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

AMBASSADOR DENNIS HAYS

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Hays]

Q: When did you actually enter the Foreign Service?

HAYS: I entered in September of 1976.

Q: And leading up to 1976, how did you come to be interested in the Foreign Service? Where did you grow up? What were sort of your previous interests before entering?

HAYS: My father was a naval officer so I moved around every couple of years. I think that actually helped me in my Foreign Service career, because it was the norm rather than the exception to uproot oneself and move about. Growing up, I lived mostly on naval bases along the East Coast but also in my teenage years in Japan for a couple of years. I enjoyed the experience greatly of living overseas, picking up a little bit of Japanese, absorbing some of the culture, being able to drink beer at fourteen in the Japanese bars, and things like that. And so it was an exciting aspect that made an impression on me. I had not really ever given it any thought; quite frankly, I knew there were things like ambassadors and embassy people, but it never, to my memory, crossed my mind as to who they might be or that I might be one. I had always assumed I would be in the Navy until my eyes went bad, and I couldn't be a pilot any more. Then I figured I would be a lawyer. My undergraduate years were at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and – I don't know why – at some point during my junior year I went to see someone who had the grand title of Foreign Affairs Adviser or Foreign Service Adviser. I found my way through the musty corridors and got to this office and saw that office hours were Tuesday

from two to four. It was Tuesday about two thirty and, of course, the door was locked, and there was nobody there. So I bounced off that and came back a week later and found the guy, went in and told him I was thinking about being in the Foreign Service. He looked me up and down and said forget it, you'll never make it. You should try something else. If he had known me, I could see how one could get that reaction, but I had literally just walked in the door. I don't know what his connection to the Foreign Service might have been, but I know that he wasn't doing much for the cause at that point. So then I forgot about it again.

I graduated from college. I had to work the summer semester to get my hours to graduate since I had a fairly easy-going junior and senior year. I didn't want to go to law school right away so I took some time off and came back to where my family was, in Washington because my dad was in the Pentagon. I looked for a job to do before starting law school in March. I went through the normal things, took the post office exam, but I wasn't of that trend; I didn't have a chance there. I went to Hecht's and they said, "Well, we have openings in women's lingerie and in drapes, and you probably won't do well in either one of those." So I was having trouble getting a job until as luck would have it, my dad through the Navy had contacts with Congressman Bennett who was the Chairman of the Sea Power Sub-committee at that point. I got a job stuffing envelopes. It started out as a 30-day job, but I ended up being through the next nine months.

That is important though, because I rode the bus from Alexandria into the capital every day, and there was a guy who wore one of those piebald hats and a collegiate-looking jacket with patches on the elbows and everything. We started chatting after a while, and it turned out that he was a USIS (United States Information Service) officer and was taking the bus into the old USIS building at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. And so we would ride together. We hit it off pretty well, and he would tell me these wonderful stories about being in Addis Ababa and Karachi and places that I knew weren't quite the paradises he was depicting them. Nevertheless, he painted a very worldly and exciting picture of the Foreign Service. I told him my story of the Foreign Affairs Adviser, and he shook his head and said, "Well, it wasn't me. It was some other people." He convinced me to take the written exam which I just was able to sign up for in time to make the deadline.

Then I got the results saying I had passed, and my oral was scheduled for the day that law school was supposed to start back in Gainesville. I wasn't quite sure what to do, but I finally thought, well, I'll take it and if it doesn't work out I'll just get on the plane and be a bit late to law school; not the best start, but what the heck? So I did that, I went and took the exam. That was back in the days when you had the good cop, the bad cop and the sort of wise father figure interview. It went pretty well, and fortunately, they asked me questions – one of which I had just had as part of a graduate-level course on America Between the Wars – so I was pretty quick on that. In those days, of course, they told you yes or no on the spot which I think is better in many ways. They told me I had passed, and I made the decision not to get on the plane; I had a reservation for six o'clock that night to fly down to Florida. So there I was.

Q: What year did you take the written exam?

HAYS: That would have been in 1975.

Q: So it was early '76 when you had the oral?

HAYS: Yes, I think it was early March, if I remember correctly.

Q: And then you entered in September; so it went very quickly.

HAYS: Yes, it wasn't standard.

Q: When were you in Japan? You said you were a teenager then. That was in Yokosuka?

HAYS: Yes, and that would have been '67 through '68.

Q: And I guess I would add that your father eventually became an admiral and was Commander of the Pacific Fleet and perhaps other things as well.

HAYS: He was European Commander in London and had a flat on Grosvenor Square and a house out in Wentworth. I was already in the Foreign Service by then and never really got the full advantage of that. He was also in Puerto Rico when I was going to college, although I guess it's not so foreign and but in many ways it is.

Q: You mentioned that you picked up a smattering of Japanese. What other languages had you picked up?

HAYS: Japan was my only foreign language environment. He was transferred to Puerto Rico as I graduated my senior year in high school. I met some friends, but I really didn't have the chance to learn Spanish there. Shortly after I got there I made a mistake of going to the base barbershop and asking for a trim. They gave me one of those Marine high tight things, and I was much too vain to go out of the house for about three weeks after that.

Q: So you came into the A-100 junior officer orientation program in September of 1976. How long did you stay in Washington on that occasion?

HAYS: Well, it was very interesting, because to my knowledge I was the first white male to threaten an equal employment opportunity suit to the Department of State based on my A-100 experience. I'll tell you a little bit about that. When I came in, I was told when I got the phone call that I had qualified on all of the registers. They said, "We need administrative officers at the moment so we can bring you in as an admin officer or you can wait whatever." So I said, "OK, fine, I'll come in now. I want to be in the Foreign Service." So that was fine and I came in. Then as we went through the post selection process we were given a list to work from. I went through, looked at them and picked the ones that I thought seemed the most interesting. One of them was Belgrade, Yugoslavia. There had been a lecture shortly before this on the security side which talked about not

sending single officers to Iron Curtain Countries. I raised this point with our A-100 director and the personnel officer that was there. They said, "Aw, that's like sixties thinking." This was in the seventies, of course. That's like sixties thinking. Besides, this is Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia is one of our friends, an Ally, an island of stability in the Balkans. There is no problem.

So I think that I was the first person in my class to know that I'd been locked down to an assignment which was to Belgrade. Interestingly, Eagleburger was the ambassador in those days so you know it would have been an interesting assignment. We went through all this and everyone else got their assignments. I get this call, and I'm told, "Your assignment is broken. It's not going to happen." And I said, "Why not?" And they said well, we can't tell you, but it's not happening. So the impression I was left with was that there was something in me that had been discovered or assessed or whatever, and therefore I was not trusted to go to this assignment. Furthermore, at this point, all the other good assignments were gone; even my second, third, and fourth choices were all gone. So it was Lagos, Kingston, and someplace else. Not the ones you would immediately lean to, to want of go to. So I kept asking, "What's the problem? Is there anything I can do about it? Could I talk to somebody, explain something, can I whatever?: Stonewall, absolute stonewall. Nobody would tell me anything, one way or another.

So I started missing some of the A-100 trips. They wouldn't let me go to Commerce or Agriculture which was a side benefit of all this. I kept working my way up. Finally, I went to AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) which plays a part later in my life and asked for their help. I forget the name of the guy now, but somebody who was very helpful and listened to my little plea and plight and made some phone calls. This is maybe two to three weeks after this process had started, and finally one of the DAS's (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in DS (Diplomatic Security) called me in and sat me down and said, "We've got nothing against you, personally. There's nothing in your file. It's just that you're a single, twenty-three year old male, and we're not going to send you to an Iron Curtain Country if we can help it. That's it!" And at that point I said, "OK. That's all I wanted was for somebody to tell me that it wasn't me, it was just the system." I understand later there were exceptions to that rule and that my age and whatever other factors in there may not have been pertinent.

Q: You suggested earlier Belgrade at that time was hardly behind the Iron Curtain.

HAYS: Yes, that's correct. So at that point I said, "OK, fine, I can accept that. I'll drop whatever other concerns or other actions that I may have been contemplating. I just wanted an answer." I think the State Department makes things more difficult than they need to. A lot of times we don't provide information or don't explain why things happened or why things don't happen. Anyway, so now I'm back in the pool and where do I go?

There were at this point only two jobs left; B&F (Budget and Financial) officer in Lagos and vice consul in Kingston, Jamaica. There was one other guy, Brent Miller. I remember

talking to the personnel person saying, "You know, Brent really has an accounting background and I think he'd do well in that job. I think that would work out well for Brent." So I took the Kingston job, and as it turns out there were three of us from my A-100 class who went there because in the previous two classes no one had been prepared to go. It had been left at the bottom of the list and no one had bid. So when our class came around, they said were going to take three from it and two out of the next class. So we became the Kingston trio. We had the consular course and were due to be shipped out. The first guy, Harold Bond, left in December. This was at the time of the second Michael Manley election in early December. So Harold is scooted out immediately, and he was there by the time of the election. He wasn't happy about it, as I remember, but it worked out. Then I went. I was supposed to go at the end of January, and I actually checked out, said goodbye, loaded the car, and was going to drive to Miami. I woke up with 104° fever, went to the doctor thinking I would get a late start, and he said I had mononucleosis. So I had to postpone my departure which made the post very unhappy because they wanted me there, of course, two months before. So that added a week and another tearful farewell to my then girlfriend who had given me the mononucleosis, and so I finally got to post on February 6, 1977.

Q: And you went as vice consul in the consular section, doing visas primarily?

HAYS: Yes, doing nonimmigrant visas. There was Harold, my classmate, and we had a supervisor. We also had what seemed at the time like thousands – but was actually hundreds – of applicants every day. My on-the-job training consisted of the supervisor – who was in his seventh year as an untenured officer at that point – coming up and doing the first two interviews. He then patted me on the back and said, "Good luck." I had had the consular training. This was when the security consciousness was only weighing in, and we weren't quite as sophisticated as we are these days. So shortly before I arrived, they put in those flexguard windows and fortified the wall between the applicants and the people. Of course, we walked out to hand out the passports to people, and we had to go through the waiting room to get in and out and other such things, but nevertheless, we had this wall and this flexguard window that they had drilled some holes in. The problem was that sound did not go through these windows very well, and so you ended up having to lean forward on your tippy toes and scream into the windows and the person on the other side would scream back.

At that time Jamaica was having a lot of problems, a lot of violence. There was the beginning of the flight of the business class, and everybody else for that matter, and so there was very heavy demand both on the IV (immigrant visa) side and the NIV(non-immigrant visa) side. Probably 75 to 80% of first-time applicants were being denied. Like most people I had never said no to anybody in my life really about anything, sort of here take my last dollar sort of stuff, and now you're in a situation where all day unrelieved, you're telling people, "No, your hopes and your dreams are crushed by me." There is an adjustment, and you obviously get calloused or hardened or toughened or whatever you like to call it as time goes on, but nevertheless it was interesting to watch the other people who came behind me over the course of the next two years to see how people respond to

that kind of pressure. Some keep their objectivity, some are hardened and find that it's easier to say yes or they find it's easier to say no and then that becomes the answer.

I knew from Jamaican friends of mine that one of their challenges was to wait and see and position yourself for the right vice consul for the match. That would increase your odds of getting approval. One of the things I went through early on was to put yourself in their shoes, and I said, "Well, I were on the other side would I be a bona fide applicant or would I be an intending immigrant or something?" So that seemed to work for a while until I got a guy who came up who was born one day before me, i.e. he was one day older than I was. He was sort of my height and my build and he was a Jamaican guy, and he didn't qualify under any circumstances. He was a young male, and he had a job where he worked for his brother at a garage. He wanted to go buy auto parts, like everybody does. He was a bright guy and I enjoyed talking to him. I normally tried never to tell people to come back; that was a problem.

In this case I said, "Look, bring me some stuff about your brother's business and let me take a look at it." So he did that, and we talked some more. There was a restaurant across the street from the consulate. It was the only place that you could eat, and so we would always go over there. We would be eating on the patio, and of course, the visa line would be watching us eat. Of course, sometimes the applicants would go there; it was the only place for them to eat too so it happened that this guy was there. He was clever and maybe he planned it, and we started talking again. He wasn't pushy or anything. I said if I were born in Jamaica, you know I could easily be this guy, and I'd want somebody to have some faith and trust in me, so what the heck, I'm going to go issue the visa. What the heck?

I did that, and I was feeling quite happy and quite proud of myself for helping humanity. Three or four weeks went by and the blue sheets came back, the turn-arounds that the INS (Immigration and Naturalization) does at the port of entry. There's his name. Of course, when they saw this guy they wondered how he got a visa, and so they took him to secondary. When they opened up his luggage, they found letters and other things. It turns out that he was basically a pimp. He had some girl friends who worked for him that he had smuggled through Canada, and he was going up to join them to set up business in New York City. So that was the last time I put myself in their shoes and tried to anticipate other people's reactions to these things. I went back to a more standard gut reaction based on salaries and earnings and family ties and these kinds of things. I never found anything that I had that much confidence in that ensured I was making the right decision at the right time.

Q: Did you basically do this work for the whole two years you were there or did you switch to another?

HAYS: No, I switched. We had a visit. I think the first one was Rosalynn Carter when she was First Lady. She came down, and I was taken over to help out with the visit. I liked that, and I was pretty good at it at organizing and scheduling and doing those sorts of things. The then admin officer, Gene Scassa, who I also hit it off, invited me to come

over, and it worked out for me to do a detail in the admin section because there was no GSO (General Services Officer). I think the last one had been shipped off to detoxification or something so there was a vacancy there. Anyway, I came in and worked for what was supposed to be a six weeks' rotation. It worked out pretty well so then he got me reassigned at post. Meantime, I had worked on IVs for a few months and also non-immigrant visas. Then this happened, and I moved over into the admin section. So I spent two and a half years in Jamaica which is a little long for the first tour, but I was reassigned at post with the last year was in the admin section.

