not one registered glove factory in the area. It was all sort of under the counter. That is the Italian economic system. I would think in the 1950s it would be very difficult.

GETSINGER: It was incredible. Of course, during that period, there was the problem with the communists. They were all over the place. It was Farfani who finally got the

jeeps running down the sidewalks in order to break up the mob. I think it was Tish Baldwin who told that story.

Q: Go on, please.

GETSINGER: About how she is such a beautiful woman and the Italian men all pride themselves on their ability to get along with beautiful women. I think when she was first presenting her credentials... No, it was her first meeting with a foreign officer official. She came in and he was concerned about [some particular issue] at that point. She came in and he had these papers that had the Italian position. He was going to read the riot act to her. She came in in her powdered Beauvais, and cris-crossed her legs and he completely forgot that paper.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Ambassador Luce, or was that pretty much in a different stratosphere?

GETSINGER: She was remote. She was over there in Villa de Verna, and she was being poisoned from the ceiling.

Q: There was arsenic in the paintings.

GETSINGER: Yes, and it fell down into her large coffee cup. We didn't know but we did know that your ambassador wasn't there most of the time. If she wasn't in the embassy, and being poisoned in the Villa de Verna, she was traveling back and forth, between the U.S. and home.

Q: Was there any debate with your colleagues on whether we should have contact with the Italian communists, or was this pretty well understood?

GETSINGER: During the period I was there, the communists had become so important and so strong, politically, that they were actually controlling. If you remember, there was a communist mayor of Siena, I think. The administration was communist.

Q: Well, Milan, later on.

GETSINGER: Yes, Milan, of course.

Q: It was the red belt there.

GETSINGER: The red belt, yes. So, you had to deal with the communists because they were the administration, in parts of Tuscany and Lombardy.

Q: But, as far as reporting on the communists, I don't think, at that time, we were allowed to have contact with the political party.

GETSINGER: Yes, that's right. Italy was such a hard place to report on because of so

many parties. I remember that the Political Section and the Economic Section would start every morning, going through the Italian press. I remember there were at least five papers that you had to read. There was the Vatican paper, there was the socialist paper and there was a socialist democratic paper, and so forth. It took you the first couple of hours, before you could do anything else, to try and find out which way the parties were leaning, on any particular issue, by going through all those newspapers. Of course, we had to learn to read them.

Q: One of the things that struck me about Italy, later on, which was a different time, that in Rome tremendous emphasis was placed on what the parties were doing, and all this. But, yet you had the Christian democrats who were running the show, the communists were a threat, but nothing really changed for 40 years. Of course, this is early on, but we were reporting, almost at the precinct level, particularly in Rome, and it was sort of city centric.

GETSINGER: That's true. That is the problem you had. You were detoured into this. What else could you do?

Q: Was there, at that time, in the early days, a very obvious insider group. It was in the Foreign Service, people who had been there a lot and it was sort of a little club.

GETSINGER: That can be said about so many countries. I think much less than the China thing. The thing about the China thing is that, of course, language is the door to a culture, more so, I think, in China, than in most other countries. The language is the culture. The Chinese expressions tell you about the country, the people, and what they think. I think the China club is about the most distinct of any in the Foreign Service.

Q: At that time, who was head of the Economic Section, do you recall?

GETSINGER: I don't recall who it was.

Q: DCM was Durbrow?

GETSINGER: Yes, Elbridge Durbrow.

Q: How was he?

GETSINGER: Oh, good. He was the real ambassador because Mrs. Luce was an ambassador in name only. Remember, Henry Luce was given special diplomatic status, in order when he came over to be with the ambassador, so he would have some kind of position.

Q: He was president of Time-Life. He was a very significant political and industrial figure in the United States.

GETSINGER: I don't know how often the department has accorded a diplomatic status to

the spouse.

Q: By this time, how was your family back in Detroit feeling about their younger son?

GETSINGER: Well, of course, they didn't come to my wedding in Cairo. When I got to a more civilized place, like Rome, my father and mother came over. I took them to Venice. But, my brother, who was Euro-centric, never understood my fascination with China, and never came over, during all those posts that I had there.

1954, 1956, Rome. After I finished Rome, I was no longer a hot property and was put back in Chinese hands. I was sent to Taijung [FSI language school in Taiwan]. I had studied Chinese for a year, at Cornell. I was tested at Taijung to see how much I had retained. I was at the level of six months. So, McCarthy had cost me six months in Taijung, beginning back into the China area.

Q: You were in Taijung from when to when?

GETSINGER: From 1956 to 1957.

Q: How did you find the course at that point?

GETSINGER: Excellent. The language school was great. The important thing was to have it in Daijung, and to keep it away from Taipei, so that the ambassador couldn't call upon our services. That isolation was so important. We really did value that. At that point, our wives were allowed to come back into the language school at night, and study Chinese, using the instructors that we used during the day time. They became very proficient.

Q: Well, that was very important. Well, when you take language studies, you are not only learning a language, but you are learning a culture. What were you getting from your teachers about China?

GETSINGER: The language school, of course, was under the control of teachers who had come from Beijing and they were all extreme nationalists. We would, every now and then, snicker about the communists. They would be forced to show us how the communists were altering the language. So, when we would go to our posts, we would be equipped to handle the language, not only spoken by the nationalists, but by the communists as well.

Q: This is always a problem when you have... I got Serbian training from some Serbs who would have been happy with Milosevic. We were going to Tito's Yugoslavia and they were rejecting words that we knew they were using. Chiang Kai-shek was in full force at that point. Were you getting any feel for how things were going in Taiwan, at that time?

GETSINGER: Very much so. We certainly were. You can't work on a small island, even if you are isolated, and have studied the language, without getting in touch with the ferment among the Taiwanese, and their feeling about the overlordship with the mainland

group, that came over with Chiang Kai-shek. There was one incident I think I should get into. There was the sacking of the American embassy in Taipei by the nationalists. This was at a time when the offshore Islands crisis was pushing on it, and we needed to have this kind of togetherness if we were going to face up to that crisis. The reason the embassy was sacked, of course, is well known. We had a military advisory group, a Chinese officer was accused of spying on the wife of one of our officers, and he was shot. Then, the American officer was acquitted and sent out of the country. I don't know whether this is in the official record, but we know, at that point, the Chinese mob boiled over and it was Chiang Dinghai, who was then the president's son, who was in charge of intelligence, who decided there should be a demonstration in front of the American embassy to protest this. The demonstration got out of hand, who got into the demonstration, we are not quite sure. But, there were inflammatory broadcasts over a tape, to the mob, and the mob took over. That was the most complete destruction of an embassy we have had in many years of Foreign Service history. It was completely shattered. The officers and the staff took refuge in the bomb shelter and thank God, they were able to shut the bomb shelter door, but they were buttoned up in there by a steel door. Eventually, they opened the door to get out, because of course they were trapped in there. They were beaten up, and you could see American personnel of the embassy with bandages all over them. When we came up from the language school to clean up the embassy, you could sweep up top secret documents in the courtyard of the embassy. They threw the safe out of the code room and burst it opened, and scattered stuff all over. But, that is just an indication of the fact that you cannot push the Chinese too far. You cannot rob them of their self respect.

Q: You sort of learned that with your mother's milk, at least, that the language thing... Of course, you had had this before, working with UNRA, that dealing with the Chinese was really a different matter than most other countries.

GETSINGER: Oh, absolutely. I feel so sorry for people who are involved in Chinese affairs, who don't have the language. I think Chris Patton, who wrote this remarkable book about how he was trying to make a home...

Q: He knew he was the last governor of Hong Kong.

GETSINGER: He was very good at understanding the Chinese, but throughout the book, he is apologetic and shamefaced about the fact that he didn't speak Chinese. He would have been a much better governor, and certainly would have written a better book if he had the language.

Q: Did you have much contact with Taiwanese, as opposed to mainland people?

GETSINGER: I went from the language school to the embassy, and I was four years in the embassy.

Q: We will pick up that on the next session.

GETSINGER: But, certainly all of us on the island, whether we were in Economic Affairs or USIS, or anything else, were working with the Chinese, both the Taiwanese and the mainland.

Q: Why don't we pick this up the next time? You left the language school when?

GETSINGER: 1957.

Q: You went to our embassy in Taipei for four years. We will pick it up with what you were doing at our embassy in Taipei in 1957 to 1961.

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Today is the 25th of February 2000. Norman, we are going back to 1957. We have already talked some about it, but could you talk about how the embassy operated and what was driving American policy in Taipei, when you got there, and how did you operate it?

GETSINGER: I think the central feature of where we were with the Kuomintang, with Taiwan, at that point, is that we were working hand and glove with them. We have seldom worked as closely with the foreign government, as what we were working with, in Taiwan. One good example is the Joint Commission for Rural Reconstruction (JCRR). That had representatives appointed by Chiang Kai-shek and our president. They worked side by side to revise the whole of the agricultural policy in Taiwan. It was very, very close. Those of us who were there at that time were very excited at the idea that we were helping to build a new kind of Chinese society on that island.

Q: Let's take reconstruction, at that point. I would think that, and correct me if I'm wrong, something into the favor of being able to do this was that this has not been an area where Chinese landlords have been able to get their fingernails into, because the Japanese had been there. In a way, it had been protected from mainland Chinese power people coming in and grabbing off the best pieces of land, or am I wrong?