Q: When you were doing visas, either nonimmigrant or IVs, were you doing some third country nationals or pretty much Jamaicans?

HAYS: It was mostly Jamaicans. Occasionally, we'd get some third country nationals. Here's my first sort of brush with the wider diplomatic world; I play tennis and there's a club there called the Rickety Club and one of the few places to play. A guy comes up, and I didn't have a partner, and so we played tennis. We had a drink afterwards and agreed to meet two days later and play some more tennis. It turned out it was the new Russian ambassador. So I thought this was kind of neat, the Russian ambassador and we were diplomats and here we are. So I mentioned that to somebody and, of course, twenty minutes later the phone is ringing. I go upstairs, and the RSO (Regional Security Officer) and the Agency guy were there and say, "What is this? Where did this come from? What the hell are you doing?" It wasn't that big a deal, but they were excited because this was still 1977. They arranged for me to introduce one of the other guys who was actually a better tennis player than I was and more at the ambassador's level. I brought him along the next time and introduced him there, and they did whatever they do from that point.

Mostly it was working with Jamaicans. We spent a lot of time together, because in many ways at that point – I don't know if it was a conscious decision but it sort of worked out at that time – we were getting single males assigned to the embassy because of the security situation and so it turned out it was sort of like a fraternity which I was used to. We had all these guys, we'd go out and party and make friends and go to the beach and do these kinds of things. Actually, even though it had the reputation of being one of the worst assignments in the Service, as I suspect is not uncommon, once you get there you find out that it's not so bad. There're lots of things to recommend it and it's a fun place and there you go.

Q: Who was the ambassador then?

HAYS: The ambassador was Sumner Gerard when I arrived. He was a very patrician political appointee from, I think, upstate New York, married to a Polish countess who had a yacht as I understand it. I thought he was a very charming, very elegant man, but I'm told that once he got on the yacht he turned into Captain Bligh. On Friday afternoons as one of the treats for the young officers, he would invite them to crew on his boat over the weekend. I think, quite sincerely, he thought this was a nice gesture to help the staff out. Of course, from the staff side, people would hide under desks or jumping into closets to

avoid being given the honor of getting to crew on the ship. Anyway, he was there for only the first three or four months that I was there.

Then Frederick Irving came in as ambassador. He was very helpful to me. It's sort of the next chapter of the transition, and I'll explain one of the ways he was very helpful. I hit it off really well with him. I think it was the twelve hours I spent over one weekend fixing his electrical system that cemented that relationship. And also with the visits, as I said, I think I have a knack for organizing official business and things and so that was helpful and he liked those sorts of things too. And finally Roy Lawrence came in just at the very end, the last two or three months I was there.

Q: You mentioned other visits besides the first lady Rosalyn Carter. Were there others?

HAYS: Yes, we had Andrew Young come and Peter Bourne if you remember him? Actually, he was Carter's drug czar or drug adviser, and it turned out that he had firsthand knowledge of the subject and so he left. Interestingly, I ran into him about two weeks ago in the audience at CFR (Council on Foreign Relations) where I was giving a speech on Cuba and there he was. My crystal memory of him was at three o'clock in the morning at the Kingston Airport looking for his lost luggage. We had a number of these trips that came along and so they were fun.

Q: Anything else about your admin experience that we should mention?

HAYS: It was good. I got to be the GSO for a long time, and then they brought in a supervisory GSO who was an AID (Agency of International Development) guy who was a good guy and I learned some things from him. This care and feeding of an embassy certainly was more complicated than I had anticipated, and of course, demands were placed on us by the embassy staff. Throughout the rest of my career, I had a very soft spot for GSOs (General Services Officer) because of those calls at two in the morning about a plumbing leak. Here in the States, you know, no one would think of calling someone at two in the morning to come fix a blocked toilet, but overseas that seems to happen.

Also, I got in trouble a couple of times for excessive use of discretionary authority. Perhaps, I'll tell you one quick one. I like it, no one else does. I had a running feud with an AID guy for some reason I can't remember now. We had a visceral dislike one for the other. A number of incidents occurred, but the one I'll relate here was when we were remodeling the embassy. As usual it was disruptive, it was messy, and we had to demolish the section that this guy happened to be in and stuff them, doubled up, in another area for about two or three weeks so that we could do the building. It wasn't anything that was planned; it was just the way it was. Anyway, he refused to move. He said, absolutely not until my new office is ready, I'm not moving. The weekend that this was supposed to take place he locked the door of his office with great ceremony and stomped off. So the next morning, there I am with the crew and we're moving furniture and all, and we can't get into his area. So I took the walls down on the side and pulled out all his furniture and his safe, and then put the wall back up. So the room that was his little

office space was the only thing on Monday morning that was there. The door was locked, of course, and when he opened it all his furniture and everything was long gone. I got into some trouble for that, but it was worth it.

Q: Was this a joint administrative section?

HAYS: It was one of the first, as I remember – I forget the acronym now, JCAS or something like that – for joint administrative support. It covered the AID mission as well as all the other agencies.

Q: In view of your subsequent involvement with Cuba, I was wondering if you had any particular involvement with Guantanamo or Cuba?

HAYS: Guantanamo was at our supply base, and at this point, in Jamaica there were almost no foodstuffs you could buy. Other than some mangoes and pineapple juice, literally, supermarkets were empty. There was a once a month support flight where people would fly to Guantanamo and load up. But the Cuba question really didn't come up while I was there. There was a Cuban Embassy that opened up during the time I was there with great fanfare, and Castro came for a visit during this time. There was a lot of concern over his activities which proved out later to be with good reason. Castro was prepared to encourage Manley to do a lot more. There was a program to train Jamaicans in sort of CBR-type environment that included defensive maneuvers. I think fortunately for Jamaica, and for Manley, in 1980 he chose not to go that route and went to an election and lost and gave up power and came back some years later. But my involvement with Cubans was at that point very much at a distance.

Q: And you weren't involved in political matters in Jamaica?

HAYS: Some. There was a political officer, Cochran (was it Rob?), who was quite good, and we worked with the junior officers. The DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) Roy Haverkamp also encouraged the junior officers to get involved, and one or the other would take us to a lunch when we had a contact, again to just sift through my contacts. My future wife at that point, was Jamaican. We were dating, and so through the university I made contacts with various people. One of the opposition leaders who was sort of on that line between statesmen and thug was someone whom the Political Section was very interested in. So I was helpful in setting up meetings with them.

Q: Is there anything else you want to say about your first post in Kingston?

HAYS: Everyone has a special place in their heart for their first post, and it was a good post. I think I would have preferred to been in a language post, it would have helped me, but I had been sent to Kingston and it was all right. It was the sort of place where there were things happening; it was interesting politically, it was interesting economically and socially there was music. Bob Marley was down the street from me. It was a great assignment.

Q: Certainly, that's one of the aspects of doing first tour visa work, in many places it is an opportunity to use a foreign language.

HAYS: I didn't have that at all.

Q: So in 1979 you went on to your second post. Where was that? How did that happen?

HAYS: The previous fall or so I was going to Washington, and Ambassador Irving asked me to drop a letter off for him at the Department, and so I said fine. I was in the Department for a good three or four days, and on the fourth day I said, oh my gosh, I forgot the ambassador's letter. So I took it to the Assistant Secretary for Administration, John Thomas, and dropped it off and left. A couple of hours later I heard that Thomas wanted to see me. I thought that was kind of interesting, and so I went in. He said Ambassador Irving had recommended me for a position to do presidential advance work, which I thought was quite nice of the ambassador. He knew that I was interested in it, and so they offered me a job on the spot. I said, "Don't I have to bid?" and they said we'll take care of it. So they did, and that that's how I got my next assignment which was to do the presidential advance work in A/EX (Executive Office of the Administration Bureau) which also did management analysis for the Bureau, but primarily it was to do the advance work. That was another great job. This was an opportunity to fly all over the world and to help the President of the United States meet foreign leaders. What could be greater and more exciting and more fun than that? Or more nerve wracking, more stressful, or more soul-baring, or whatever? Certainly, it was on a different level from what I was used to at post, and also very much different from when you're receiving the visit as opposed to the person initiating or organizing the visit. It gave me, I think, a good overview of both White House operation in many ways and how the Department interacts with that and how foreign policy gets made. So it was a great experience.

Q: This was President Carter?

HAYS: It started out with Carter, and Mondale as Vice President.

Q: Did you travel with the principals or primarily as the advance?

HAYS: I did a little of both. Mondale went to China in 1979 shortly after I came on the job, and we were on the plane for that. There were two of us out of the office for that and we went through Beijing and then Xian and then Guangzhou and then Hong Kong; it was about 10 to 11 days altogether. This is still the time when China was pretty mysterious to most Americans. I remember everyone applauding when the plane landed, that kind of thing at Beijing Airport, that kind of excitement. Other times I would do the advance work, like the Venice Summit or the 1980 Summit with Carter, and did one for the First Lady in Winnipeg. She was supposed to spend two days in Winnipeg, and there was a dispute with the Canadians over the Secret Service having weapons. The Canadians didn't want the Secret Service to have any guns, and the Secret Service said, "She's not coming unless we have guns." There was a lot of back and forth, and I'm sitting on 80 hotel rooms during peak season which I had told my new best friends at the Holiday Inn

that I positively had to have. On the morning of the visit, literally at three a.m. this was still being thrashed out. We didn't know if she was coming are not, and finally there was a compromise that she would come, but she would come for a single event which was the core of the visit, an award she was getting. She wouldn't spend the night, and she wouldn't do anything but that. The Canadians would work on the assumption that there were no weapons brought in by the Secret Service but no one was going to check them. That was enough to prevent it from being a total disaster. I, on the other hand, had to buy three scotches for the director of room services at the Holiday Inn and explain that no, we weren't going to need the 80 rooms and no, we weren't going to pay for them, and too bad it's too late to do anything else with them, but that sort of thing was sort of par for the course.

Q: You were primarily involved in the administrative portion of these visits. The Secretariat of the Department would also be involved in briefing papers and all that sort of thing?

HAYS: We were, in effect, I won't say detailed, but we worked with the White House advance team, and we served as a liaison between the embassy and the White House. The Secretariat people would fly in a day or two ahead of the visit and point and want to move the desk to this corner and the filing cabinet over there and that sort of thing. That was fine, but they had a completely different function. We would worry more about the schedule, protocol, the liaison, the logistics, getting people in, getting people out, that sort of thing.

Q: The security dimension would be the responsibility of the Secret Service, and they would work primarily with the security people in the State Department and, of course, the RSO (Regional Security Officer) at the post?

HAYS: Correct. It got to be huge. The size of the advance teams kept getting bigger and bigger until you had hundreds of people who would be there for up to a month ahead of time. In Venice we were there a full month. That mass of humanity moving back and forth is pretty impressive.

Q: Had they begun sending ahead the presidential limousine?

HAYS: Sure. The major groups that would go would be WACA (the White House Communications Agency), the Secret Service, the Marine Corps helicopter group, the Air Force One guys would come in to coordinate that, we were there for the State Department. There must be some other people, the White House advance team itself. With the WACA people, you could get up to 100 people easily. The Secret Service would start at seven or eight and build to 30 or so before the actual shifts came that would be responsible for the security on the site.

Q: How different would a Vice Presidential visit, or a First Lady's visit or some other visit be from a Presidential visit? Were they more fun for you in some ways?

HAYS: In some ways. There was less pressure. With a Presidential visit you are always half a step away from total disaster; career ending, bloody, nasty destruction. Vice Presidential visits were scaled down a lot, maybe a third to one quarter of the people and much less time and much less sort of "Oh, my God, this really has to happen this way, this moment." I liked First Lady visits because they were usually very easy with much less stress and timelines were longer. You had more downtime; you didn't always have to be on schedule minute by minute. With Presidentials, you literally write the schedule at two thirty one you walk out and turn left, at two thirty two you get into the limo, that type of thing. People got quite cranky if you went off schedule, which, of course, was not your fault, but nevertheless it happened.

Whatever disaster happens, which can be something like wrong color car is there or something, the senior guys – not the most senior guys, but the second and third level down guys who think they're the most important – would always look around for a scapegoat. There were a few magic moments when you had to make sure you were not in a line of sight, so you perfected duck and scurry. You'd see something happening over in the distance you knew was a disaster and you'd see the guy starting to look, and you got behind somebody bigger than you or a building or something, and then you scurried off to the side. Two minutes later, everybody forgets about it and life goes on, but at that moment if you're the guy they identified, then you are in trouble.

Q: If everything goes well and it's a great success they probably don't look to you to give credit, do they?

HAYS: No, no, of course not. These things just happen automatically.

Q: Not long after you started this work, the embassy was taken over in Tehran and the hostages held for the next year plus. Did that have an impact? It certainly did on the last year of the Carter presidency, but in terms of foreign travel and what was involved? Do you remember that?

HAYS: Yes, it did. It did cast a pall over everything that was being done, and people always had it in their thoughts. I was President of the Junior Foreign Service Officers' Caucus at this point, and we worried about the younger officers, in particular, about what the reaction was going to be. I was surprised when it went on as long as it did. I thought we would have taken more decisive action earlier on. I remember coming in with the carpool when the Desert One disaster became apparent and how people felt and how it had failed. People had died in an attempt to rescue the people.