GETSINGER: A little bit. Actually, what had happened is that the Japanese had decided to build up a land of aristocracy of the local people. That this was the way they could have control. When the nationalists came over, there were large landed estates, belonging to the Taiwanese. Then, the question came up of how to do a land reform. The land reform in Taiwan was remarkable because it changed the whole economy around. They disenfranchised the landlords, and they gave them pieces of the industrial establishment that the Japanese were leaving behind. So, they kind of turned their hats around, on being landlords to industrialists. This was done completely bloodlessly, whereas on the mainland at the same time, they were accomplishing their land reform by shooting all the landlords.

Q: Well, I suppose it was handy in the way you could come in and the Taiwanese, at this point, were basically a separate group, and going down, their leadership didn't have that

much at stake in this property. So, they could sit back and say, "Let's have some reform over here," because it wasn't going their particular way.

GETSINGER: I happened to be on the island during a very early period. I was over there in 1947, and I arrived there just after the first troops had come over from the Kuomintang, and were having trouble with the Taiwanese. There was a revolt by the Taiwanese. The Taiwanese all refer to it as "RR Bong," February 27, 1947. What happened was that the gentleman who was in charge of Chiang Kai-shek's troops decided to eliminate this kind of opposition, because at that time, Japanese was the language of the island. After 50 years, everybody brought over the Japanese to occupy the island. So, the natives looked Japanese, spoke Japanese, and had collaborated with the Japanese in World War II. So, he took this as a revolt that had to be put down, if he was going to establish a base for Chiang Kai-shek. So, there were a large number of executions. We don't know how many, but something in the neighborhood of 20,000 Taiwanese. It was all of the intellectuals, the people who had established this ferment. So, here were the Taiwanese, even at that time, trying to establish some kind of independence.

Q: Now, what was your job at the embassy, to begin with? What were you doing?

GETSINGER: Oh, I was very lucky to come up from the language school to one of the posts where they put Chinese language officers, where they spoke Mandarin. I decided that the best job, and it was kind of open at that point, would be to be the commercial officer. I was excited at the idea of helping with the transformation of the economy, and getting American participation started in Taiwan. So, that was my job for four years.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you arrived?

GETSINGER: I believe it was Everett Drumright.

Q: He was an old China hand.

GETSINGER: Yes. He had been to the language school in Peking.

Q: You mentioned this 12-school operation of the Kuomintang. Was there any feeling among the embassy people you dealt with, you included, that Chiang Kai-shek was our boy, but he sure blew it, and did a terrible job in China, and this is not a terribly good horse to be riding?

GETSINGER: Yes. My view, and I think most of us who worked with the Kuomintang at that point, was that they had learned their lesson in China. What we had was a new Chiang Kai-shek and a new Kuomintang, and in a very real sense, it was. He agreed to pass, and we were all working on this, a foreign investment law, which in affect says that foreign devils are welcome to enter the central kingdom and exploit our resources and take out exorbitant profits. That is what it mandated in a way. Yet, he passed it, because he knew that if his regime was going to survive on that island, he was going to have American participation needed.

Q: Let's talk about the investment policy, which you were trying to promote. Was there a difference between the mainland Chinese, who were political leaders, military people and all, and the Taiwanese? They were all of Chinese origin. When you say Chinese, you always think of entrepreneurs par excellence, but did you see a difference in the approach, toward investment business and all?

GETSINGER: Not really, because I think that is part of the economic culture of the Chinese. The Taiwanese were very good businessmen. I let a number of American companies join investments with the Taiwanese. But, as an example, Stu, of how well we worked with the Kuomintang regime there, is that I decided one way to get investment problems solved was to set up what I call the investment lunch. I would sit down once a week with the leading investment authority of the KMT and I would have a little menu of the problems that American companies were having in Taiwan. We would go over this menu and he would send instructions to with his number two person, who would be there, that these things would have to be fixed. That is the way we did things. We sat down, had lunch, and jointly resolved the problems.

Q: One hears about the Kuomintang before, about it being a vast bureaucracy and an awful lot of squeeze included in this. Were you seeing people who were trying to do it differently?

GETSINGER: Absolutely. I think the proof of that, of course, was the very rapid increase in productivity in the economy of Taiwan, and how, even then, it was beginning to show tigerish traits. They moved up very rapidly. In fact, it wasn't simply because we were doing things in the embassy with helping an investment, but it was because we had a very successful aid program, possibly the most successful aid program that the U.S. has ever had. Dollar for dollar, in terms of results, it was marvelous in Taiwan. It was because we had this very close working arrangement, so that we could make things work. It didn't take the Taiwanese very long, I mean the Chinese in Taiwan, before they had reached the takeoff stage. We finished our aid to Taiwan. It was one of the first places we did. So, it's a complete success in that regard.

Q: You mentioned a takeoff stage; this refers to a small book by Eugene Rostov, I think, who talked about countries achieving economic growth with a certain amount of literacy, and expertise in investment and all that. At a certain point, they no longer needed assistance, they could generate their own.

GETSINGER: Exactly, and that is what happened.

Q: Who was investing? At that point, you were trying to get Americans to invest. How did you go about this?

GETSINGER: We had, with the Chinese, established an investment center. I spoke about the investment lunch, which was promising. But, one thing we were able to do was to establish an investment center. When a potential investor came to my office, we would

take them down to the investment center, in downtown Taipei. They would indicate what they needed in the way of utilities, labor, raw materials, semi-manufactured, and the whole process of the investment was laid out right there. They never had anything like that on the mainland, I can assure you. But, we could do that stuff.

Q: How about the overseas Chinese? Were they interested in Taiwan, or were they sort of playing a watching game, at this point?

GETSINGER: We had a lot of interest, of course, from Hong Kong. At that time, most of the money in Hong Kong was pro-Taiwan. So, there was a very good connection there.

Q: How about in America? Was there much of a Chinese community with money in the United States, at that time?

GETSINGER: It's interesting. The one thing we Americans were always fighting, at that time, in Taiwan, was the rivalry between Taiwanese and mainland people. The Taiwanese were pushing for independence. They were pushing for the idea of having an opposition party. Chiang Kai-shek's police would keep arresting them. We, the Americans, would give them refuge. So, here we were, working with an autocracy, but trying to push it toward a democracy. The way we would do it was to give [assistance] to the Taiwanese. So, when you speak of what kind of activity there was in the U.S. in relation to Taiwan, there was a lot of agitation. The Taiwanese would escape Chiang Kai-shek's police. They would find refuge in the United States. The Chinese community in the United States, with regard to Taiwan, was clearly divided between the pro-Kuomintang and the pro-Taiwanese. So, there was a civil war within the civil war, going on.

Q: How did you feel about Drumright? Was he too close, just right, or distant from Chiang Kai-shek and the way he was leading the embassy at that time?

GETSINGER: I would say that he was just about right. Drumright was beloved by the Chinese. He was so close to the Chinese, but he needed to be because this was the way we were operating. We were not operating at a distance. We were embracing those people. We had, in addition to the embassy and the aid mission, a huge military advisory group and a tremendously large intelligence station. The intelligence station in Taiwan was as big as stations we have ever had abroad. They, in a sense, were helping Chiang Kai-shek operate some of these raids on the mainland. So, at that time, the policy was kind of supporting Chiang Kai-shek return to the mainland. At the same time, supporting the Taiwanese' desire to be independent, and that's important.

Q: The Korean war had ended not too long before, around 1953 or so. Did Korea serve as any example, or have any influence there, South Korea, or was it just something over the horizon?

GETSINGER: I think it was quite far up the horizon. Between Taiwan and Korea, of course, there is Japan. The Japanese influence on the island was still very strong. Most of

the trade, at the beginning, was with Japan, because here was an ex-colony. That is what happens with colonies; they have this tremendous trade.

Q: Did you get involved in visits? In the United States we had our own., I don't want to call it Civil War, but difficulties. You had the China lobbies, representative Walter Judd and others. Then, you had the "Who lost China," the McCarthy thing, which was petering out. Were you feeling the effects of either of these things, with visitors or watching how you reported, or anything like that?

GETSINGER: I think we probably did have, Stu. I don't really have too strong a view on that.

Q: I meant, did you have quite a few visitors from the United States?

GETSINGER: Yes, they were pouring in. This was our China. This is what we had to work with, in the way of China.

Q: On the part of the American investors, was there concern that they would take a look and say, "Is this place going to fall to the mainland Chinese?" Was that something you had to address?

GETSINGER: It certainly was. Of course, the Taiwanese and the Chinese, themselves, were very concerned. At that time, there was absolutely no economic connection with the mainland. Of course, then things began to change.

Q: But, really quite a bit later.

GETSINGER: Quite a bit later, and of course, still more or less indirectly through Hong Kong. There is no direct trading.

Q: How about the Quemoy-Matsu business, during this 1957 to 1961-period?

GETSINGER: As you recall, I had been involved, when I was down in Tai Taijung at the language school, in evacuation preparations. This was 1957, 1958. Then, the big problem, which was out of my sphere, was to get Chiang Kai-shek to remove so many of the troops from Quemoy, which sits in the harbor of mainland China, and get them back to defend Taiwan. It gradually developed that mainland Chinese on Taiwan felt that they should keep the troops Quemoy, because that represented the connection to the mainland.

Q: Did you find, for investment and all, were you working with the Department of Commerce much, or was this pretty much it, of self-sustaining operation?

GETSINGER: Of course, we had good connections with the Ex-Im Bank. At that point, Ex-Im Bank thought that this was their job to develop the economy in Taiwan. So, there was a lot of Ex-Im money that came in.