I'm glad you mentioned this, because one of the advances I did was for the homecoming of the hostages. This was very hush, hush in the beginning about where they were going to come. At this point, they had been released. I had been out at Andrew's (Air Force Base) when Carter left, and immediately started working on the hostages return. So a couple of days later we got into a jet, and we didn't know where we were going. We knew it was either going to be West Point or a place in Chesapeake, Virginia where there was a big hotel that was a possibility also. Anyway, we looked toward the sun and I said I

guess we're going to West Point. It was supposed to be secret; no one was supposed to know about it. We couldn't tell anybody. This was pre-cell phones and all that so we got up there and worked with the West Point people to put together the visit. On the arrival when the hostages came into Stewart Air Force Base, everyone got onto the buses and the buses went in a motorcade and to West Point. All along the street there were thousands and thousands of people that were just screaming, yelling, and cheering and everything. The emotion was palpable; it just overwhelmed you. I remember I was completely in tears. I could not stop crying; other people were laughing. It was clearly because everyone's system was overloaded by the waves of emotion that were coming in as we went through these thousands and thousands of people to get to West Point. That was a phenomenal experience, and I'll never forget it.

Q: Any other highlights of this period? It sounds like you have a few dinner stories.

HAYS: Yes. I also have a memory that up until a week before the election, the advance team – who tended to be the same people who did the political advance – were convinced that Carter was going to win. They were absolutely, positively convinced. At that point, I knew he wasn't going to win; it wasn't even going to be close. But when you're in that bubble, that environment, and when you went out in a big crowd of people yelling and screaming, you'd feel the waves of emotion, and your world view is affected by it. Even though, in theory, you have the best information in the world coming in, a lot of times you think what you want to think.

Q: Did you continue in the Office of Presidential Visits into the Reagan administration?

HAYS: Yes. I did the first Bush visit to Paris, Reagan to Canada twice, a couple of other Bush trips. I stopped being full-time advance, but I stayed kind of emeritus and so I would do one a year for the next decade. I would come back and do one trip. It was so much fun and so different from day-to-day things. It was also satisfying because the plane lands and the plane takes off. Something happens, unlike in a lot of Foreign Service work where you can go weeks, months, years, decades, and basically the issues don't change much. With a Presidential advance, it either works or it doesn't and so there was that immediate gratification that I found useful as a change of pace.

Q: Was John Thomas the Assistant Secretary throughout this period?

HAYS: No. I think Tom Tracy came at some point in there. I'm not sure when but he was there also.

Q: You were working fairly independently with the White House, of course, and with all parts of the Department depending on where the visit was?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: You were still an untenured junior officer on language probation?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: What happened next?

HAYS: Well, let's see. I had college French, and I guess I was taking early morning French language. I'm not the best linguist in the world, and William Humphries, who was a professor of French and later became a Foreign Service Officer and still is, as far as I know, was very helpful and sort of prodded me and got me across the last five yards to score. I think right at the end of this I got off probation.

Q: Where did you go for your next assignment?

HAYS: From there I went to the Kennedy School. One of my career goals was to go back for a master's and have the government pay for it. I had signed up for this program and, fortunately, had been selected. I chose the Kennedy School because it was a one year Master's and it was Harvard and the whole bit.

Q: What year was that?

HAYS: This would have been 1981 to 1982. I'm giving a speech at the Kennedy School. That will be the first time I've been back in twenty years. The things that I took away from that: one is, it gave me a much broader professional contact with people who were city administrators, army officers, teachers, what have you, they were all my colleagues. My best friend there, a guy named Jeff Amestoy, was interesting. He was an unemployed Democrat at that point. He's now the Republican Chief Justice of the Vermont Supreme Court. He learned a lesson or two there. My best professor by far was Mike Dukakis who taught a course on operating in the political environment which was absolutely brilliant. Curiously, a couple of years later when he ran for president, he did absolutely nothing of what he taught us and failed horribly. Ideologically, I wasn't close to him, but he was my former professor and so obviously, I had some interest. I kept waiting for him to do the sorts of things that he had taught us that seemed to me to be smart things to do, and he didn't do any of them. He failed miserably and to this day I don't know why.

Q: He had finished his term as governor of Massachusetts at that point?

HAYS: Yes, and at this point, he taught the fall semester and he stopped to run for governor again and then he ran for president in 1984. In 1982 he ran for governor and was reelected for a second term.

Q: You were sent by the Department to Harvard to the Kennedy School of Government primarily to do public administration, not to do economics?

HAYS: No. It was a fairly loose. It was sort of like do something and come back; have a good time and come back.

Q: I was there about 20 years before you and did economics and enjoyed the opportunity to really do almost anything. I did do economics, but I certainly picked and chose carefully in terms of professors and subjects. And so you finished the Kennedy School in 1982 and where did you go then? I assume you were tenured by then.

HAYS: I must have been tenured then to take the long-term training. I was scheduled to go to the MBFR (Mutual Balance Force Reductions) talks. It was one of those things that went on for 25 or 30 years. This would have been a good assignment, because as I understood it, the talks would be in session for two to three weeks and then out for a month or so. When you're in you worked all the time, but when you were out, you're out. You can go skiing, you are in Vienna. This was a fabulous assignment, and I was excited about doing it, but another Kennedy School course that I took was a case study course. In reading the case study which was about a labor union, I said, "Well, this is like AFSA." So for some reason I got in my head that I wanted to run for president of AFSA. I flew back to Washington to talk to some people about this and got encouragement from people like Joe Mearsman and others. I decided to do it. The President of AFSA at that time was Charlie Whitehouse who had come in after Ken Blakely. Charlie was another very patrician fellow. I don't know if he was married to a countess, but he should've been, and I thought he had nothing in common with the up and coming generation of Foreign Service Officers. He was a great guy, nice guy, but independently wealthy, old school, and didn't understand people who have kids to feed and are living in substandard housing overseas.

Q: You had been President of the Junior Foreign Service Officers' Association?

HAYS: Yes, but that had been sort of a who wants to do it, how about you - type of appointment rather than any kind of an organized campaign. There was another guy, Ken Quinn, was interested in running at this point, so the three of us were scouting around for support. I made my pitch to the oppressed classes, which was basically the junior officers, the staff corps, the secretaries, the communicators. I figured this is where I could go to get support. I went knocking on doors. I didn't have any Friday classes so I would fly down Thursday evening and campaign all day Friday and then go back on Saturday, back up to Harvard.

Charlie was the existing power. He was president, and he had a board and everything. Quinn was sort of the designated alternative. Ken raided Charlie's board and ripped out a couple of his people over to his side, the AID people in particular. Charlie was outraged by this lack of loyalty; it was practically treason or along these lines. It became apparent that he went from being number one of three to being number three of three. I had my little rump group of the disaffected that were going to support me. Through an intermediary I approach Charlie to see what his intentions were, and he was so mad at Ken and the AID guys that he basically released his people to me. So now Thea de Ruville who was the long-term vice president and others came over to my ticket.

So now I had the bulk of the things. The one unstated, but understood, part of the deal was that the two AID guys would growl that they were not going to end up with me on

my ticket. That was acceptable, because I didn't much care for them anyway so within two weeks with my original group and then Charlie's group and everything, Ken was out. He didn't have a chance. So he withdrew and the last little bit of support team to me and I ran unopposed. That was the 1982 election.

Q: You had just finished your year at the Kennedy School of Government in 1981 and 1982 and you've described how you came to be elected the president of the American Foreign Service Association in 1982 for I think a two year term.
Would you talk a little bit more about what that entailed? I assume that you were still on the Department of State payroll but were, in effect, were given a year or two of grace, so to speak?

HAYS: Yes, actually it worked out to be three years. I ran for reelection but for a one year term. We were switching election cycles. At one point my predecessors had felt there would be more voter turnout if they would have an election every year so the board was elected one year and the officers a different year, and then it became clear that that involved a lot of costs and no particular benefit, so we flipped back.

AFSA is one of those organizations that in many ways, I think, the Foreign Service is uncomfortable with, because you bring what you want to it but you see that there are other things in there also, so it may not conform to your view. I faced a basic split; as I mentioned my initial core of support was the junior officers, the staff corps, the communicators, the security officers, and secretaries who were interested in, and comfortable with and insisted upon a labor union, in the sense of not quite the Teamsters but nevertheless, the idea of confrontation with management, a zero sum game either we win or they win – type of organization. Most Foreign Service Officers, particularly older Foreign Service Officers, at that time, were more comfortable with AFSA in its first iteration as a professional association that would deal in a gentlemanly way over a glass of port. You would discuss the big issues of the day with people who were in fact you, in the sense that you could be in either position, either on management one day or labor union or the professional association side the other day. So you had this tension, and there was always pulling in different directions. My sense was that both were important and that both could be used complementary one to the other to come up with a better organization that could better address the wants and the needs of its members. It did not work out that way, but that was the plan.

It also affected our actions when we would make assignments, say a chairman for a negotiating committee to deal with management. It didn't take me long to realize that I had to keep that split in mind. If there was a professional issue – something to do with training or tours of duty or these sorts of things – then obviously, you would want an experienced, senior officer who could head up the team. On the other hand, if it was something like kindergarten or educational allowance or some kind of danger pay or something, you did not want a senior officer because of the tendency to preemptive capitulation. I remember one time when we were going into meet with the Undersecretary and a very distinguished senior officer with several ambassadorships under his belt pulled me aside as we were going in and said, "Dennis, what's our backup position on this?"

which surprised me because this was a real black and white, straightforward issue, and so we had no backup position. Our backup position was we were right, and we wanted everything we're asking for because we're entitled to it. So this was the sort of tension that was out there. I found it a wonderful job. It gave me as a very junior officer access to the most senior levels of the Department. Ron Spiers was the Undersecretary of Management at that time. Eagleburger was P (Undersecretary for Political Affairs) at that time, and so being able to deal directly with both was an interesting and rewarding experience for me.

The types of issues that we dealt with during those times divided up into different chunks. This was the exclusive bargaining agent for 12,000 members at that time for the Foreign Service both for the Department of State and the Agency for International Development. It was also a professional association for all of the then foreign services, in other words, for Commerce, for Agriculture and for USIA at that point. We operated a club that had a restaurant that served lunch and at one brief period we tried to do dinner. It didn't work too well. We sponsored awards, we had insurance programs, a scholarship fund, outreach programs and a number of other activities, dealing with the press, with what have you. There were twenty professional employees at that point, and there were probably 50 or 60 volunteer members either on the board or on the different committees.

On other types of issues we dealt with, believe it or not, I remember an issue in those days was whether Beirut and El Salvador qualified for danger pay or not. On the professional side, issues like the use of lie detectors for Foreign Service Officers, for nondisclosure agreements. These are big concerns. There was always the issue of the split on ambassadors; career versus non-career. I testified at least twice against people, nominees that we felt were unqualified. We didn't oppose all non-career, but there were people that were pretty egregious and we felt we had to speak up. Another note of some amusement was the spread of nonprofessionals into Foreign Service positions. At that point the concern was the Bermuda Consul General, and in a document that was written in 1982 or 1983, I swore this would not pass on my watch, but I think it actually did. Nevertheless, the point was that we were concerned that it was a slippery slope if Bermuda, why not Munich, and if in Munich, why not the Helsinki Consul General? You could go down the line where you basically would not have a professional Foreign Service.

At this point, the Foreign Service Act was being implemented. It had been passed just before I came on. There was one very nice piece to it which all members liked, the linkage in pay was like getting a promotion. So that kept everyone sort of fat and happy for a while. However, as we implemented the different pieces of it, it was clear that some were working and some weren't. The open assignments policy was a problem; a lot of people were unhappy as to how it worked both in theory and in practice. I remember spending a lot of time dealing with the promotion precepts and specifically the form that one filled out. There was a push in those days to force reviewers to rank order on a hard scale. In other words, not everyone is wonderful and outstanding, and if you had one wonderful and outstanding, then you had to have one "can't find his way out of a closet" type of thing, and obviously, as a labor union we had our concerns and problems with

that. Mundane things like shipping allowances were extremely important to a lot of people. It was one of those issues again from a professional side that people said well, why worry about that? Nevertheless, for somebody like a communicator who's got three kids and can't take a full set of furniture for the third child, it's an issue and a problem.

We also had something called the senior glut in those days which was the excess, or perceived excess, of senior officers. And there were a number of reasons for that including perhaps over-promotion, the use of non-career people in senior jobs both in Washington and overseas, an unwillingness of officers to accept certain assignments and an equal unwillingness of the system to insist people go into those jobs. So there were lots of different pieces we had to kind of play off everybody with that. I dealt with AID which was clearly a key component of AFSA. In fact, I think we had statistically better membership out of AID in those days than we did with State. They were also much more comfortable with the labor union side than the professional side. Nevertheless, because they were a separate system and had their own separate regulations, it was very difficult to implement policies across the board that we felt were fair and equitable. They might do better in category A but State did better in category B so if you tried to get both sides up to a higher level or do you bring one down or how do you work with that?

I have a note on how you worked through the bureaucracy. Take something like amending the tour of duty to increase conformity between bureaus, say between the European and the Latin American bureaus. Basically, what we would do was to research the issue in the past practice, we would canvass different constituencies in AFSA, we would begin discussions with management, we would try to construct a position that would be acceptable to all of our components obtaining an internal consensus, we would then communicate to the membership on how the change would affect them, come to some agreement with management and then monitor management's compliance. Again, that's a simple one. If you got into other issues, then you might have to work with Congress to obtain clarifying language, we could possibly file an unfair labor practice, do press releases to try to garner support, refer a matter to the impasse disputes panel or even seek a suit in Federal court. There were lots of different possibilities.