Q: Were we at all concerned, at that point, that we might build up Taiwan to be a rival of the United States? I think, particularly with something like textiles... I mean, at that point, we had substantial textile business, particularly in the Carolinas, and all. Was this a concern?

GETSINGER: I don't think so. But, we did have with Taiwan all of the problems that we have had with the mainland of China. There was, initially, a great textile industry in Taiwan. There was the question of whether the Taiwan textiles were undermining our textile industry, but that is occurring now with China. That was a very labor intensive type of industry, which eventually moved out of Hong Kong, and over to the mainland, but we had trouble with copyright and patents. That was a terrible problem. The first time that the Encyclopedia Britannica was pirated was in Taiwan. They did a marvelous job of taking the whole Encyclopedia Britannica and reproducing it.

Q: I remember, I think, most of the Foreign Service profited by having these pirated editions, which they had picked up in one place or another. But, what were you doing? Were you going down and trying to ferret it out, or pounding the paperboard?

GETSINGER: Oh, we had remarkable success in just facing up to the authorities in Taiwan, and making them change their regulations. Who is this old gentleman who is so involved in Hollywood? This is a gentleman who pushes motion pictures. He came over a number of times to Taiwan, and I worked with him to try and raise the admissions in Taiwan.

Q: Jack Valenti?

GETSINGER: Jack Valenti, yes. Jack came over maybe a half-dozen times, because this was one of the major outlets for Hollywood.

Q: They were pirated films?

GETSINGER: They were not only pirated films, but the main problem was that they were not charging the admission price. You could get in for a few pence or a chopstick. That didn't make sense. Hollywood was really looking forward to making some profit over there. So, we got them to jack up their prices.

Q: During 1957 to 1961, was the embassy sacked during this period, or did this come a little later?

GETSINGER: Yes, remember that is what we discussed at our last meeting.

Q: We did discuss it, that's right. That was early on. While you were the commercial officer, were you keeping an eye on political developments?

GETSINGER: Oh, we all had to get involved because... LBJ came over and we had to put together a control group for LBJ. I remember a wonderful scene. He was the Vice

President. When he came over, he loved to press the flesh. He would get in a pedicab and start down the main street of Taipei, headed for a mob of Chinese, and they would see this great huge Texan coming along with a 10-gallon hat, and sitting in the back of a pedicab, and he would jump out of the pedicab, and would rush forward to shake hands. The mob would melt. He couldn't get to a single hand.

Q: You were there during the Kennedy-Nixon debates, which centered at one point on Quemoy and Matsu. There were peculiar little things that happened, and all of a sudden he became the center of the universe, as far as political candidates were concerned. How were Kennedy and Nixon seen from the Chinese perspective?

GETSINGER: At that point, because Taiwan was our China, we were pouring everything into China. Eisenhower came over as the President, and we were in the control group for him. They just loved having this American attention. It looked, at that point, as if Taiwan would be our China forever. I remember one of the problems that occur with Foreign Service officers in the control group with a presidential visit is that some of the guys who came over with the president wanted to find out where the girlies were. So, you have to measure whether you can do anything pimping as a Foreign Service officer. But, you can do it by indirection, just indicate that...

Q: I'm told, you sort of point them toward the embassy drivers, or something like that.

GETSINGER: I remember there was a hot spring's resort, just outside Taipei, and you could put them up that way. Let me tell you about one incident that is rather interesting.

Q: Yes, please.

GETSINGER: To show you how close we were and how Drumright was as an ambassador, Drumright was giving a very large cocktail reception. It was getting down toward the end of his period there. He assigned me to stand at the door as one of the junior Foreign Service officers. He said, "A lot of these Chinese, I don't know, but they all know me. They will all come rushing forward, and I won't know their names. I tell you what I want you to do. You stand at the door, and you stop every one of them as they come in, introduce yourself, get their name and then pass the name to me." Well, it was going very well, until a rather short, stocky Chinese came in and he tried to walk right around me and rushed by me. He started toward the ambassador. I knew what my instructions were, so I kind of lined him up against the wall, and said, "I don't believe I have gotten your name." He said, "It's Chang Ching-kuo." Well, Chaing Ching-kuo was the president's son. Chaing Ching-kuo was head of the secret police. I said, "Pass, friend."

Q: How did you find, during this time, the hand of the secret police and all? Was it a heavy hand?

GETSINGER: Oh, it was a very heavy hand, very ubiquitous. To equate Taiwanese independence types with the communists was very easy. In fact, at one point,

Kuomintang was trying to find a connection between the communists in Beijing and the Taiwanese independence types seeing it as a way to weaken Chiang Kai-shek's regime, so he couldn't recover the mainland. Oh yes, they were all over the place. My wife, who at that time was married to someone else, and so was I, and we both lost our mates later; but her husband at the time was with the CIA in Taipei. At one point, there was a midnight knock at the door and it was Henry Gau. Henry Gau is one of the leading Taiwanese independent types. He said that they were after him, and asked if we would let him in for a while, until his people could get him away. He stayed with us for 24 hours, until he was able to exit through the back door. Six months later, Henry now became the mayor of Taipei. What the Kuomintang had to do was to permit some freedom of expression and some freedom of candidacy, even though there was no opposition party. But, you could be an independent. The Taiwanese kept developing these independent candidates. So, here was this guy who was taking refuge, and six months later, he was the mayor. They called it a democracy holiday. If you, as a Taiwanese could get yourself elected, then they couldn't arrest you. But, if you failed in your candidacy, you were lucky if you ended up in Green Island.

Q: Speaking about the officers in the embassy, how seriously did you take the slogan of "back to the mainland?" Were you seeing that Taiwan would develop its own government, and it would go on that way, or were you seeing a fairly early collapse of mainland Chinese and communists or what?

GETSINGER: I think, during the period I was there, still very early, we were very much caught up in the idea that Chiang Kai-shek might have a chance to get back, because after all, the communist rule on the mainland was failing miserably. They had the great leap forward and terrible starvation that occurred there after. So, it looked like the thing would be falling apart, and Chiang Kai-shek might have a chance to get back. Then again, our agency people on the island were helping them develop a spy network and an infiltration at work that went in and the intelligence in Taipei was very good on what was happening on the mainland. The possibility that Taiwan would find itself independent under self-rule only came when Chiang Kai-shek's son, years later, decided that the only way they came to keep power was to share it with the Taiwanese.

Q: There was a remarkable change around, a gradual move, so today we are waiting for an election which will probably put the final stamp on an independent Taiwan.

GETSINGER: Of course, those of us who are interested in the island, can go back and look at a lot of the history, but there was a point when after the island was ceded to the Japanese, the Treaty of Chimwini Decree in 1895, the Japanese came down to take over Taiwan, and there was a resistance. There was a short period, I think it lasted for 45 days, to free Taiwan. It was the Republic of Taiwan who established it, and the Japanese troops came in in the north and just marched down the island and eliminated it. But, here was an island that was 50 years under the Japanese, 50 years under the Kuomintang. During the period when it was a province of Taiwan, it was a very big period, only something like 30 years. The Dutch were there on the island.

Q: How well were you informed of what was going on on the mainland? This was during the period of the great leap forward, and we had our consulate general in Hong Kong, which was processing this. Did we have a pretty good idea of what was going on in China?

GETSINGER: Oh, I think so. I think the intelligence network that Chiang Kai-shek had established, together with our Central Intelligence Agency support was an excellent one. We were really getting information. That changed by the time I went to Hong Kong, later in my career. Hong Kong has become the center, and the network was established through that area.

Q: By the time you left in 1961, was there a pretty free enterprise system in place, at least as far as small entrepreneurs?

GETSINGER: A very good free enterprise system. It was really moving ahead very rapidly. I think this was why assignment to Taiwan at that time was so exciting for Foreign Service officers. You were part of something that was happening because you were part of the governmental structure as well. It is the kind of thing we had later in Korea, when we were working so closely.

Q: 1961 or 1962 was when things really started moving there. I take it that during this time, you weren't seeing a solid leftist movement, a communist sympathizer. This just wasn't on Taiwan.

GETSINGER: No question, but there was a very strong developing Taiwan independence movement. The Taiwan independence types would be under house arrest, and then they would escape and flee to the United States to join the Taiwan independence movement there. So, Chiang Kai-shek could never really suppress it. That's why his son, when he took over the presidency, decided that the only way they were going to get anyplace with strengthening the position of that island, was to accept the Taiwanese in the government.

Q: But during this time, it was pretty much mainland Chinese, Kuomintang people were running everything.

GETSINGER: These were the people who were chasing, by their mainland experience. These were people who were basically anticommunists. They really hated what was going on on the mainland. They really felt they had to create something different on Taiwan.

Q: Well, then in 1961, whither?

GETSINGER: War College.

Q: You were in the War College from 1961 to 1962?

GETSINGER: Naval War College.

Q; *What were you doing there?*

GETSINGER: I had the normal War College course. Then, one of the things that happened at that War College, and I don't know whether it happens at all war colleges, but George Washington University had a group on the campus. If we wanted to study nights, we could get our masters degree at the same time as attending War College classes in the day time, which I did. It was a remarkable opportunity. So, it was a sabbatical year, but it was fully used.

Q: How did you find the Navy, as far as its system at the upper levels for its people? One of the things I have heard is that the Navy tended to be more oriented toward its equipment, and how do you do Naval things, whereas the Army was more senior people, and it was felt that it was more important to get them out and think about the world a little more.