I mentioned that I ran for reelection for one year. AFSA, like many assignments in the Foreign Service is probably a half life that most people have, and you wouldn't want to go too far beyond that because you stop being fresh or having new ideas. At this point, one of my major concerns was my succession. Who was going to come after me? And again there I was an 03 officer who would be invited out to be with Eagleburger, and he would, sort of, pump me for information. I knew what was going on, and it was OK and I enjoyed it. I can give press conferences; I could give plaques to the Vice President and do all of these things, which seemed wonderful. I had power, authority, responsibility and a staff ; all these things I had, and I couldn't give it away. I couldn't get anybody I thought was going to be really good to take it over. And that was one of the reasons that I took the third year, because I was unhappy about that.

My sort of nemesis or adversary on the board was Tom Miller, but I thought he'd be a great president. We didn't agree on everything, but he was dedicated and active and all,

but he had other issues and other prospects and took them. Eventually, the third year, working with Adrian Basora and others, the senior officers, perhaps as a reaction to my being twenty-eight at the time, felt that it was their turn, that they'd needed to have their guy in there. This was OK with me as long as their guy was in fact, a good guy. So they kicked this around and came up with an excellent candidate, Bob Keeley, and so everybody said, yeah, OK, he's a good guy, he's a bright guy, dedicated, hard worker; OK, fine. So I went out with some comfort in knowing that not everything I'd tried to build up over the last three years was going to collapse. Maybe the day after he was elected, he was offered ambassador to Greece, and I certainly don't blame him, he took it. But nevertheless, that meant that the position was vacant, and not only was it vacant, there was also this image that – again, I'm not saying it was anything to do with Bob – but some of the staff corps guys said look, anybody you put in this wants to be ambassador and so they're bought off and how can you trust them? So, you know, it was great for Bob, and I'm sorry it worked out that way because I know for a fact that people ranted and raved at me because there was this perception that anytime management could take an FSO and hold this carrot out. We also tried very hard to get the staff corps and the communicators and security officers and what have you more heavily involved, but that was difficult to do even when it was clearly issues that pertained and had a dollar impact on their salary and everything

I saw AFSA as a pretty effective tool to effect change, and it seemed to me that people would recognize that was in their best interest a) to be supportive and b) if the any of these people had a pet project, we could probably push it through. I'm sort of surprised that more people didn't recognize that or be prepared to take that.

Q: Let me ask you to talk a little bit about the general subject of outreach as it relates to Congress, maybe as it relates to the country at large. I think in later years that has been one of the main emphases of AFSA. To what extent did you spend a lot of time lobbying or keeping in touch with either members of congress or staff, other than testifying occasionally before hearings?

HAYS: That's an excellent question. We certainly didn't do enough, although we did as much as our time and resources would permit. We tended to have a very narrow circle of contacts. There were people who for one reason or another were interested in the Foreign Service or they were on a specific committee that dealt with us and so they would deal with it. We didn't do a very good job, mostly because we didn't have the time, to get beyond that to try to get new support, new people who were aware of our issues and concerns. As you are aware, the Foreign Service, to the extent that anyone has an opinion of us, it's often felt that we're prima donnas and a little bit spoiled and a little bit too cocky and so that doesn't engender sympathy or concern a lot of times. We have to overcome that and say when you're in Dhaka in the monsoon season and you're sitting there rolling up the rugs at three in the morning it is not as glamorous as people might expect.

The other story which I'm sure you've heard and that I've come across and think it has some validity, is that the Foreign Service exam takes, in those days, 18-20,000 people a

year and maybe 10% of those might get an offer or actually come in which means that 90% don't, and what happens to this 90%? Well, they become congressional staff members, newspaper reporters, captains of industry and what have you, and they remember the one thing that didn't go well in their life is that they didn't get in to the Foreign Service and, therefore, you have to overcome that. I only mentioned that because I can remember clearly at least four or five occasions where that has come up as an issue or as a snide comment from someone with their hat in hand trying to get something from a congressional staffer.

Q: You mentioned the relationship that you had with the Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Larry Eagleburger and Undersecretary for Management, Ron Spiers. You have a photograph here of you and the Board with Secretary of State George Shultz. Of course, he had a background in labor economics; he had been Secretary of Labor. To what extent did you feel his presence either in terms of meetings or attitude toward AFSA or anything that might have affected you?

HAYS: He actually came in about the same time as I became president of this particular board; so this meeting was sort of a courtesy call on him. I think he was interested and concerned in a general sense. He didn't deal with specific issues, and that may have been his style of delegation. Ron Spiers was pretty activist kind of guy, and he was in charge of labor management issues and so there it was. We did appeal to Shultz on a couple of occasions in the sense of writing directly to him. I think of Beirut. This was at a time when the embassy blew up in '83, and so there were security issues and concerns. I think there was one other issue. We appealed to him on the ambassadorial questions on a couple of occasions. On the one, my sense was word filtered down that he was helpful, on the other, not particularly.

Q: How about the Director General, the director of personnel in this period? I don't know who that was.

HAYS: There were several. Harry Barnes was one, for sure, and I think Joan Clark might've been for part of that time. I do remember Harry was there when I first got there. Again, I thought he approached AFSA from the professional association side, and I think he saw that as our role and may have been a little concerned if we strayed a little too much into the nuts and bolts of allowances and shipping weight and these kinds of things. My clearest memory of his tenure was in the wake of the bombing. We wanted to have a public manifestation of this for support. I can remember talking to the board, and we were afraid that the Department was going to oppose this or at least make it difficult for us. In fact, Harry was very supportive, extremely supportive, and personally got out and sort of led the parade. We had a march down the middle of the street, and it turned out pretty well. We were always appreciative of that.

Q: You had vice presidents from State, AID, maybe other agencies?

HAYS: In those days, we had basically, the vice president Thea de Ruville, just one vice president, and then we had board members from the different constituencies. One of the

things we did – I think it happened during my tenure – was we pushed for a vice president for AID, which basically became the senior member on the board. Another thing we did at that point – it's one of those things be careful what you create – was the legislative action department to try to support our efforts. Basically, we weren't making enough on dues; more so then than now, dues were controversial. There was inertia, not wanting to move off where you had been, so we had to create new sources of funding and we looked around at foundations and what have you, but one of the options was simply to create a new funding mechanism amongst ourselves which was the Legislative Action Fund. I get a letter from them every quarter, with the opportunity to participate in this vital thing, so it's still going on.

The club was extremely controversial in the sense that it was losing money. Everyone has a dream that they want to own a bar or a restaurant. My phase of that is over; I had enough of having to deal with the AFSA Club; it will inoculate me forever. We had everything from employee theft problems, we had managers who didn't keep books, we had everything you can imagine. Nevertheless, it was my hope to maintain the Club because I felt a) there weren't that many options. (In those days, there was the cafeteria which was not the fancy food court thing you see today, but your basic government cafeteria of the 70s and 80s.) And b) it was someplace where, while not quite an English club, someplace where ideally, people would be able to go and relax and see people they hadn't seen for 15 or 20 years or meet friends or whatever. And we tried very hard to get people to do luncheons and events we could cater and what have you. It was just a tough sell. And we had the bad fortune of being at the time when the three martini lunch was pretty much going out the window and where you make all your money is on the alcohol. We tried to have some things in the evening, but carpools dictated that people couldn't hang around and have a few at the bar in the evening so it bounced around. It stayed after my time for many years but eventually it's been shut down now. It's too bad.

Q: What sort of relationships did you have with DACOR (Diplomatic and Consular Officers, Retired) or some of these other organizations related in this field of Foreign Service?

HAYS: We had good relations, but not intimate in the sense of working hand-in-hand on a lot of the issues. DACOR was always very supportive if we were having some event, again on the professional side or to mark terrorism concerns or what have you, they were always extremely helpful. But not so much in the day-to-day stuff that we were doing. The Foreign Service tends to spin off lots of organizations, but most of them tend to be pretty hollow after a couple of years when whoever founds it goes away or dies or something. So we had all these sort of subgroups inside the Department; various factions of the senior officers, the admin officers, the consular officers, everyone had a little group. The junior officers' group was a very important one. The admin officers had something-2000 because that was their personnel code. The consular corps had the red bowl or something. Anyway, there were all these nice descriptive things. My feeling was you take your allies where you can find them and work with everybody, but my experience was they really didn't have a lot to offer.

Q: How about retirees in general? Certainly now and even then, that was important component of the AFSA membership. To what extent did you spend time worrying about issues relating to those who were retired?

HAYS: Actually, a fair amount. I think you almost had a full circle in that the retirees became more interested and concerned in the labor union issues than they may have been when they were active duty and it was more the professional side. But now you're looking at a pension check, you're looking at the health care, these kinds of things. And so we were blessed with pretty active and opinionated retiree participation. I'm not aware of many other organizations that have such a prominent role for their retiree corps, if you will, in an organization like AFSA. In the AFL/CIO you could have been the grand high muckety muck, but then you're retired and you're emeritus. You can come to the annual convention, but no one's going to ask you your opinion about anything. I had this discussion with somebody who fits that description a couple of weeks ago. A lot of retirees have maintained an active position, either because they are working part time or full time with the Department or because they're a resource of people you can call upon or that move into positions which are in the private sector or an NGO but nevertheless, related to the Department so they continue to have that ability to influence. What struck me again was as soon as they became retirees they became interested in labor union issues.

Q: But AFSA is certainly very involved in what is essentially an alumni reunion, Foreign Service Day. Did you have a staff person who did alumni relations or took care of retirees?

HAYS: We did. We did have somebody, and again they were the board members. There were three retired board members, but we also had a staff person who looked after them. C.J. was his name. He did a pretty good job keeping the lines of contact open, and naturally we saw retirees as a source of contributions to different funds and scholarship programs and these sorts of things.

Q: Do you want to say a few more words about other agencies and how they perceived AFSA? Did they basically see it as a State Department Foreign Service organization that they were kind of an appendage to or did they feel like you were as interested in their kind of issues as you should be?

HAYS: There was a fair amount of suspicion, let's say; the black dragons, for instance. Did you ever hear of the black dragons?

Q: No.

HAYS: The security guys would always talk about the black dragons, and one time I basically said what the hell is that? They said well, you're one and I said oh. In theory the black dragons was a group of senior Foreign Service Officers or mid-level for that matter, who secretly ran the Department of State and the second half of that was to the detriment of people like the security officers. There was a vast underground conspiracy that existed

from their perception. Whether you're working for AFSA or management or on the Hill or whatever you were all part of the club. There were people who were in the club and people who were out of the club.

Q: And the ones who talked about it were the ones who saw themselves as very much out of it?

HAYS: Exactly. Correct.

Q: As you look back on these three years from 1982 to 1985 as president of AFSA would you want to say a few words about what you're most satisfied with, most proud of, your greatest sense of accomplishment and perhaps, what was most disappointing and frustrating?

HAYS: Well, probably what I was most proud of is that I worked very hard and had some success at the bringing people into the organization, making them concerned about the service as a whole and trying to get communicators to worry about political officers' assignment problems and vice versa. This was a time of fairly rapid change. Again, the Foreign Service Act was being implemented, and there was a lot of talk about people wanting to throw it out and go back to the old thing. There were literally hundreds of little pieces that had to be negotiated over this time period. I'm sure there were 30 or 40 separate negotiating teams we put together on different issues. Retirement, you mentioned; I have a note here. No single issue has gripped the Foreign Service like the assault on federal pension benefits. When the issue broken the spring of '83 there were 150 posts cabled AFSA asking for guidance, and I remember we held a meeting in the Dean Acheson Auditorium, and the entire auditorium was filled with people for the briefing on this. Standing up, getting the Act implemented, I think defending the concept of professionalism and again let me note that although we were a labor union we felt very strongly about the professional side, that there should be standards and management should hold to those standards.

I'll give you one example I had of where I was accused of betraying the union side and taking the part of management. There was a guy in Ghana who did a thing with the exchange rate with his automobile. This was a '74 Volvo station wagon, and he was going to clear $100,000 on this by having sold it at one exchange rate and then going to the embassy for another. The ambassador, quite properly, refused to do this. The regulations at the time appeared to permit this. This guy's point was he wanted AFSA to fight his fight and sue somebody or whatever. I looked at it and of course, immediately saw this was a disaster waiting to happen. When Congress hears that people in the Foreign Service are selling ten-year old Volvo wagons and making $100,000 profit we're going to get everything slashed on our housing, tax and everything. So I presented that to the Board, and I said I think we should oppose this. There was a split of people, particularly the staff corps, who said, hey, this is done all over the world. This guy's making a little more than other people but so what? Good for him. So it was very controversial, but eventually the board agreed there was a bigger issue here and we needed to have some kind of guidance. Again, we're not looking to penalize anybody, but

you shouldn't be able to clear two or three times your salary by engaging in effectively black market operations.

The downside is sort of the opposite of what the upside was. As happy as I was, as proud as I was of bringing people in and getting people to contribute, I wish I'd been able to do more, get more people in more of an institutionalized involvement. We started a thing where we would invite all A-100 classes over to the club rather than just sort of going to Rosslyn (in those days), and we would feed them and have a little talk. We would have everybody; a consular officer, an admin officer, a political officer, we'd get an ambassador and to try to make the pitch that this was an organization they needed to not just join and pay dues. When we started doing that we doubled our membership among junior officers, but we also wanted them to be involved in it for their own self interest if not for other reasons. And when you really worked on it, you could get a good response, but the minute you turned your attention somewhere else it would fade away. I guess I regret that we never figured out how to institutionalize bringing a consistent flow of new people into the organization.