GETSINGER: One of the things in the curriculum at Naval War College and I presume it was the same at all of them, is that you do what is in the academic year and then at the end of that time, you have war games. On each team, there is an individual appointed to be in charge. I, as a Foreign Service officer, was lucky enough to be put in charge of a team which consisted of Army and Navy, and Marine officers. So, I was working with a bunch of Colonels and we were given the problem to work on. So, from my standpoint, the War College was a place to get everybody together and work out problems together. I think it was very successful. From them on, throughout my Foreign Service career, it was easy for me to operate with the military types because of that War College exposure. I don't think enough Foreign Service officers are given that chance.

Q: No, I don't think so either. Where did you want to go, and where did you go after the War College?

GETSINGER: Well, it was time for me to get down to the department. I entered the Foreign Service and had been abroad, and a language student and so forth. There had been no 24-hour operational center until the Kennedy administration. The president wanted to have an operation center, well actually a crisis center. Originally, the idea was to get senior officers in there who would be on watch for 24 hours. If a crisis developed, then they could give you some kind of an initial reading on what our policy should be and how we should handle the crisis. It didn't work. They would get tired. There was no crisis. So, then it changed completely. They brought in junior officers. The junior officers were running the operation center and our job was simply to bring in the intelligence, to watch the tickers, to watch the telegrams, and prepare all of the information so that when the secretary came down or the desk officers, they had all of the latest intelligence to work from. It had been kind of arranged so that they could get into it. That was what the operation center became, and I think it still is.

Q: When did you start on the operations center?

GETSINGER: I'm not quite sure.

Q: Probably July or something like that, of 1962.

GETSINGER: Of 1962, and then I was there through... Well, we had a Berlin task force operating in one corner. That was a 24-hour job, too.

Q: Then, you had the Cuban Missile Crisis.

GETSINGER We had the Cuban Missile Crisis. I have one small claim to fame. When it was decided that we were going to pull the rug out from the president of Vietnam, President Diem, instruction had to be sent out by a telegram to the ambassador that we would let the generals go ahead and do the job. In the operation center, it was our job to make sure that whenever a message went out to the field, it had the clearances from the White House, from the CIA, and from the Pentagon. I signed off as the officer in the State Department, SS. Several years later, that telegram surfaced and was put on the front page of U.S. News & World Report, with my name at the bottom of the telegram, offering the generals the opportunity to go in and assassinate President Diem.

Q: While you were in the operations center, what were you getting about Vietnam? This was before our big build up.

GETSINGER Yes it was. My exposure to Vietnam came later when I really worked on Vietnam at the White House. At that point, I was just doing the mechanics. You would get the information in, and pass it along. Because we had this long watch, which started at midnight, and went on until 8:00 in the morning. I would bring a sandwich down to have it available, because the coffee machines, and the snack machines around the department didn't have very much. I had my peanut butter and jelly sandwich on the corner of my desk, and I had the tape of traffic from the Far East that had just come in, and I had it all arranged on the desk. Dean Rusk came in to check out the tape. As he sat at the desk, he absentmindedly put his elbow into my peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I had several things I could do: I could tap the Secretary of State on the shoulder and say, "Pardon me, but you have spoiled my peanut butter sandwich," or I could bring it to his attention that he had peanut butter and jelly on his elbow, or I could ignore the situation, which I did. I chose the latter. I thought it was career wise to do.

Q: How about the Cuban Missile Crisis? Was this a time of rather frantic activity?

GETSINGER Yes, it was. But, of course, that was really being run out of the White House, and the Pentagon. At that time, I was at the War College, and our little housing was in Fort Adams, that is a fort at the entrance of Narragansett Bay. It was built at the time of the Civil War, and was reenforced on subsequent crisis. It had redoubts that went way, way down, maybe a quarter of a mile, into the ground. What I did was take equipment and clothing and take it down into the bottom of the fort and have it ready in case the bombs did go off, the atomic weapons. I would have a refuge for me and my family. So, that was how I used the War College opportunity.

Q: You left the operations center when, late 1963?

GETSINGER Yes, I was there at the time of the Kennedy assassination. I remember going down to duty the day of the assassination, having heard it while I was painting the kitchen. Everybody remembers where they were. I stopped by the little church in Alexandria there, on the way down to the operations center, because I knew it was going to be a terrible period down there. Then, I went on down to the center and we were setting up this operation. We had people from 92 countries, eight heads of state, ten prime ministers. They were all coming in up to the operations center, to set up the reception for this group, who would go to the airport, where would they be in the line, and so forth. It was a frantic period, and it was strange that people would call up the Department of State and would want to blame the Department of State for the Kennedy assassination, something about we hadn't guarded him well, or we had allowed foreign agents to come in. But, we were barraged with crank telephone calls, blaming us.

Q: People looking for a scapegoat.

GETSINGER: Exactly.

Q: Where did you go after you left the operations center?

GETSINGER: I plunged into the China desk. I was there for two years.

Q: This would have been late 1963 to 1964?

GETSINGER: 1964 to 1965. It was a very busy period. Our China policy was in the process of gradual change. We were losing support in the U.N. for the seat for Taiwan, the China seat for Taiwan. But, it was a wonderful learning experience, to just drop in and become the head of a desk in the department. I was there at the time when Madam Chiang Kai-shek came over for her last visit to the United States. At that point, we didn't want Chiang Kai-shek the madam, over here very much. She arrived and declared that it was an unofficial visit. But, I was our control officer, and I stayed with her during the period she was in the United States. I went with her to the War College. She delivered a lecture there. The Secretary of State gave a dinner for her, upstairs in the State dining room, so I had to arrange the main guest list. Do you remember that one of the things that people said about Madam Chiang was that she was a high-falutent lady that had to have silk sheets?

Q: I remember that. During World War Ii, going to the White House.

GETSINGER: It appears that the reason she has to have silk sheets is because she has an allergy. It reacts to cotton, so she has to sleep on silk sheets. Because she has these allergies, she couldn't eat any seafood. So, I had to make sure that at the State dinner, there was no seafood. That was one of the desk officer accounts.

Q: And Madam Chiang is still with us.

GETSINGER: Still with us. She is a marvelous lady.

Q: When people who were dealing with China and the State Department would get together, did they say something like, "Sooner rather than later, probably, we are going to be recognizing mainland China, or was that just something that wasn't discussed?

GETSINGER: Oh, there was a tremendous debate in the United States, in the Department of State. We always had these guys in various corners at the Department. They were trying to work out some kind of way that we would establish relations with Mongolia, and that would be the key to getting a relationship going. So, it wasn't a surprise to me that eventually Henry Kissinger and Winston Lord were to make that trip over there. It just wasn't working. We couldn't establish the fact that China was Taiwan, and that was where we were going to stay, with that big China over on the other side of the street. It didn't make sense.

Q: While you were on the desk, from 1963 to 1965, was the Chinese-American community an important factor? Was the attitude, "Can't our American Congresspeople weigh in or not?"

GETSINGER: This was the highlight of the China lobby period. Of course, they were going full steam ahead, because the debate was going at its greatest extent at that point. We could see the change coming. Every vote in the UN would show that we were losing support for Taiwan to be China. So, of course, the China lobby, we were quite conscience of it. We spent a lot of time at the Chinese embassy trying to reassure them. But, they knew as well that it was a matter of time.

Q: This was during the time when we were getting involved in Vietnam or in more. Did that impinge on Taiwan, our relations with Taiwan, at that time?

GETSINGER: Of course, Chiang Kai-shek was always ready to send troops down into Vietnam to support the U.S. interest, just as he was ready to send them up into Korea. It was important to dampen his expectation that he didn't get involved. This was the chance for him to get up toward the mainland through Vietnam. That was going on. Do you want to move onto the next step?

Q: Yes, I do.

GETSINGER: I don't want to take too long. From the China desk, I went to the White House.

Q: This would be from when to when?

GETSINGER: This was the latter part of 1965. I was the special assistant to Lyndon Johnson's special assistant for Vietnam. Any period of being assigned to the White

House is frantic. I finally find out when I began to work in the White House that the State Department was a long way away from the formation of foreign policy. In order to find out what the State Department should do, or when we thought they should be involved, we would get into one of these limousines that had the gooseneck lamp in the back, as an indication that you were White House. We would drive down to the State Department and have some kind of meeting and pull the State Department officers in, But, actually, we were making policy in the White House. The department seemed a long way away.

Q: Who was Johnson's Vietnam advisor?

GETSINGER: Bob Comer. Bob Comer was my boss.

Q: How did he operate?

GETSINGER: Very individually, and very personally, but we would constantly call these meetings and I was the note taker, and we would bring in Bill Colby from the agency, some of the generals from the Pentagon. We would sit there and try to figure out where we were. Then, we, in Bob Comer's office, would prepare a message to the president about how things were going in Vietnam. You would take the body count and put that in, and the various programs that we were trying to bring. You would send the word over to Lyndon. It was usually pretty optimistic, because it was possible, if you looked at where we were going in Vietnam, to find reason for optimism. Perhaps we were wrong in using the body count as an indication because the Vietnamese were perfectly prepared to give us as many bodies as we needed. But, they knew what they wanted and they were prepared to sacrifice everybody to get it. That was possibly a falsehood. But, if you looked at the military operations, we would categorize them and catalogue them, and send them over to the president, it seemed things went very well, especially because of this Tet Offensive and this was supposed to be the great rising of the people of Vietnam.

Q: This would be January, February 1968?

GETSINGER: Yes. That didn't work.

Q: You were there during the Tet Offensive?

GETSINGER: No, I was not. But, I mean that was an indication of...