Q: It occurred to me that that latter point is an important one and without talking maybe about numbers specifically I assume that membership across the board in all the various categories was a concern. How do you get more people to have a sense of belonging, and participation and so on? Let me ask you on the professional side – I think it's one thing you haven't mentioned yet and I don't know if there is much to be said about it – about the Foreign Service Journal.

HAYS: Yes, I guess I didn't mention it because it was in very good hands. The editor was Steve Bijack in those days who I thought was quite good, and we had a kind of a subsidiary board that specifically dealt with Journal issues. There was also a sense from that sub-board's view and the editor that they didn't want my direct involvement; they saw themselves as having independent status, if you will, and occasionally that was a little irritating but on the whole I tended to agree that. I didn't want to be proofreading people's submissions and these sorts of things. I did have a page in each edition that was the president's page where I could talk about whatever the issue of the day or the outrage of the day was.

I'll give you one quick story on the Journal that was a topic of discussion. How much were we going to charge for it? There were some people on the board who felt we should charge the full amount to recoup cost, which in those days was something like $2.25 or something per issue. It was really, really cheap and we were charging $1.25 for it, and we were giving it away to like the newsstand at D Street. We would give them copies, and they were selling them for $1.25 and would keep $1.25 and so it wasn't a bad deal for them. There was part of the Board, of which I was a part, who felt it was more important to have it get out than to make money on it, because compared to the money we were losing at the Club, the Journal wasn't too bad. And again we sort of by inertia, maintained that position that we were more interested in getting it out and sending it to universities and sending it to places than we were to make money on it.

Q: Did you have an office in the State Department or only at the AFSA headquarters across the street?

HAYS: That's a good question because my immediate predecessor had been Charlie Whitehouse, who was retired and so he devoted whatever time he cared to the operation, and he had of an office in the Foreign Service Club over on E Street. His predecessor, Ken Blakely, had been a special assistant in the EA (European Bureau) front office and had been sort of given time to do this, which I think talking to Ken worked out to about half time. When I came in, I mentioned I had to a break an assignment to MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions) in Vienna in order to do this, so I defaulted back to where I had been before I had been before I had gone off to the Kennedy School which was the A/EX (Executive Office in the Bureau of Administration) office which was Joe Miersman and then John Shumate after that. Joe, in particular, had had a run in with Charlie somewhere along the line so he was thrilled that I had pushed Charlie out. And he said, let's talk to management, we'll work it out so that you can encumber a position here but you'll be detailed effectively fulltime to the association. Management brought in a hard nosed union guy to deal with us upstarts who opposed that, but I think Spiers and company approved it in the end because there had been a problem. I mentioned all these negotiating teams that were out there, and they were backing up because nobody had time to really deal with them so the Foreign Service Act wasn't being implemented. It was going to cause problems on the Hill as to why that wasn't happening.

It was in management's interest to have somebody that they could call and deal with any time they needed so I had an office in the Department. I had the office over on E Street, and then there was the AFSA offices themselves in the 3400 corridor in those days. In that one I didn't have an office so much as a space. It was a larger room where we held all the large State standing committee meetings. I had like a little corner that I would keep my papers in. We sort of institutionalized that idea of a fulltime position, and eventually the vice president, or the chairman of the negotiating committees as we called him, also had a fulltime position. Again, I don't think this was necessarily just to be nice on management's part; there were very real reasons why it was in the interest in moving things along smartly that they wanted to do that.

Q: Did the Foreign Service Act of 1980 provide a statutory basis for the relationship between AFSA and the Department of State and these other foreign affairs agencies?

HAYS: Yes it did; it helped a lot to solidify the idea of the union as opposed to a professional association, and it gave us a way and a mechanism, several mechanisms, to influence policy. The key question was whether something was negotiable or not. That was always the first argument we would have, and management would generally take the position of no, this is a reserved right, and therefore you can tell us what you think but we don't have to listen, and our position was no, no thank you but this is in fact, a negotiable right. We took them to various impasse panels on occasion, and I think we almost always won. The impasse panel tended to be made up of non-Foreign Service people who kind of rolled their eyes at management's claims because it was not something that HEW or HHS or whatever they would make. So it worked out.

Q: How about the whole question of grievances for individual Foreign Service members and the Foreign Service Grievance Board? Is that something you spent a lot of time on or did AFSA?

HAYS: Yes, we were very much interested in it. Savina Cys was our grievance counselor in those days, and she was wonderful. I didn't deal with her directly. Normally we would try to resolve issues at the lowest level, and Savina was quite good at that. She could call up the personnel office or EUR and say, "What the hell are you doing here? Why are we doing this?" We always tried to resolve things at the lowest level, with the least amount of outrage and emotion. It didn't always work. We would have to take things to the full grievance board. Sometimes looking at things from a half step away I would agree with the grievance, sometimes I thought the case wasn't that strong, but nevertheless, that wasn't my job. Our job was to represent to the best of our ability our member, and we also had an obligation to represent people whether they were members of the AFSA or not. There was one guy, in particular, with a grievance that when on and on and on with hundreds of hours of staff time who never did become a member. I think it was still going on when I left.

Q: Is there anything else you want to talk about during your time you were president of AFSA? You made an enormous contribution at a very important time of the Foreign Service. Things were changing, and I think your impact lasted well after 1985.

HAYS: Well, it was a great time. As I said, I loved it. I thought I had the best job in the Foreign Service. Other issues that were out there; tandem couples, maybe I should say a word or two about that because it cut across a lot of lines. This was really the time period when tandem couples started to be an issue in the sense that they were no longer a novelty, a rarity. There were now lots of them, and there were immediate equity questions. This was a little before they became a big issue, but the initial tandem couples tended to be an older male, or one who at least had served in the Foreign Service for a number of years, and a wife who was new to the Foreign Service. There tended to be a great discrepancy.

Q: Of course, with some of those couples, the wife had earlier had a Foreign Service career and had come back.

HAYS: Exactly. But there was a gap. We also at this time saw two people who were the same rank coming in together, so these two trend lines were coming along here. At the time, it seemed as though it was going up, up, up, and there were equity questions. Because of the nepotism rules and equity, tandem couples were easier to place in big missions than in small missions. Big missions tended to be in nicer places: London, Rome, Tokyo and Brussels. Not so much in the Ethiopias and the Guyanas and the Haitis of the world. So far a while it just sort of happened that the flow of assignments would push these people into these posts. Then you had singles or people who were married to non-Foreign Service types who would say, "Well, I want to go to Brussels. Why can't I go to Brussels?" As I remember, the initial reaction of the Department was, "Hey, we got

burned two years ago when we tried to separate people and now we've found a solution to our problem so stop bothering us." That wasn't acceptable for a union. We couldn't agree to that, but we had people who were tandems who said just as passionately, "Why should I be penalized? You know, I could get to Brussels on my own and my husband can get Brussels on his own so why can't we both be there at the same time?" And again thinking back, there were some very heated discussions in the State Standing Committee over what should be our position on this. As usual, we tried to split the difference and hope for the best. Everybody was a little bit unhappy, but nobody was horribly unhappy where we ended up. We would try to do a fair share in respect to assignments. What we tended to see already in those days was tandems would come to Washington for an assignment, they would work the next assignment out, and then probably have to come back to Washington again. So it did change the pattern of a career from what it had been a few years before.

Q: You mentioned that you testified a couple of times or maybe more before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on some unqualified candidates for non-career appointments as ambassadors. To what extent were you or AFSA involved in the selection of ambassadors? Did you have any voice, formal or informal, or was this something that you can basically take a position on pretty late in the process after an announcement has already been made you were perhaps doing it as much for the record as anything?

HAYS: Well, I thought we played a role in the sense that some people said there should be no non-career ambassadors like there are no non-career admirals, but that was never our position. Our position was, well, we have a long history of that in our great nation and what have you. We did, however, believe that there was a point beyond which it was unhealthy for the service for Management to go. What we recognized is that we needed to be increasingly shrill as the percentage of non-career appointments went up. In other words, if we had a candidate, the used car salesman from Encino which I think we actually had and he was one of the ones I testified against, and if 20% of appointments were going to non-career then it might be that we would note our unhappiness and that would be it. The point where it was 35 or 40% that are non-career, then we would be calling press conferences and going from door to door in the Senate and testifying, and publishing articles in the Journal, and leaking to the equivalent of Inside the Loop in those days about the qualifications and what have you. It was an embarrassment to the administration. The administration didn't like it, and the first reaction, of course, was why don't you guys play ball and shut up? But in the second one, it enabled people inside the Department and inside White House Personnel to say, this is a marginal candidate, we're going to catch some grief on it. I think we had a direct impact in helping keep the numbers down.

Q: During your third year as AFSA president there was a presidential election across the country. To what extent, if any, were you involved or was AFSA involved either during the campaign or later? There wasn't a transition from one party to the other, but as I recall there were some resignations and the second Reagan Administration was a little bit different from the first term.

HAYS: As I remember, we wrote to both candidates or to their campaigns and laid out what we saw as the concerns facing the professional Foreign Service and of course made the point that we serve the president, whoever that might be but these are the issues that we wanted to bring to their attention. The other issue as I remember was there was a letter signed by nineteen political appointees that endorsed the reelection of President Reagan. We took a very hard line against that; that was inappropriate for them while serving currently as an ambassador. They should not have taken that position, and we got a fair amount of press on that but that was the end of it. We never saw a second letter so I think we had an impact in the sense that we kept that from happening on a bigger scale or more often. As far as the campaign itself, there was never very much doubt about it. There was an assumption that there would be continuity of the Reagan administration, and therefore I don't remember it weighing heavily in our "what if" discussions.

Q: Anything else during your term AFSA President?

HAYS: No, I think that pretty much covers it.

Q: As you've said, it was a great job for a relatively young person, a junior officer. You were obviously able to accomplish a lot, make a lot of friends and contacts and probably a few enemies.

HAYS: Yes, I think so.

Q: How did all this weigh in? What came next for you?

HAYS: Actually, very directly. My onward assignment was as DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) to Bujumbura, Burundi**.** It's kind of a rule of thumb that if you haven't heard of the place before you enter the Foreign Service, you need to think about twice about whether you want to go there. I was interested in it because I wanted to be a DCM or a chargé. I was chosen for that job by the then Ambassador Jim Bullington who had never met me, never spoken to me, but knew me through AFSA and so that was one of my bids and he chose me. As an admin cone officer and as an 0-3, I don't think I would've been picked to be a DCM other than the fact that I had the AFSA experience under my belt. So it carried on to that.

Bujumbura was kind of the end of the world. I remember telling my family, my dad was in the quarters right across from the State Department on 23rd Street where the Vice Chief lived, and the Redskins were in the Super Bowl getting crushed by Oakland. The final piece fell in place and I knew that I was going to Bujumbura, Burundi, and so there was a mad scurry for maps and atlases. But it was good. There was a transition when I was on the Ewing Commission which was sort of my last AFSA action. It with the mid-career course here at the Foreign Service Institute. I went in determined to defend it and came out determined to kill it. It just wasn't doing what I hoped and thought it could do. I didn't see any way for it to get to where it needed to be. One of our last meetings I attended was at the expense of going shopping with my wife for last second purchases to go to Burundi so I paid the price for that Commission, I want you to know.

Q: We appreciated that. As I recall aside from the content of responsibilities, you were chosen by Undersecretary Spiers. He appointed the commission, and it seems to me, because I didn't know you, I think he asked that you be on it. I was very agreeable.

HAYS: Thank you.

Q: Let's go on with Bujumbura. Did you have French?

HAYS: I had college French, and I had gotten off language probation by taking early morning French.

Q: So you didn't have any brush up or any more preparation?

HAYS: No. I could've used it and would have liked to have it, but there was no time.

Q: And so you went there the summer of 1985, and the ambassador was still Jim Bullington?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: Talk a little bit about what you found there, in terms of the problems of the country and to what extent the cleavages that we have come to connect with Burundi and Rwanda present at the time you went.

HAYS: By the time I got there in 1985, it had been thirteen years since the end of the last set of massacres. At that point there had been about 180,000 people killed, the vast majority of them Hutu – like Rwanda it's a Hutu-Tutsi question, the Tutsi being nomadic herders and the Hutu being Bantu farmers. It was a feudal society that had existed for hundreds of years. Colonialism was a very light mantel on these countries. They were an appendage to the Belgian Congo after they had been originally German colonies. After World War I, they had been given over to Belgium. Interestingly, my German colleague noted that every month there were three guys who had fought for the Germans – they were Burundians who had fought to the German army in World War I – and they were still getting pensions 65 or 70 years later.

The Tutsis, when they conducted the last set of massacres, had systematically gone after every Hutu who had any education at all, even elementary school education. They would go into villages and kill all Hutu. The idea was to prevent the Hutu for at least a generation from presenting any kind of threat in the sense that they're educated and in touch with the modern world. So that had happened, in addition to the 180,000 dead, there were 200,000 who had fled with some still living in refugee camps in Tanzania and a few over in the Congo (Zaire). But you were starting to see some Hutu who had been to the university in Europe, let's say, and now had come back to the country. At this point, it was just beginning to be an issue again. The feeling was pretty upbeat though at the time. There was a sense that it was a new world, and that some accommodation was possible.

Actually, one of my clearest memories of the humbling experiences in my diplomatic career was being at dinners and arguing that the Burundi really didn't need to worry about a repeat of the '72-73 massacres because in the modern day (1985), the world would no longer permit such a thing happening. Between CNN, and the New York Times, and Paris Match, the U.N. and everything, there was no way that a slow motion massacre like that could take place. The world just wouldn't let it happen. Well, of course, the world did let it happen and not too long after that. I was completely wrong on that point, but I believed it at that time and argued and worked for that.

There was a military strongman Jean-Baptiste Bagaza who was in charge. He had taken over in a coup from Micombero, his cousin, who in turn had taken over from the King who was deposed in 1964 or so. You had the Tutsi in control of Burundi and the Hutu who had taken over in 1959 in Rwanda, and there was no thought at all that Rwanda would ever be anything other than Hutu-dominated. They were 90% of the population; how in the world could they do anything but rule the place? There was this strain as I remember of this sort of melodic cousin culture that was active in Uganda at this point. The Dinka are sort of considered in this crowd. Along the Great Lakes region of Central Africa there were these sorts of contacts that were taking place. But we were more concerned at the time about Bagaza's engagement in a power struggle with one of the few groups outside his control, the Catholic Church. He was engaged in a series of repressive measures against foreign priests, local priests and what have you.

Another key issue at this time was AIDS. In the mid-eighties it was clear that something was happening, and it was out there, but there was no definitive answer as to exactly what it was and exactly how you got it. So there was concern in the mission, and me too with a second baby being born around this time; what if it's mosquito borne or waterborne or if it's casual contact skin-to-skin contact that transmits this? So there were people at post who were seriously thinking that we needed to leave; it was one thing for me, but I'm not going to put my kids at risk. The State Department medical officer, the RMO, came through and was reassuring to the point that he could be, but when asked the specific question if he could guarantee that this is not transmitted by mosquitoes or whatever, the answer was no, we can't guarantee that at this point.

There was a Belgian researcher who was doing work secretly on this (what became AIDS), because Burundi didn't want to admit that this was going on even though Burundi was one of the first nations to really take a hit in this area. The other thing that was happening, of course, was that the Tutsi elite tended to be more at risk because they had more sexual partners. In your Mercedes you can drive to more places than if you have to walk from your hilltop to somebody else's hilltop. So in the army, in particular, a lot of people were getting ill and wasting away. To keep things in proportion though, many, many more people were dying from malaria every year than would die from AIDS and more people probably died from cholera and maybe yellow fever. Certainly malaria was a killer, and the family members of the staff were dying of malaria and so the government was downplaying all this. I can remember several, kind of clandestine meetings with the doctor to get his best sense which turned out to be not too far from where the scientific community ended up. At the time, it sounded pretty radical, pretty strange.

One quick anecdote: the ambassador from Zaire died of AIDS at this time. His successor came in and had the house literally stripped: all of the curtains and the furniture was taken out and burned, they ripped down wallpaper, tore up the floor boards; he wanted to replace everything in the house. But there was one part that I thought was the most interesting: he had his deputy drive around in the ambassadorial Mercedes for a couple of months just in case there was a spare microbe. And after he seemed to be doing OK, he said OK we'll take it back and it became the chief of mission vehicle again.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the size of the U.S. embassy, and perhaps a word or two about what were perceived to be U.S. interests in Burundi at that point.

HAYS: We were a pretty small mission. State had a political/economic junior officer, there was me, the ambassador, a consular officer, and an economic/commercial guy. AID had a modest mission, a guy by the name of George Bliss when I started, and they had two or three mostly demonstration farm projects that tended to be their big thing.

One of the things I worked on and we got during my time, was a Peace Corps presence, although it was a mixed success at best. Burundi is a tough place to operate in. Both the Hutu and the Tutsi tend to be very reserved, they don't make friends easily, they don't trust outsiders, the language is all but impossible for anybody who wasn't born there and grew up there and French, once you kind of got past the settlements, had died out. You could get by with Swahili and most of the Peace Corps ended up learning Swahili rather than Kirundi. Kirundi is just impossible. There weren't that many paved roads in the country at that point. There were stretches where the predecessors of SUVs no-shock jeeps and trucks were the only way you could get there. Burundi and Rwanda were the most densely populated countries in Africa at the time, mostly because they were small countries, but they had a lot of people. It was subsistence farming; since the country was predominantly mountainous you had families who worked their way up the mountain. If you had more than one son you would divide up the land, and there wouldn't be enough to raise a family so you would have to move further up and steeper up the mountain which led to erosion and problems along those lines. The Belgians had tried to institute terracing as a method, but they went about it in a kind of brutal way – get out there and do your terracing without explaining why or what. After independence, there was a feeling in the general population that this was something their colonial masters wanted them to do and therefore they were going to go back to the way they had always done it for hundreds of years. The difference was they hadn't worked their way up the mountain quite as much and erosion wasn't quite such a problem, but it was always a concern in terms of eating. We had some food programs to try to deal with that.

Q: Did AID have any population programs? Family planning?

HAYS: I don't remember specifically if there was anybody who dealt with that. It may have been a component in someone else's program.

Q: And I assume in the embassy proper there was an administrative officer. Was there a Public Affairs Officer, USIS (United States Information Officer)?

HAYS: Yes. It was David Lambert, and we had an admin officer. We were supposed to have a GSO (General Services Officer), but sometimes we did and sometimes we didn't.

Q: And then you were covered by the Regional Medical Officer from Nairobi ?

HAYS: For a while from Nairobi and for a while from Kinshasa.

Q: And there were probably some other regional people who came through periodically?

HAYS: Yes. There was an RSO (Regional Security Officer), and there was the usual sort of standard folks, but we didn't get a lot of visitors. We were not on the main beaten path for people to come and see us.

Q: That was probably also true of your families?

HAYS: Exactly. Not too many families get out to Burundi.

Q: Was there much travel within the country or were you pretty much confined to Bujumbura?

HAYS: You could travel down along the lake, and you could go inland to an AID farm which was about a four-hour drive. There was the road that went up to Rwanda and then there was the road to Zaire. And pretty much that was it. One nice feature was the lake, Lake Tanganyika was there and so the embassy had emergency evacuation boats in case we needed to flee to Zaire, and in case not everyone can fit into the boat it was necessary to put someone on sticks behind the boat to carry out an evacuation. So that was quite pleasant, and the best fish in the world, a Nile perch, was out of there. There were also crocodiles, and twice there were people in the international community who were killed while I was there. A twelve year old French boy got snapped up.

Q: So if you're water skiing it was important to stay on the skis?

HAYS: It was. Most of the crocodiles were on the border so we would go out into the middle of the lake and ski out there. Of course, periodically there would be an overachiever who would cut across the lake to get the other side. You did have to worry about that. Fortunately, in the American community that was not a problem. But it was difficult to get to places. It was expensive. To get to the States was a two day operation and very expensive; you go to Brussels or Paris and then on over. Nairobi was a big town and once in a while you would go there just to see a city, but they were already starting to have their crime problems and so it wasn't total rest and relaxation.

Q: And Zaire probably wasn't so good?

HAYS: It was never an option. We did go to Bukavu. It was a beautiful little town, but already sort of fading. They had mountain guerrillas there, and I once went with a group from the embassy. It was pretty neat and I enjoyed it. That was in Zaire.

Q: Now, the American community was pretty much just the official community and the Peace Corps volunteers? Or were there some other Americans?

HAYS: There were some others. There was a missionary presence that was fairly big – in total including children probably 80 or something like that. There was a very small American business community; one of the oil companies was interested in drilling and they had a resident manager American there. It was interesting in the way colonialism washes people up. There was a fairly good-sized Greek community – most of the fishermen were Greek and did the trading and we had all this "made in Swaziland" which was actually South African foodstuffs and materials that would come along the lake.

Q: You mentioned some of the other embassies or missions that were there? Belgium, Germany, Zaire.

HAYS: The British had an honorary consul and the ambassador would come down from Kampala from time to time. The big missions were the Belgians, because they were the traditional colonial power, and the French because they were interested in the Francophones. As it was explained to me, they saw Burundi and Rwanda as a sort of entrepôt for British speaking East Africa. If they could get a foothold there, they could work up through Uganda, Tanzania and Nairobi. They were a serious mission. The Chinese, of course, were there, the Russians were there, the Libyans, the Egyptians. Interestingly, the Egyptians were there, I gather, because Rwanda claimed to be the southernmost source of the Nile and their sphere of influence is anything that touches on the Nile. They had a bigger mission than you would think for somebody as far away from Egypt. As far as the Nile, you could go and drive and hike and then there was this rock and every twenty seconds there would be a drop of water and you'd say well, that's the southernmost source of the Nile.

Q: Was there much Cold War mentality in the diplomatic community in those days, in the mid-eighties, with the Chinese or the Soviets?

HAYS: The Chinese were inscrutable. It was hard to know exactly what they were up to. They had a pretty big mission. The North Koreans were there too. We got along with the Russians pretty well as a rule. By the mid-eighties things were calming down. I also went to Leningrad to do an advance for the First Lady who went to Leningrad for a day trip from the Moscow summit and the Russians were happy about that. There was a pretty good camaraderie among the diplomatic missions. Obviously, I saw it from the deputy level, and so the French, the Belgian, the German and myself were the western power group. This became important in September 1987. When you have a military government, there are a lot of coup rumors all the time. Most of the time they were false, but this time it was real. In the middle of August all the Europeans go on vacation so they all leave. Out of eighteen or nineteen diplomatic missions, there were only two or three

ambassadors who happened to be in the country on the third of September. We were having our Western alliance breakfast – we would get together about every two weeks to talk about stuff – when I got a call from our agency guy who said, "None of the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) from the north part of town are at work; none of them, do you know why that might be?" And I said, "Is there some traffic problem or why?" because there was a bridge that went over that part of town. About this time the French got a call that there were some strange things going on, and so as we were sitting around comparing notes, it dawned on all of that there was maybe something actually happening.

In fact, there was a coup d'état taking place. Interestingly, being Burundi, they waited until Bagaza was in Quebec for a francophone summit so he was out of the country. The proximate cause, as we went through and analyzed it, was that the non-commissioned officers were very unhappy because: 1) there was a threatened reduction in force that was going to hit them pretty hard, 2) they weren't getting a pay raise because times were tough and 3) their pensions were being affected. The sergeants were very unhappy and Bagaza was out of the country. There were all sorts of other things: there was the church-state thing, the Hutu-Tutsi thing; there were all these issues but what it came down to basically, was the sergeants were unhappy with their pay status. They went to a cousin of Bagaza, Buyoya, who was from the right clan of the southern Tutsis and said, "Look, we want you to be our head. Are you prepared to do it? Yes or no? Tell us." Buyoya was an attractive candidate for a successor as head of state and his cousin knew that, so he was being farmed out. He was being relieved of his command. He was leaving the army and he was going to be manager of the brewery, which wasn't a bad job for Burundi, but he was on his way out. They came to him and he had motivation to decide what he wanted to do. So the sergeants said basically, look we're with you if there is no reduction in force, you raise our pay and protect our pension. He said, sure, I can go with that.

So this set in motion a slow motion coup, and it gained strength unit by military unit. There was some opposition to it but not a lot. The embassy was co-located with one of the larger banks, and so we had armed soldiers within our compound, mostly because of the bank, but behind them was the front door to the American Embassy. We were concerned, obviously, with the American community. We had done a pretty good job with the warden system drills and contact sheets, phone trees and that sort of thing. We got the word out to the wardens and again, because it was sort of slow motion and not everyone seized at once, we were able to co-locate and ended up at the ambassador's residence. The ambassador, it was Dan Phillips at this point, was on vacation (Block Island, I think) and I remember calling him, and telling him, "I think we're having a coup." He said, "Oh, my God! Can I get back?" And I said, "Well, they closed the airport; I don't know for how long." It ended up that they shut down the airport for two weeks, and that's really the only way to get into Burundi. The overland route is pretty tenuous. After about two weeks they opened up the land border and some of the ambassadors came back that way, flying to Kigali and then driving down. I remember the French Ambassador saying, "No, this is not possible." He would fly back on Air France, thank you very much. The French Ambassador does not sneak across the border in the middle of the night.

The first day or so we were very much concerned with security aspects because 13 or 14 years before there had been 180,000 people killed, and so there was always this concern the spark would be lit and there would be widespread massacres that took place. And we had nowhere to go – we could not fly in or out. Overland was not recommended. Maybe we could get on the lake, but then where would we go? We could go to Zaire, but that isn't too much either and so we decided to stay put. Because it was basically a military coup, it was Tutsi against Tutsi. You didn't have that element of Hutu that even two and three years later was present and might have started it off on the downward spiral that we saw in 89/90.
Bagaza meanwhile tried to get back. He made it to Paris and sent the message OK, you guys can have the money, we won't to any cuts, no problem, let me back, but it was too late at that point. The people were committed and they realized that if they let Bagaza back they would be at risk. So they stuck with Buyoya, and he became the new President. I had dealt with him through the IMET (International Military Education and Training) program in his military capacity. He had the training command so that actually worked out pretty well because I had some rapport with him before he got to that position.

Q: Buyoya is still there?

HAYS: Yes. He's still there. Actually, to his credit there was a democratic election, he lost and stepped down. Then there was another coup, and he was invited to come back in. Of the candidates that are out there, he is probably the best one that they could have. I think he's a reasonable fellow.

Q: Did you in this period anticipate that the Hutu would come to the place where there again would be violence or you certainly thought that was a possibility?

HAYS: Certainly we were concerned about it, very much so. As I mentioned earlier the Hutu were just getting to where they were more prominent. You were starting to see Hutu school teachers, second-level ministry people, even a couple of ministers although the real power was with the Tutsi who was number two in the ministry. Again, the whole educated class had been wiped out fifteen years before so it takes a while for the new generation to move in. I think that if the coup had happened two or three years later it certainly would've had that element in it and might have gone much worse as in fact it did, but a couple of years later.

Q: How long was your tour of duty in Bujumbura?