Q: Did we have much of a line on, almost this revolving door of generals who followed the assassination of Diem in early November of 1963? By the time you took over, had Thieu established his presidency?

GETSINGER: Yes, that's right. I believe it was Thieu who was in at that time. Stu, to be more accurate, I was more of a clerical type. I took notes. I had experience as a desk officer. I helped to prepare reports for the president. I was not in a policy making position, but I was in the position to feel that things were not going as well with the public, as we were telling the president. Let's say, the media was losing the war while we were

winning the war in our reports to the president. I was conscience of that conflict. The president was, of course, wearing out at that point. One day he decided that we needed a little pepping up. This was only a six-month assignment. That is enough in that powerhouse atmosphere. But, he decided we needed to be congratulated, Bob Comer's gang. So, he asked us to come over and sit with him for a minute. We went over and we were ushered into the cabinet room. Because I knew the president was going to come in in a minute, I wanted to be very close to him, so I managed to work my way into the vice president's chair. The door opened and Lyndon came in, and said, "I am so proud of you all. You all are doing a fine job. I think you all have been working too hard. It's Sunday afternoon, I want you to take the evening off, and then come back to work tomorrow."

Q: You're saying that during this period that you were in the White House, there was a feeling of confidence that things were moving.

GETSINGER: Oh, absolutely. We would get these reports in the field, and the reports were not about military defeats at all. It just seemed that if we kept putting in enough troops and kept pushing it along, victory was just around the corner. But that was beauty and the beast. I left the White House. They gave me a rest and sent me to the Department of Commerce. I was detached and sent to Commerce as a Foreign Service officer, to sit in in the office that determines which Foreign Service officers are going to go overseas as commercial officers. That was my job, and I was well qualified for it.

Q: You did that from when to when?

GETSINGER: That was from 1965 to 1966.

Q: Was there pressure from the Department of Commerce to take over the commercial side, at that point?

GETSINGER: Yes, there always has been. You look at how other countries do it. The Brits have a professional, commercial service that is kind of separate from their Foreign Service. There was a continuing effort, of course, to make us turn around and do it that way. My feeling on this is that it is easier to take a Foreign Service officer and teach him commercial skills, and give him the capability of operating in an embassy environment, than to take a businessman and teach him how to use commercial skills and work in an embassy environment.

Q: I think so too.

GETSINGER: I think it was a mistake to turn it over to a commercial service. I don't think it has worked that well. I have been overseas a lot since then, and I don't find them working that well.

Q: By 1966, whither?

GETSINGER: Well, in 1966, I was in this job. I could determine which foreign

assignments for a commercial officer would be a good one to have. So, I chose Turkey. It was an excellent assignment. I really enjoyed it, and the Turks were great people to work with.

Q: You were in Turkey from 1966 to?

GETSINGER: 1966 to 1970.

Q: Where, in Ankara?

GETSINGER: Ankara, yes. The commercial attaché was in Ankara and there was an assistant commercial attache down in Istanbul. So, I spent a lot of time running back and forth for training. The Turks were just great to work with. The interesting thing is that here is a developing country. A commercial officer or any embassy officer who goes into a developing country is working in a different environment than he is if he goes to embassy Paris. I think the developing countries have special problems, requiring special skills. I would think that someplace, and it may be here, we would train Foreign Service officers that are going to developing countries, into understanding what the experience will be. In almost every case, they will be working with an AID mission. You should understand what an AID mission does, how they get to the point where they do, how they spend their money, and how you take your commercial capability in the embassy and attach it to what AID is trying to do. You both are working in the same direction, but you are bringing the American business community into the AID effort, and making them work together. So, what I had to learn in Turkey was how to work with an AID mission. Since we now have the foreign commercial service, if they are going to be assigned to a country where there is an AID mission, they should spend some time in Washington, learning how to work with an AID program, and how to make the AID program work, alongside the foreign commercial program.

Q: Let's take Turkey during the 1966 to 1970 period. Where did the connection with AID programs for the commercial service?

GETSINGER: They had a very large AID program. The country team would get together and the AID representatives would be there with the commercial officer. At first, I didn't quite know how to fit what I was doing into what they were doing. It was kind of a surprise to me. So, then I shifted my operation. I would sit in on the AID staff meetings, before we got to the country team level. That was the way to operate. Of course, the commercial officer, the commercial attache, in the embassy, had to work hand and glove with the American Chamber of Commerce. That was your identity. That was the way you got things done because you were working for them. You were really their boy, in a very real sense.

Q: What were prospects for trade with Turkey, during this period?

GETSINGER: They were very good and they were coming along at a very good rate. In fact, they had established a new development agency in Turkey, headed by a gentleman

by the name of Turgut Ozal. Turgut Ozal was available to the commercial attache at the embassy. So, I could take people like Steve Bechtel over there to meet with Turgut Ozal. Later, Turgut Ozal became the prime minister of Turkey.

Q: What was the political situation as it impinged on the commercial situation in Turkey in the 1966 to 1970-period?

GETSINGER: The political situation was a little difficult because the Turkish government was constantly shifting. It wasn't like it had been in Taiwan, like my experience there, and like my experience would be later in Korea. It was a difficult situation because there were several parties that were competing, more like the situation that I faced in Italy, when I was working on economic affairs. There was a constant change of government. Things were a little disturbed. There were minorities in Turkey who were causing trouble. I remember at the cocktail parties that we would go to, in various embassies around, you would get out on the balcony, because it was warm in Turkey and you would be sitting around with your cocktails and kind of wait for the explosion of the next bomb that would be going off down in Ankara. So, it was an upset.

Q: Was the Turkish economy receptive of American products, business?

GETSINGER: Very much so. I think the sense that we had an economic relationship was doubly reinforced by the fact that we had this military relationship. We had these important bases in Turkey. There was no getting around from the fact that if we were going to fight together, we would trade together. So, Turkey was the key to our whole situation in the Middle East, outside of our direct relationship with Israel.

Q: Did Israel have any impact? I mean, in some parts of the Middle East, you can't do anything without Israel being thrown in your face.

GETSINGER: Yes, and the Turks, who are very wise about their relationships with our countries, did maintain a good relationship with Israel as well as with the other Arab natives. Turkey had so many borders, including one with Russia. The Turks liked the Americans, but they were concerned about our relationship with Cyprus. While I was there, there was another Cyprus crisis. The Turks had gone from taking the American sailors, if they came through the Bosporus and carrying them around on their shoulders, to them taking the Americans and throwing them into the Bosporus, because they were upset. We said to the Turks, "Look, we are your friends, and we are friends with the Greeks." The Turks would say, "That's impossible."

Q: Who was the ambassador, or ambassadors?

GETSINGER: I had three. I had Harch, Handley, and Comer. Paca Harch spoke Turkish. Turkish is a difficult language. He was a marvelous ambassador because he spoke Turkish. The Turks respected him. He could discuss their problems with them in Turkish. You can't beat that, if you have to do an ambassadorial job. I think it's so important to have a professional Foreign Service ambassador who is so good to work for in that

situation.

Q: Then he was followed by whom?

GETSINGER: He was followed by Bill Handley, who didn't last very long. He had trouble with his wife, or something. That didn't work. Then, it was Bob Comer.

Q: Comer had the reputation of... I have heard him called "the blow torch." He was a very active person. How did he work as an ambassador?

GETSINGER: It's interesting, it doesn't happen very often. I worked for Comer and his wife, as his special assistant. Here he came along to be my ambassador in Turkey. I respected him very much. He was a clear thinker, a hard driver, not a diplomat. I think that is lacking a quality you should have, if you are going to be totally successful at that.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from the people at the embassy, about the Soviet threat, the 1966 to 1970 period? Was there much concern?

GETSINGER: I really was not concerned with that very much. My job was so much involved with helping the Turks develop, and bringing American investment in and it was working very well. The Turks were easy to work with, because they respected us, not like other countries. You could never get close to the Italians.

Q: Did you have any contact with Greek diplomats, at all, during this time?

GETSINGER: No, I didn't. Turkey was our favorite post. I think Foreign Service officers have two favorite posts. One is a post where they can work most effectively, and the other is the post where the ambience, the environment, was so perfect for their family life. Turkey was it. It's a beautiful country, and it's full of ruins, and good cooking, and marvelous wines. It's a great place for a Foreign Service family.

Q: Did you find that working out of Ankara with Istanbul, which has always been known as the commercial center, was where the real action was? Or was there much action?

GETSINGER: That is well said. Certainly, most of the economic and commercial action was in Istanbul. With the government in Ankara, they moved the government up into this flat Anatolian plateau, which was about equal distance from all of the oceans and seas that surround Turkey, because they wanted to get it away from the influences of Istanbul. I spent a lot of my time moving back and forth from Ankara to Istanbul. But, the commercial attache and the embassy had to be where the government was. The commercial attache had to be there too. Much of my time was spent, ideally, with the economic development officers.

Q: This might be a good place to stop, 1970. Where did you go in 1970?

GETSINGER: I went over to Korea.

Q: Okay, well then, we will pick it up, in 1970 in Korea.

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Today is the 29th of March 2000. Norm, you were in Korea from 1970 to when?

GETSINGER: Actually, I have a gap here, and I have to recheck. But, I have me down in Korea from 1972 to 1974. I think I was in Turkey longer. I was there through three ambassadors.

Q: So, we'll say 1972 to 1974. What was your job in Korea?

GETSINGER: I was the commercial counselor. I was very proud that I had chosen the commercial track. Rising through the Foreign Service to be the commercial counselor in Korea was a wonderful job for me, and I was working with Phil Habib as my ambassador.