HAYS: Three years. I left in the summer of 1988.

Q: Dan Phillips was the ambassador at the time you left?

HAYS: Yes, at the time I left.

Q: When we talked before, you were talking about the coup that took place in September of 1987, and you were in charge of the embassy at the time. Was there any violence at all in the course of that coup?

HAYS: Not a lot. It was still, at this point, inside the Tutsi family, in particular in one clan in the Tutsi family that produced the leadership. There were episodes of violence but mostly outside the capital. At that point, the army had a very tight grip on the population, and you also had a situation where they effectively had pass laws, so unless you had permission you were not allowed to live in the city. I think that also made it a bit more controllable. When the army took over they closed the airport, took over in the radio stations, and the banks and that these sorts of things. They really had all the choke points. Bagaza dismissed the first reports in Quebec at a francophone summit and attempted to fly back and made it as far as Paris before it was clear that the airport was closed. My understanding was that Habyarimana, the guy in charge of Rwanda, also said he was not interested in facilitating his return. So then it would have taken a major effort. Four weeks after that there was a pretty tight curfew which the major effect was changing the social atmosphere in terms of when people had to get home from parties. It went from dusk to 9:00 and then to eleven or twelve and finally faded away. There was a time that people were worried that he was going to come back so people were jumpy and anxious. Again because the embassy shared the compound with the bank, we had soldiers at our front door for that time period.

Q: Did Bagaza ever come back?

HAYS: He came back years later as part of a general amnesty, and he tried to get some traction and never quite made it.

Q: But that was well beyond your time there?

HAYS: Yes. There was also a guy who they called Mr. America who was the minister of public works named Niamboya who was imprisoned at this time. He ended up spending a number of years in prison or effectively in prison in tiny posts out in the middle of nowhere.

Q: Why was he called Mr. America?

HAYS: He had lived in Brooklyn for some time, I guess, originally as a student and stayed on. He spoke English which was very unusual for the Burundi at this point, very few did. He had what was perceived as an American style; he was open, he liked jokes, he would invite people to his home and very few Burundi would invite a foreigner to their home. To socialize with Burundi it was either in your home or in a restaurant. One quick story on him; he had this magnificent house on a hill but it had the absolute worst road you can imagine to get to it. It was full of potholes and was sliding off the side down the mountain. So you'd ask him, "You're the Minister of Public Works. Why do you have this road?" And his answer was, "When people see my road they can't complain about their road."

Q: Why was he put in prison, because of his association with America?

HAYS: No. I think it was mostly because he was perceived to be the bagman for Bagaza, the one that had the smarts to work in the international financial markets and to make money go places that might come back later as theirs and theirs alone.

Q: I'm not sure to what extent you talked about the role of other countries in Burundi at that time. I'm wondering a little bit about the role of Japan and to what extent the United Nations and international agencies were involved.

HAYS: As a Belgian colony, the Belgians' license plate number was one. The French were probably the next most prominent because of the francophone connection and also this feeling that this was the tip of the spear aiming into eastern Africa and they would work at moving their commercial interests forward. The U.N. was represented by UNDP and was the major group there. They had money and could do new projects and so they had a fairly visible presence. Interestingly, there was a Japanese woman who was the acting head of that for quite some time. Other than that, the U.N. had a refugee office there because there were still a lot of refugees from the various massacres that had occurred over the years in all directions. That was about it; the Russians had a big mission, the Chinese were there, the Egyptians, the Japanese, I don't remember them playing much of a role. They did have an aid program. I remember once every six months having lunch with the Japanese. I think he must've been rotating, because I don't remember him being there all the time. They would donate a generator or something to the hospital. The Saudis also were there but only to the extent of being a sponsor of a new hospital which had absolutely top of the line, first rate equipment, but then of course, no one to really administer it. It didn't live up to its full potential.

Q: Did we talk the other day about the U.S. AID program and the Peace Corps?

HAYS: We touched on it a little bit. The AID program was primarily about sustainable agriculture. In Burundi culture the women did the farming except for coffee which was a cash crop. With cash you could buy beer, so there was that connection. AID had an experimental farm way up country which was trying to do wheat and other highland wheat-type stuff that worked pretty well. My impression at the time and afterwards was that that the reality was that it worked great as long as you had a farmer from Iowa living right there who would get up everyday and do the right things or make sure they were done. It didn't happen afterwards. The Peace Corps came in and their thing was tilapia, fish farming. They brought it in. I was there when the initial group came in, about ten or so, and they were sprinkled out in the countryside to do tilapia farming. In some places it actually kicked off and was self sustaining; I can think of one specifically where the community really took to it, but the others were not so good.

Q: Did you travel up country, around the country, through the bush quite a bit?

HAYS: I went everywhere there was a road, which isn't saying a whole lot, and then some in the dirt tracks. It is a country where there was sort of one part-time elephant in the whole country. There was literally a guy who would occasionally wander over from Zaire on the Zambezi Plain, and it was sort of interesting because Burundi was one of the largest exporters of ivory in the world even though they had one part-time elephant. They also had Lake Tanganyika and so from Zaire and Zambia and points south it could come up to the airport. I lived on a hill overlooking the plain, and you can see the airport in the distance. Occasionally, the lights would come on at about three in the morning and go off five minutes later and about two hours after that they would come on for five minutes and then go off again. This was the ivory planes that were flying in from the Mideast or perhaps the Far East. But most of what Burundi had was people. It's a mountainous country, most of the wildlife was killed off except for the river, a lot of crocodiles, a lot of hippos. Lions, tigers and bears had been pushed out by the great weight of people. I think I mentioned that it was the most densely populated along with Rwanda. The system was you divided up whatever you got among your sons, and of course, you would get smaller and smaller plots. People would have to go further up the mountain in order to till the land, and this would lead to greater and greater impoverishment.

Q: Was there any kind of a population program?

HAYS: I think I mentioned that AID did have a program but it wasn't particularly successful. Civilization was touching very lightly on most Burundi at this point. If you didn't live in the city, you were still very traditional. The Catholic Church was very active in the country, and so they were one step ahead of any population planners. So it was going to be a tough fight for the population guys.

Q: Did the Catholic Church buttress the Tutsi domination?

HAYS: They were perceived to be, and were, more on the Hutu side and recognized that 85 or 90% of the population was Hutu. The Church under Bagaza had a lot of problems. Bagaza kicked out most of the foreign priests, he imprisoned a couple of other priests, he would limit religious ceremony, he took away their media outlets and these things. That was a source of continuing discord between him and ourselves, the French, the Belgians and what have you.

Q: To what extent did the U.S. Embassy have contact with the Hutu community leaders to try to encourage reconciliation or bridge building or whatever?

HAYS: We did, but again the massacres of thirteen or fourteen years before had literally wiped out what was not a very big educated class in the first place. The people I would come in contact with would tend to be Hutus who were in their late twenties or early thirties and had just recently come back from university in Belgium or wherever. So they weren't really senior. By age they hadn't hit the point where they could occupy key ministerial slots or what have you. There were a few token Hutus in the cabinet, but really the whole mass of the population had been deliberately kept down and so they weren't in positions to do this.

Q: We had an IMET program and USIS maybe had some exchange training programs, AID may have. Did we make a conscious effort to try to train Hutu?

HAYS: We had a number of programs. We were supposed to be tribal blind in how we did this. Part of the problem was you could never be exactly sure who was what. There were tall Hutus and short Tutsis, Tutsis with broad noses. And when you consider that the first military strongman had been trained by the Belgians because they thought he was Hutu because he happened to be fairly short. He came back after he had been trained and he lead a coup, and they discovered in fact he was a Tutsi. The government also as a policy tried to downplay the differences. From their prospective, this was a way to not have it be as much of an issue, and so they didn't end up counting how many people in the Ministry of Agriculture fell into which category.

Q: What about the U.S. programs?

HAYS: We tried like the IV programs. We made a conscious effort to build a program around a couple of the Hutu who we thought were going to be there in the future. I think in those particular cases it didn't work out, but nevertheless, the effort was there.

Q: Anything else we should say about the Bujumbura DCM assignment? You were chargé a good part of the time.

HAYS: I would say close to a third of my time there maybe because there was a gap between ambassadors, of course, and then there was the time during the coup when the ambassador couldn't get back, and then the sort of normal travel. The IMET program was a very important part of our program because it dealt with the military and it was something that the Burundi military liked and wanted. We were always looking to do more there. We saw it as a good way to establish links. For instance, my contact with Buyoya, who became the head of the country, was through the IMET programs because that fell under his bailiwick. The Burundi were good students. Of course, the Tutsis tended to be tall and not so much in the upper body strength and so we always had to have them run around and do push ups before we sent them off to Lackland AFB.

One small anecdote; when I first arrived, literally my second day there, I went to say goodbye to this guy who was going off to IMET training. About two weeks later I got a message that he was in the hospital and was dying, and I thought wow, what happened? They said, "We don't know, we're not sure what the problem is, but it's bad." Two days after that I got a message saying, "We're very sorry; we have to report that he's brain dead. Would you inform his family and the military?" So I went over to the ministry and told the Chief of Staff that this bright young guy who two weeks ago we were toasting, is dead and then telling his family. It was just a horrible scene. This was on Thursday. On Tuesday I got a report that the patient was sitting up and responding to commands, and I go, wait to minute, if he's brain dead, how's he's sitting up and responding to commands? It turned out he had cerebral malaria, and no one had seen that in Texas. They didn't know how to handle it, so they finally called in someone from CDC (Center

for Disease Control) who came over. He took a look at the guy and said this is cerebral malaria; do this, this, and this, which they did, and in fact, he went from being brain dead to sitting up and answering commands. The poor guy came back, but they had also discovered he was HIV positive. Through all this, he had complete renal failure and lots of other problems. He came back and went on active duty again, and then died about a year later.

Q: Your contact with Buyoya through the IMET program was more one of selecting candidates? Did he go on the program himself?

HAYS: He did not. He wanted to, as I remember, but he was never in the pool of people to go and again because I think he was in the pool of people that Bagaza was worried about. He probably didn't want too much contact with the Americans; that would be a dangerous thing. We also had a number of programs that came into the country to do training, and that worked out pretty well. EUCOM in Stuttgart would send down training teams.

Q: What was the role of the Burundi military at that point?

HAYS: Bagaza was commander of the army in addition to being president of the country. Military officers occupied all the key economic spots, and there were civilians who were part of the government. Buyoya was a civilian, but the military had the power.

Q: Did the military have any role outside the country, either in U.N. peacekeeping or in the region?

HAYS: I remember that under IMET we sent a couple who sort of tagged onto a peacekeeping mission somewhere. I don't remember where, but they liked that a lot; it was a lot of fun.

Q: I heard Jim Bullington talk once about a cultural group that had come to Burundi. Was it blue grass? The mountain boys or something?

HAYS: It was the blue mountain boys or the green mountain boys or something.

Q: These were cultural exchanges?

HAYS: He loved that. He was a big blue grass fan, and so I'm sure when the people at the USIA headquarters saw the request for a bluegrass band to go to Africa they scratched their heads a bit. But he brought them over and played with them. He was a pretty good musician, and in fact, on his next home leave, he went back and toured with this group for a while so he was pretty good.

Q: I actually heard the group play in his house here in Arlington. He was in charge of the Senior Seminar at that time. In 1988 where did you go?

HAYS: From there I got a call. I wanted to stay overseas for another tour and I was interested in being a DCM or better yet, chargé, someplace. I think I made my third attempt at Antigua which was still a post, a chargé level mission. My old friend Gene Scassa was back in ARA (American Republic Affairs). One day he called and said, "Hey, I've got just the job for you, you'll love it" which was Georgetown as DCM. I found out later that there had been a couple of people lined up for that, and they had all bailed out. I was an 03 when I moved into the DCM job in Burundi which was a 02 slot and I was an 02 at that point and this was an 01 slot. So it was a nice stretch assignment and I did it. I went off to Georgetown.

Q: Guyana in those days was tough. It was about ten years after Jonestown.

HAYS: This was about the only reason that most people would recognize the name. When I got there, there was almost no electricity in the capital. Literally, you'd go days without electricity, and at that point we really didn't have generators in individual houses. It was raining all the time, the humidity was 110%, everything had fungus on it, the phones didn't work, the mail didn't arrive. The embassy was a 120 year old wooden structure that creaked and groaned, and the guys from FBO (Foreign Buildings Operation) Fire said, "Seven minutes from the first match to the last ash." That would be the total time. You couldn't get much food in the markets. It was tough. I remember getting there and moving into the bare house, what became the DCM residence, and the first night was sort of fun because we had candles and my kids were pretty young then and I read stories to them by candlelight. It was sort of fun; the second night less fun, and the third night no fun at all. It was difficult. It was a morale factor, obviously. We had a pretty big mission there, because there was a large consular section. Some of the first tour officers would come into this wretched, dilapidated building and spend hours upon hours every day having people beseech them for non-immigrant visas.

Q: Other than survival and daily coping with these conditions, what sort of role did the embassy have in Guyana? You mentioned there was a large influx from Guyana into United States.

HAYS: A lot of outflow is what there was from Guyana. Canada was still the favorite point of destination because there had been a pattern there earlier for the Guyanese. They called it the eleventh province (ten in Guyana and the eleventh of Canada). The twelfth would have been the United States. But increasingly it was shifting primarily to New York although the upper class Guyanese tended to go to South Florida, to Miami and that area. So that was a big a part of what we did, the consular stuff. When I was getting my briefings, Guyana was perceived to be in a transition. Guyana, of course, is one of these anomalies of colonialism where the two major population groups are Afro-Guyanese of African descent and Indo-Guyanese of subcontinent descent, and the two political parties split roughly along those racial lines.