Q: What was the situation like in Korea, when you arrived there in 1972?

GETSINGER: Of course, we had Korea as a client country. We had come in and we had saved them from the communists, and rolled them back to the 57th parallel. The Koreans were duly grateful. So, it was our job to try and build back Korea, economically, politically, socially. It was a terribly broken country. It was broken like very few countries have been. As you remember, the Korean war went down to the Yusen perimeters, and back, and over to Seoul, and then back to Seoul, and back again. It was all busted up. We were going to put it back together. We had learned how to do this pretty well, because we had done some of this in Taiwan. I happened to be in Taiwan when we were putting Taiwan back together. Actually, what we were doing is helping to build the Korean tiger. We did it very well.

Q: Well, when you got to Korea in 1972, how were relations at that time? How were relations at that time? Any problems?

GETSINGER: With us?

Q: Yes.

GETSINGER: Well, in Taiwan it was very much like this. Taiwan and Korea were much the same in that the embassy was really responsible for running the country. An interesting indication of that was that the embassy compound, an embassy building was attached to the central government building by the same switchboard. I could pick up the telephone on my desk and dial an extension and get the Minister of Economic Affairs. I think there are very few Foreign Service posts where the government and the embassy are on the same switchboard.

Q: How is Phil Habib as an ambassador and what was his interest in Commercial Affairs?

GETSINGER: As you well know and certainly it has come up in other interviews, he was one of the finest ambassadors we ever had. He was a crusty, outspoken guy but he was very good for commercial work. If I had a businessman and I called up the ambassador's secretary and told him I wanted to get this man in there, because he would make a good investment, I never had any problems. Phil took me with him to view various installations around the island. It was another indication to me of the fact that the commercial work and the work of the embassy have to be so closely coordinated. I don't know how anybody who wasn't the Foreign Service officer could have that close connection with his ambassador. I'm saying that now I don't think the Foreign Commercial Service, working out of the Department of Commerce, can work that way.

Q: Were there any major investments that you worked on that worked or didn't work, while you were there?

GETSINGER: I can't think of any that didn't work because by that time American companies were doing their homework pretty well. I did have some drop-ins. Commercial officers have to handle those people who just dropped into my office and said that they happened to be passing through the country and they thought they would find out what the opportunities were for American business here. Some of those went away. No major American firms had any difficulty, because we could fix the problem. That was how good our influence was there.

Q: What was your impression of the American Chamber of Commerce at the time?

GETSINGER: It was very good. It was not as strong as I wanted. I formed a U.S./Korean business council, which was a kind of joint Chamber of Commerce. One of the things we did was to organize retreats whereby American businessmen, who were into Korea and in for a long haul, would go away with Korean businessmen at the top rank and they would spend a weekend at some hot spring in Korea. The agenda would be first, the Americans speaking about what they don't like about dealing with Koreans. Then, the Koreans would come and say what their problem is in dealing with Americans. At the end of the weekend, we would do a little report. We would come a long way to bridging even those personal differences.

Q: How was the Park Chung Hee rule, from your perspective?

GETSINGER: We could see that we were working with a military dictatorship just as we could see we were doing this in Taiwan, but it was what we had to work with. Our job, even then, was to build up a strong country to stand with us in the struggle with world communists was a motivating factor. They were bastards in a way, but they were our bastards. So, we had to work with them. It did work to the extent we built the economy, just as we did in Taiwan.

Q: Were you watching an individual's net worth? Some countries say it is $100.00, and others its $2,000 or something.

GETSINGER: There were large differences in Korea much more so than Taiwan. Taiwan has one of the most even income distribution levels in Asia, probably the most even, but Korea not quite so. Korea had this concept of the old families. They had been there in Korea forever, whereas in Taiwan, you had this kind of conflict between the mainland boys who came in and the Taiwanese who were there. But, it was interesting, because you were dealing with the Koreans, you were dealing with only one group. This in contrast to my Taiwan experience, where you were dealing with two groups. You had to know whether you were talking to a Taiwanese or a mainlander. But, the Koreans were a divided nation, but not separated. Most of the successful Korean businessmen that I dealt with had been up in the north, where the industry had been. As a result of the Korean War, they were forced to go down into South Korea, which was agriculture, and build up their industry there.

Q: If you were talking, at that time, to an American businessman, getting ready to deal with the Koreans, what would you tell them about the Koreans?

GETSINGER: I would tell them that you will find perhaps nowhere else in Asia, a group of individuals who are eager to go the whole way toward working with you. The one thing the Koreans feared most was that the Japanese would come back in, because the Japanese had such a strong economy, and Korea was next door. So, they would come to the American businessmen and say, "I want you. I don't want your Japanese."

Q: How about corruption, payoffs?

GETSINGER: There was, of course. In Asia, it's a tradition. Korea was not so bad, as say the Philippines. It was on a par, probably a little bit more corruption than Taiwan. But, there was a lot. The way to do it, of course, you being an American businessman, was to have your Korean partner handle this side of the problem. You don't have to know where all the money goes.

Q: Was there the feeling that an American would come to you and say let the Korean take care of it because the government officials needed to be paid off, were they the people you had to deal with?

GETSINGER: At every level, from the customs official on up to the guy who provides the license or who signs off on the deal up above.

Q: How about... I can't remember the name but, it's something like Chao Ball, which were business conglomerates. Could you describe how they worked and their importance at that time?

GETSINGER: They were so important that you could have, and the ambassador sometimes did, a dozen of these people over. You had a major part of the Korean

economy sitting around your table. When the ambassador wanted to press on about how things were going, that is exactly what he would do.

Q: Was there concern over Korean business practices, the American market at that time?

GETSINGER: You mean Korean businesses in America?

Q: Yes.

GETSINGER: No, at the time I was there, they were just getting started in coming toward the American market, but you could see them coming. They were beautifully organized. They did the same thing that they did in Taiwan. They set up industrial parks and technical centers. They were training all of their engineers in the technologies necessary to come along to the then dawning information age, which they now are an important feature of.

Q: One of the things I noticed with the Koreans was that, particularly at middle management, the Korean middle manager would be told to go get this contract or collect some money or something. He was in deep trouble if he didn't do it, so it meant the Koreans were, from an American business point of view, terribly aggressive about things. They wouldn't take no for an answer.

GETSINGER: Yes. This is the amazing thing about the Koreans over the other businessmen in East Asia, or the Filipinos. The Koreans are direct- (end of tape)

Because corruption was gift giving and the individual relationship was so important, it was hard for me, as the Commercial Officer, to fend off little presents that kept flooding into me. They would be handed to me in envelopes with cash in them. There would be deliveries to this little house I was living in. There were ladies who were presented to me. They could not understand where I had the influence, and I could help them. They did get to where they wanted to go, and why couldn't I, just between friends, accept the gifts. So, I kept busy in keeping track of what I was getting so that I could be sure that the record was clear.

Q: I spent three years as consul general. So, you can imagine. We had visas to give out. Young ladies would end up in my office for some reason.

Was there much of a Korean business community in the United States at this time?

GETSINGER: Yes, the Koreans were very conscience of trade balance. When they saw that Taiwan had sent a purchasing mission to the United States, they came to me and said, "We want to organize the purchasing mission." They went over and ended up signing a whole bunch of contracts to try and even out the imbalance which was definitely going to arrive. One thing I should say is... When were you in Korea?

Q: I was there from 1976 to 1979.

GETSINGER: Oh, later. The American military presence was so prevalent in Korea that you or anybody working in the embassy was really working in and through and around a military umbrella. We, in a sense, represented the occupation of Korea. But, it was good for Foreign Service officers to be there with this kind of assistance because we had a marvelous military hospital. We had schools, bowling alleys, golf courses, everything. But, it was evident that this heavy a U.S. military presence grated on the Koreans, especially the students, who didn't like to see these GIs going around with their girls. I am amazed it has continued, Stu, as it has to this day, with as little difficulty as there has been.

Q: We have had problems, but basically, we can thank our friends to the north for that. Every thinking Korean knows that within 30 miles, there were 50 well-armed divisions, particularly in those days. Today those divisions are beginning to rust and it caused a lot of damage.

GETSINGER: When we were there, they were digging these tunnels.

Q: In those days, there was a real threat.

GETSINGER: When business was finished and businessmen wanted to go up to the DMC, we would go out there. We would look through the binoculars and see the North Koreans looking through their binoculars, down into our binoculars. But, you look at that wasteland out there and think about what that peninsula would have been like if the South Koreans had lost the war. We would all be one horrible hermit kingdom.

Q: There was a phenomenon that really is true in a lot of countries, where college students were in a sort of permanent state of rebellion. But, each year, their leaders of the rebellion would move into industry, and get out of the other side of the barricades with no difficulty whatsoever.

GETSINGER: We, of course, are trapped in the embassy. We can't spend time testing the temperature of the student movement, and we can't hob knob with the students. They were, thank goodness, a force that eventually brought about a change in the policy there.

Q: You were there during the Nixon administration. One of his strengths was in the southern American states, which in those days were full of textile industry. Did the textiles ring heavily with you?

GETSINGER: Very much. It was easy to see why the Koreans could beat everybody else in the textile market or into the semiconductor market, or anything that they went into. You would go into a Korean factory, (I'm speaking of the semiconductor factory) you would see these great lines of girls lined up at their machines. The intensity with which they attacked their work made you almost feel that you were in a temple, where people were worshiping. They were worshiping at their machines, because this was their life, and they were completely devoted to it.

Q: I think at one time, around this time, it was almost a 54-hour work week.

GETSINGER: Then, they would go home to their dormitory, after having a company meal.

Q: Were the American firms or the embassy concerned about working conditions?

GETSINGER: Sure, we were, but we had to, of course, approach it gradually. We had the work in the pocket of the Koreans, who were our partners.

Q: Were the American firms, or you all, talking to the economic leaders and telling them that for the future, these working conditions really should be made better?

GETSINGER: We did. Of course, we tried. That was one of the things that came up for discussion when we had these retreats when the Americans would sit down with the Koreans, and we would say, "Your labor standards are so low." They would say, "Well, we are a broken country that is coming back from a terrible war. We have to do what we have to do in order to lift ourselves."

Q: Were you getting the feeling, as I did when I came there three or four years later, that the Koreans were on a winning streak, as far as economic? It was very apparent, by the time I was there, 1976 to 1979, that the standard of living was going up all the time. Park Chung Hee had made some right decisions. He had not starved the farmers in order to feed the city, but was bringing the farmers up at the same rate as the city factory workers. There was a great feeling that they were on their way.

GETSINGER: Absolutely. Citizens of the country and most of the people we were dealing with have been part of the Korean War, inevitably. They had been refugees. They had seen their cities destroyed and certainly they were coming back. They had this determination, I think, that only comes from having suffered as badly as they did.

Q: By the time you were there, were you noticing an impact of Koreans who had gone to the United States, gotten graduate degrees and come back, particularly in technical fields, but in economic fields? Was that apparent at that time?

GETSINGER: Yes, it was. Not as much as Taiwan, but certainly a strong presence there.

Q: Speaking about the government and the business leaders, were they looking at Taiwan, going over there and using Taiwan as a model, thinking they were a generation ahead of them, or something like that?

GETSINGER: I didn't detect any of that. I have a feeling that when you look at the geographical location, there is Japan in between, and the Koreans who have had so many of the problems with the Japanese, this was their concern. That it was hard for them to think beyond that group of Japanese islands, down into where Taiwan was. Chiang

Kai-shek was willing to send troops up to fight in the Korean War. Of course, we had to cancel that. We told them to stay home and take care of the boys on the other side of the street.

Q: How much of a threat were the North Koreans felt to be at the time you were there?

GETSINGER: I think everybody felt the threat who made that little trip from Seoul up to the DMZ, and who looked around them at the way the ruins were still visible, and they were building on them. It was the presence of the American troops over there that gave them the reassurance. Do you remember, I think, it was Jimmy Carter, who at one point, had talked about thinning out our troops?

Q: He was talking about withdrawing the second division. In fact, I was there when he came in. It scared the life out of everybody, including us.

GETSINGER: The Japanese, and Taiwan, and everybody else.

Q: Was Park Chung Hee a presence in commercial activities, promoting/dealing, or was he not interested?

GETSINGER: He was active only on the very big deals. Then, you got the idea from the Minister of Finance Service, Minister of Economic Affairs, that this would require the troops of the blue house. The blue house was at the end of the street, there. It would be kicked up that high, but it had to be a big deal.

Q: There were two major incidents that happened, but I'm not sure when. One was the Pueblo capture. Did that happen during your time?

GETSINGER: That was after.

Q: That was after?

GETSINGER: I think so.

Q: The attack on the blue house was later?

GETSINGER: That's later.

Q: That's later too.

GETSINGER: Would you like to move down to Hong Kong?

Q: So, in 1974, I guess, you moved to Hong Kong?

GETSINGER: Yes, to go down to be Deputy to Chuck Cross. I was the deputy principal officer. It's hard for me to explain to people who don't know the Foreign Service means

that you are kind of the deputy counsel general.

Q: You were there from when to when?

GETSINGER: My little chart here says 1974 to 1976. A very, very interesting period.

Q: What was the situation in Hong Kong at that time? What were you up to?

GETSINGER: When I was there, we credited Hong Kong for being the fifth or the sixth largest Foreign Service post. It was a consulate general, but it was huge. It was that way because this was where we were learning about China, preparing to go into China, where all of our intelligence is on China. We had all the regional offices there: the DEA had an office, there was an Ex-Im Bank office; every kind of an office. It was a difficult thing for Chuck and I to really feel that we had our hands on everything, and this happens quite often in the Foreign Service. You can't do that. You are too thinly staffed to do it. There really were the two of us, and we were running a consulate general that had all these other agencies in it, as part of it, and yet we had very little opportunity to oversee on what was happening with them; big USIS, big everything. I almost felt, and I think we talked about it from time to time, that we really needed another person there, another deputy who is in charge of the overall responsibility of coordinating all the agencies that were working there. It was all that we could do to know what was going on in a very large consulate general. Of course, we had a large, a huge CIA station there which we had to keep track of. This was, at that time, because we had the liaison office up in Beijing; George Bush was up there as the liaison office there. He was the guy, we didn't recognize China, but we had the Nixon breakthroughs, so we had this office up there at the preliminary kind of embassy. But, what we had really found out was that the way to find out what was going on in China, was to do it through Hong Kong, and not through Taiwan. For a long time, we thought that Taiwan, with its mainland connections, would be an intelligence gathering source. It didn't work, because the people we would send over to the mainland would be captured. They were quite alert for it. But, there was such a movement of individuals and goods across the border, between Hong Kong and China. Do you remember the Brits had these fences and these perimeter guards, and so forth, but nevertheless hundreds, thousands of Chinese would come over all the time? They would swim across through Deep Water Bay, through the sharks, and so forth. The way we knew what was going on in China was through our connections with the British, and the very open border of Hong Kong to China. So, almost everything that was published in China, found its way across that border. Individuals would bring it over, and they knew the Americans would buy it. So, all of the written information, everything that we could collect in the way of manuals and books and party director's source came through Hong Kong and our big intelligence station. They were given a preliminary look over, and then this huge pipeline of material would go back to Washington for the analysts to work on.

We were really the China watchers. We were a consulate general in Hong Kong, and we had Hong Kong trade and economic relations with the U.S., but we really were the gate to China. That was very much illustrated to me. One time, Chuck was away and I was running the consulate general. George Bush was coming back from Beijing to take over

his job as Central Intelligence Agency director. So, my wife and I took the consulate general car and went down to the border at Lo Wu. At that time, there was a single bridge across the border. The train stopped at that side, and the train started again on this side of the Hong Kong/Chinese border. So George Bush came down to the border and left his vehicle. I walked across the bridge with my wife to greet them and to carry their bags, leaving the Chinese officers there, and picking up the British over there. We got into the consulate car to come back to town. I thought, "Now, George Bush has been up there in Beijing, for a year, a year and three quarters." He must have some kind of notion about what is going on in China. So, I was delighted at the opportunity to have him imprisoned in the back seat of the car, so I could pick his brains. But he didn't really know what was going on in China. It's easy to understand, in a way, because of course, at that time, our relationship being what it was, he was not allowed, I think more than a quarter of a mile, outside the city wall of Beijing. Although he had title of "ambassador," we still had no diplomatic relations. His contacts with the Chinese government were very limited. Realizing this, of course, he was going to go back to Washington, after his period in Washington. He knew he would be asked by the Congress, the White House, about what was going on in China. So, we took George Bush and took him to the tank. That is that internal service room that you have to keep the intelligence from being monitored electronically. We briefed him for hours on the situation in China. Then we gave him a little time to go up and do some yachting around Hong Kong. When he went back to Washington, he was pretty well informed on China, but he learned it all from us.

Q: One of the things that one hears is that our people, for so long, (and maybe it still pertains), are sort of trapped in Beijing. They really can't get out and about, particularly in the early days.

GETSINGER: It gradually, and gradually got better. By the time I got to my second year in Hong Kong, I was sent up to the office in Beijing, on a trip just to have a look see. I was coming back to China, after 33 years away. I had been in China with the United Nations, from 1946 to 1948. There I was going back, and it was in the height of the cultural revolution. I could see how badly off China was. It didn't look like it had improved, if anything, it had gotten worse in the 33 years since I left. I remember I was standing with Harry Phare in his apartment in Beijing. There was a worksite where the communists were building a new building. The workers would come in in the morning and they would check around to make sure they weren't being observed. Then, they would stack their tools in the corner and drink tea all day, until it was time to quit and go home. On the railroad platforms, I saw drunkenness. Public drunkenness was something you were not supposed to see in communist China. But, again, it was the height of the Cultural Revolution and things were just going to pot in China.

Q: What about Vietnam? The war ended in Vietnam while you were there.

GETSINGER: While I was there, when we talked about Vietnam, the essential problem were the boat people. They were coming up in every kind of rickety thing, up to Hong Kong. The Brits would give us a chance to interview them. They would have temporary camps for them. The Vietnamese would be asked "If you could go to any country as a

refuge, where would you like to go?" Of course, France was number one. The U.S. was second. At the bottom of the list was Japan. Here, the wealthiest country in Asia, and none of them wanted to go.

Q: It's not only that, but the Japanese, even today, don't accept them. Korea doesn't either. Those are two countries that don't accept outsiders.

GETSINGER: Those who do get there are very unhappy.

Q: What was our role? Were we, in the consulate general, pressing the British on the boat people?

GETSINGER: Yes. They, of course, would look to us and say, "You're the country that is supposed to take these people, so why don't you do it?" I remember one time, Stu, the Brits had decided that they had had enough. They said that all of their refugee camps were full and they couldn't take anymore. There was this rusty old Panamanian freighter that had picked up a bunch of boat people. It was trying to come into Hong Kong and drop them off. The Hong Kong people said, "No, you stay out there." So, they put them outside the territorial limits of Hong Kong. Well, our job was to interview these people to see if we could possibly fit them into the U.S. refugee program. So, they told me I had to go out to the ship so they put me into a British Air Force chopper. We flew out beyond the territorial waters of Hong Kong. They lowered me from the chopper down onto the deck of this freighter, which was pitching in the seas there. Sometimes, as I was going down, the boat would be underneath me and sometimes it wasn't even there. This is one of the cases where I thought later that if I had known, as a Foreign Service officer, knowing what my duty is have said, "No, I don't think I should really do that."

Q: Yes, but there you are. Well, were we responding pretty well at that time?

GETSINGER: We really were. There was always a question about whether we were being too responsive, and the Brits would wonder whether they were being too responsive. It seemed that this great flotilla of boat people was heading up toward Hong Kong because the bamboo grapevine was saying that this is where it can happen. You land in Hong Kong, and then the Americans take you.

Q: What was your impression of the staffing, particularly the China watching staff of the consulate general?

GETSINGER: It was excellent. I must say that the Central Intelligence Agency group was just terrific there. We really were beginning to get some understanding of what was going on, as best you can because, of course, the big decisions are all made by a bunch of old guys up there in Beijing.

Q: Was the cultural revolution on?

GETSINGER: Yes.

Q: Was this having an effect on refugees out of China?

GETSINGER: Very much so. Every now and then, the Brits would try to close the gates and double their guard, but there was no way of keeping that many people who wanted to come in from getting in. It was true. They would swim through the shark infested waters to get across some of those bays, down into the territory. I had two big jobs in the consulate general, which were very interesting. One was to be the liaison with the last officers of the last British empire post. I was the liaison between the American embassy and the Hong Kong/British authorities. They were a marvelous group, Stu. It almost looked as if this great British empire had shrunk down to the point where they only had the few, the very best left, and they were in Hong Kong. They were a great bunch and they were doing a marvelous job. At that time, they were trying to control the Chinese, up to the corruption. There was this commission against corruption, and they were the busiest British office in town, but they did a good job. They kept corruption down in Hong Kong to a minimum, which shows it can be done, even with a mass of Chinese like that.

Q: What were you getting from all the people who were looking at China, before that time, 1974 to 1976, whither mainland China?

GETSINGER: Actually, in the consulate general we were working very closely with the biggest American Chamber of Commerce in the world, by far. We had every element of the American business community in Hong Kong in spades. When we had a meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce, it was a mass meeting. All the banks were there, the insurance companies, all the major manufacturing companies who had an idea that they were going to find some kind of a lodgement in the mainland. Of course, we were able to give them some information, but they were very wisely working with the Hong Kong Chinese, because, of course, they had very little opportunity to connect with mainland Chinese. Hong Kong Chinese were preparing to go in. As you know, they are still one of the principal investors in China.

Q: Did you have the feeling that economic interests were shifting away from Taiwan and moving toward China?

GETSINGER: We had an annual battle at that time between the Chamber of Commerce in Taipei and the Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong. We had major investments in Taiwan, which were much larger than anything we have in China. Our trade with Taiwan was so much bigger than our trade with Hong Kong. You were working always on expectations, aspirations and hope about what the business connections were. Of course, there was that huge market there, so they were all poised and ready to go in. The Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong back in Washington was asked to go easy on the mainland, to work on developing that economic relations. The Chamber of Commerce in Taipei would say, "Hey, let's be careful. At least we have the advantage that we have in Taiwan, and let's not spoil that." The investments were going very well in Taiwan. In fact, the last time I looked, even today, there are more U.S. exports going to Taiwan. All of

these years after China's opening, there is more going to Taiwan than there are to Hong Kong. In other words, there are more American jobs, depending on our trade with Taiwan and with China. That is not brought up very often.

Q: No, it's not at all. Did the switch over from Nixon to Ford make any particular difference in our policy in that area that you saw?

GETSINGER: I didn't see that. We had our noses to the ground over there. We were working on trying to develop that communication with the mainland. One thing that I should bring up is being stationed in Hong Kong, where all that activity takes place and where all of us have the bigger jobs than we can possibly handle, so we rest our heads at night, we can't say, "We did what we should have done." There was always that much more that you couldn't handle. It's a small island and the intensity of activity begins to wear you down. It was hard in that respect. Not only was the work of the office difficult and all consuming, but the social life was tremendous because the Chinese were determined in that respect. I found as the deputy that it would be a good idea if I could join a club. That was one way you could get it. Now, the consul general could join any club in Hong Kong. They were recreational clubs. There was the yacht club, this club and that club, the tennis club. But there were no slots for the deputy. The only club that had a slot for the deputy consul general, or deputy principal officer was the club at the Stanley prison. The Stanley prison had an officer's club; these were the British officers in the prison. Fortunately, that turned out to be one of the best clubs on the island. They had a grass tennis court. The Brits loved to play tennis on grass. They would have the prisoners out in the morning with little sticks that would indicate the heights of the grass. They would be down on their knees cutting each blade of grass, so by the time we played tennis, everything would be perfect. It was really a great club. It had one of the finest beaches in Hong Kong, and of course, bowling on the green, and pink gins at sunset. That part of it was good. I had a marvelous big house and would give cocktail parties for 150. I had a great staff. We found, as many Foreign Service officers do find, that having a great staff can create a lot of problems. We had a gardener, and a number one boy, an assistant number one boy, and a cook, and an amah. It was just a great staff; and we had a driver. But, they would get ill or they would have problems, and we would have their problems too. So, having a big staff is not the best way to get lots of free time.

Q: Well, in 1976, where did you go?

GETSINGER: In 1976, I was nearing retirement age. I took advantage of the fact that my wife, who had acrophobia, which is a fear of flying. Maybe I mentioned that every time we went home on home leave, the health people in the Department of State would examine her to see if she had acrophobia. Of course, there is no way you can tell. So, they would have to decide that she probably does. So, we were going home by rail service. I arranged the longest possible rail journey, which was from Hong Kong to London. It took us three weeks. We went in through China, through outer Mongolia and joined the far eastern railroad of Russia, and went all the way across Russia, and then up through the low countries, into England, and back on the QE II. That was a long trip home. But, that is one of the advantages of the Foreign Service, or it was.

Q: It was.

GETSINGER: I had four sons and the education that they had on that trip, going in through the bamboo curtain, and coming out through the iron curtain, and realizing all of the land mass of China and Russia. It was a remarkable trip. That was our final trip. After I left the Foreign Service...

Q: You retired in 1976?

GETSINGER: 1978. I did various things in the department. I worked in an industry office in USIS and so forth, waiting for the clock to tick down. But, I was very fortunate, and when I left the Foreign Service, to go to work for the U.S. Council for US/China trade, National Council for U.S./China Trade. So, I was giving back to the U.S. and its attempt to establish relations with China, some of the experience that I had acquired. I speak Chinese, which I learned. So, I was the director of Exporter Services, for the National Council for U.S./China trade for two years plus. In that time, I took some of the first business delegations to China. I received the first official Chinese delegations from China, who were looking at the U.S. business connections. So, I was finally doing something that I had always wanted to do, building economic bridges between the U.S. and China. It was all because the Foreign Service had given me the background and an opportunity. It was great.

Q: What was your impression of developments in China, particularly commercial developments that you were working on in this period, from 1978 on?

GETSINGER: China very much wanted and had to have, if it were going to modernize American technology. They made it very difficult because they wanted, not only to have it to use it, but to learn it and use it themselves. American companies, even today, after all these years, are finding it very difficult to get their foothold in China. The regulations change all the time. You never know for sure that the guy you were talking to is the guy that you are going to finally deal with. You sit down at a table with five Chinese individuals, and you are talking to four guys, but the guy, the fifth gentleman on the side, who doesn't say anything, is probably going to say yes or no to your proposition. It is very, very difficult to do business in China. If I were to, as I sometimes do, give advice to businessmen, I would say that their best hope is to go over to Taiwan and pick up a Chinese partner there; then those two go together to China. The Chinese know how to work in that environment. There are now something like 20 billion dollars worth of Taiwan factories that are going great guns. They are doing better than the American companies, making money. I really think in the long run, Stu, that although they will pay for it, and they will get it, they will take U.S. technology and U.S. business acumen to help them get going. But, in the long run, China intends that the great Chinese market is going to belong to the Chinese, and perhaps a large portion of it to the Taiwanese, and the Hong Kong, and the Singapore east.

Q: Were you finding yourself, both in and out of government, working in competition with

the Japanese?

GETSINGER: Yes, very much so. I think we always had problems making Americans realize that they had a simple ethnic advantage because the Chinese don't like the Japanese, and the Koreans don't like the Japanese. The Taiwanese like the Japanese. But they are the only ones in East Asia.

Q: We're going back to the history as you talked about before. Well, is there anything else we should cover, do you think?

GETSINGER: No, when I go through these things... which has been a marvelous opportunity. My wife has been after me to write up my Foreign Service background for my kids and grandchildren, of which there are now five. Because I've had to think things through and work with you, I look at these things and have decided that now I am now in a position to sit down and spend... Maybe I'll have to go on an around the world cruise with her.

Q: I think that sounds like a long train ride, maybe.

GETSINGER: But, it would be just great to get it down.

Q: Well, all right, well I want to thank you very much.

End of interview