There had been Cheddi Jagan, a name from years before who was a communist. That's what he was, and his wife who was an American citizen or born an American was also a communist, in fact, more of a communist than he was. The Indian population was slightly

bigger than the African population. Cheddi and his party were convinced that they were robbed, and they may well have been, in '64 when the British who were unhappy – and we were unhappy – with his direction set up another election, and it worked out that the opposition party came in led by Forbes Burnham. There was a third party actually which was the party of everybody else, primarily Portuguese who had come up via Brazil and also Chinese and the business community. So they were kind of the third group, but at that particular point they identified with the Afro party.

Burnham went from horseback riding with LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson) at the ranch to becoming a traditional strongman, one-party, flirting with Castro and other anti-democratic types and then holding a series of rigged elections to make sure that he stayed in power. A couple years before I got there Burnham, who would be president today if he'd had anything to say about it, went in for relatively minor surgery on his throat. Castro had sent his very best doctor to do this operation, and the operation was a success. Unfortunately, Burnham died in the recovery room from a heart attack. And among other things, they got the Cuban doctor out of the country before they announced this. They were afraid people would think he had assassinated him, and they might go after him. They weren't sure that was going to happen.

Burnham, like a lot of these guys, rotated his number two. He'd let somebody be number two for a while until they actually started having their own power base, and then he would move them out. So the guy who was number two at this particular moment was a man named Desmond Hoyte. There were very low expectations in the international community for him. He was seen as Burnham light. He wasn't going to really do much, just hold on to the power or be pushed aside by one of the other strongmen in the party. I have a pretty clear memory of doing my briefings around town here, and at that point, and there was some acceptance that maybe he would do something in the economic area because he had wanted some economic reforms, but low expectations that he would do anything in the political area. In fact, Hoyte did a lot in his time starting with the economic then also leading to political reforms. This, in turn, led to elections, free and fair elections, which eventually he lost, and he stepped aside. Subsequent to that, people said he's not playing as helpful a political opposition role as he might. But my experience is with him up to that point.

The country had invited in the Carter Center for the election process, and there was a lot of concern because of prior electoral fraud. People can be very creative when it comes to electoral fraud, and there was zero trust between the two sides. There had been violence in the past, certainly around elections, but also ethnic cleansing in the sense of driving people out. You would have an Afro village and an Indo village and people would overlap. Someone would say no, you, whichever side it is, need to get out of here and move, and there were campaigns of rape and beatings and things to enforce this over the years. So there was lots of hostility built into the system on top of mistrust.

What it came down to was the voters' lists and IDs. Both sides were convinced the other side was going to pad the vote in their stronghold areas. And so they had to come up with a system of identity cards that would be foolproof or close to it, and a system for voting

so people could only vote once and you couldn't bring in ringers or what have you. That took a real long time. Carter came down a couple of times. I have great respect for his negotiating skills, because I sat there in the room and watched him. Hoyte, to give him credit, realized that the country needed to get out from under this cloud. The only way that was going to happen was to have an election that would be accepted by us and the Brits and the international community by extension. So when it came down to the hard questions he went ahead and did them much to the distress of the hard wing of his party who said, "Hey it's worked for 25 years, why are we changing it now? Why are we arguing with success?" So again I don't think he gets enough credit. Buyoya, for his many faults, took the country through an election, he lost and he stepped aside. What more do you want from somebody under these circumstances?

Q: What year was this election?

HAYS: The process started in 1990, and then it picked up in 1991. They were scheduled for the fall of 1991, and then they were postponed again and again and again. I left in June 1992. They finally took place in October of 1992.

Q: So the first couple of years you were there Desmond Hoyte was in charge and not yet facing the elections but allowed the country to come to that point. Why don't you say a few words about what he did on the economic side that seemed to work?

HAYS: Burnham had picked and chosen from various statist models; there wasn't any real pattern except that he wanted to make sure that he had control or a piece of everything that happened. So the cabinet was emasculated. They would have their little fiefdom but only with him watching over them to the extent that no one was getting more than he thought they should get along the way. There were disincentives; there was a presumption that any foreign investment was rapacious capitalism at its worst and to be avoided. Who needed them? We have a lush nation, we can grow everything we want, we've made it for 500 years without eating apples so why do we need these apples when we have grapefruit and tangelos and everything else? And so it was sort of that North Korean system of self-sufficiency. So Hoyte started breaking that down by streamlining the process, by traveling to the States and elsewhere to say come take a look.

Bauxite, of course, is one of the big industries. There was an interest in oil at this time in Guyana . It was right next door to Venezuela, and so there must be oil someplace. And the import sector had also been very restricted. There was a whole list of items that could not be imported. They were not considered necessary for a struggling socialist nation to have. So he started crossing things off. Not all at once, because I think that would've been more than the system could have taken, but little by little every six months or so there would be a revised list would come out with fewer things that were banned. More consumer goods started showing up. There was interest from the fast food industry; KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) was sniffing around at this point. They're always the first guys in.

The press had suffered considerably under Burnham. In fact, the only quasi-opposition was the Catholic newspaper which was a once a week if they were lucky, sometimes once a month, four-page tabloid. They would mostly hand them out in churches. When Hoyte came in there was a guy named David de Caires who was of Portuguese descent, a businessman, and he went to Hoyte and said, "In your speech you said you did not believe in restrictions on the press. Do you mean that?" And he said, yes, and de Caires said, OK, I'm going to start the press. It wasn't that easy. In fact, what David did is he would do the editorial and stuff and send it out to Trinidad where they would print it, and they would then fly it into the country once every other week at first and then once a week. In the initial going, there are always people who don't get the word and he had shipments that were seized, shipments that got lost, all kinds of things. He persevered, although there were harassment issues and problems. By the time I arrived it was up to twice a week, and by the time I left they were at four times a week and shortly thereafter I think they went to daily.

Q: Still printing in Trinidad?

HAYS: About a year after I got there they set up production facilities in Guyana. So they did print it. (Starbuck News was David's paper.) The Chronicle, the government newspaper, was nothing but a propaganda sheet at this point because it was still controlled by the ideologues in the party and so there wasn't much hope for that one.

Q: Did Hoyte, again on the economic side, manage to get the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank?

HAYS: They came through. They had conditionality on everything, and he met most of it, not all of it. There was a lot of back and forth and negotiating. The country would get some money, but not all. Again, not everything worked well. There was an American group, Batavia, who were interested in doing something with the electrical system. Again I mentioned at the beginning this sort of problems. I took a tour of the main electrical plant one time, and there was a bank of control panels there and I looked at it and all the indicators are at zero. And I say, how does this work? And he goes, "Walk around the back of that." So I walked around to the back, and the wires that were coming out of the control panel were all cut.

Q: Venezuela was next door and Surinam was on the other side, and I guess Brazil is the third neighbor. Why don't you talk a little bit about that relationship with the neighbors, in particular the question of oil in the economic context?

HAYS: If you look at the map of Venezuela, they always have the zone of reclamation which is about 2/3 of Guyana going all the way over to the Essequibo River. There was a treaty in 1899 between the Venezuelans and the British on that point, but the Venezuelans never accepted that arrangement so they still consider Guyana all the way to the Essequibo to be their territory. If you look on the other side with the Surinamese, there is what's called the New River Triangle. The way the border was set between the two countries was that one of the early explorers basically said the right branch of the

river here seems to be the bigger one so the border goes this way. In fact, he was wrong; the other branch was the major branch of the river, and so you have a triangle of land which has been in dispute and actually fought over a long time. So if you took what Surinam claims and what Venezuela claims you're left with about 30% of the land mass. The other thing that's happening, of course, is that while the Brazilians recognize there's no dispute over where the border is, they don't necessarily see it as anything other than just another river which you can cross and go over. So there's a fairly massive migration that's occurring from the northern part of Brazil up into Guyana. It's sort of thing that Brazil stops where the Brazilians stop.

Q: That's part of the Amazon River development, I suppose?

HAYS: Yes. It's a very serious problem for all these small countries along there because in 30 or 40 years if current trends continue the bottom half or 2/3 of the country is going to basically be Brazil. It'll be Portuguese speaking people who believe they are Brazilians rather than having any loyalty to say to Guyana or Surinam or French Guyana.
One of the sociological issues is that there's no manifest destiny in the Guyanese or the Surinamese either, for that matter, in the sense of if they think they need to go make a life for themselves, they want to go to New York or want to go to Holland or to go wherever. They do not want to go into the interior and homestead, or set up a business or go into logging. This is seen as something you do and then you come back to the cities. The population of Guyana was 800 or 900,000, but they were losing 1% per year net through emigration. If that were turned around and these people were going south, you would have a much more bustling economy and economic development.

Q: Let's review what constituted the U.S. mission in Georgetown in 1992. Who was the ambassador? There were a lot of junior officers; were they all doing consular work?

HAYS: I seem to have a knack for picking posts that were identified as the worst in the Foreign Service in terms of living conditions and overall ambiance. Georgetown fit into that pattern. The embassy was housed in a 100 year old plus house that was very creaky. That's what we dealt with. At one point the ambassador's secretary happened to look up at the suspended ceiling which seemed to be bulging and figured there was some water damage. GSO (General Services Office) came up and found that the floor above her was bulging. The Agency had a five-drawer safe that was literally coming through the floor and would have not only crushed her but would have taken her straight down to the ground floor had it happened. Anyway, the embassy was actually pretty good sized; we had a very large consular section. Guyana is a visa mill – both immigrant and non-immigrant visas – and it occupies a lot of people's time. Also when I got there, there was a USIS (United States Information Service) program, and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) had a few things going on. There was the usual gamut of embassy-type functions. We had an RSO, we had a building program because the new office building was under way at that point. It was a major effort and was one of the first of a series of post-Beirut embassies that were built up to the international world-wide standards which for Guyana was quite an effort.

Q: That's particularly on the security side in terms of set back and so on?

HAYS: That's correct. Remember Georgetown is built on mud flats, and so when you build a building out of that amount of concrete and rebar, the first thing you have to worry about is that it will just sink into the mud and disappear. So we ended up with 90 foot steel pilings that were driven. The first year was just putting all of that down to get into the hard clay. Interestingly, the Soviets were building an embassy about a mile and a half up the coast from us, and they used wooden poles of about 60 feet. The problem was that the hard clay started about 70 to 90 feet, and so effectively what they did was to have pilings attached to nothing and they did nothing for them. As soon as they moved into their building, it started cracking and splitting. So I do have to admit, for the money, we had a pretty solid building.

Q: I just read an article recently in the Foreign Service Journal by the wife of the current ambassador there, and she said that she liked to walk along the waterfront. If it wasn't for the sea wall, the sea would be well into the city of Georgetown.

HAYS: It is actually below high tide. The city was laid out by the Dutch – at various times the Dutch and British swapped – and they had a gravity-feed system where the water would drain out of the city at low tide and you would have a sea wall with a system of sluice gates that would prevent the water from coming in during high tide. Unfortunately, shortly after independence the government decided that they could use mechanical means to pump the water, electrical power, and so they didn't need the gravity feed. They stopped cleaning all the system of canals, and so then naturally, when the electricity stopped and they had no gravity feed system, the city started flooding regularly two or three feet deep, knee deep to hip deep, at high tide.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about U.S. interests in Guyana at that time? Were there many American firms? You mentioned bauxite. Oil? The Venezuelan fields are nearby. How about American tourism?

HAYS: Practically no tourism. With some of these countries you really had to work to get there. There was a recent article in the Washington Post about two Guyanese sisters who have started up an airline now to New York. They have a charter flight that goes back and forth. In my day, the national airline, Guyana Airways, had one old 707. In fact, it was the last 707 in the world in commercial service. You'd get on, and it would sort of rattle and you'd see bolts coming out of the ceiling. It was an experience any time you got on it.

Q: Did it fly to New York?

HAYS: It flew to New York. New York was the spot. That's where the Guyanese migration pattern shifted to. Toronto was a big area also. But New York is the hugely desired entry point into the United States for the Guyanese. Bauxite was a major product. There had been bad blood and ill will between the American companies and the Guyanese government over the years and if they had not actually nationalized, they had

pushed out the door various companies. By the time I got there some of the companies were thinking about coming back. Reynolds, in particular, I remember was interested in getting back into a mine it had run in years past, but it was difficult to deal with the government because it was hard to get decisions made at any level. Oil, everyone who is an expert in oil says you have to have oil since you are next to Venezuela. They kept looking but had trouble finding it. There were American companies looking for oil that identified, through some process, this spot in the middle of the Amazon way down in the south part of the country that turned out not to be economically viable. To do the test wells, it was impossible to get to the site from Guyana and so what they did was to go over to Venezuela. Then they drove along a road that would get you down to Brazil and there was another road that would kind of bring you across. Then they had to reinforce a bridge and clear a road up through the jungle. So it was quite an effort. Ultimately, it did not pan out that it would be economically feasible to continue.

The Guyanese believe, as sort of a part of the built in paranoia they had, that everybody wants a big chunk of their country, the Venezuelans claimed about 60% of their country; Surinam claims about 10% of the country. So they're always aware that their neighbors' maps include the vast bulk of their land. This plays out in interesting ways; one of the reasons that Jonestown was located where it was is because Forbes Burnham, the then leader, thought it would be a good idea to have a thousand Americans on the border with Venezuela so that in case of attack the United States would be pulled into the discussion or the fight. That's one of the reasons why it's located there.

Q: Jonestown happened ten years or so before you were there. Were there any residual effects?

HAYS: Not much. My first year there we came up on the tenth anniversary which we thought would be a bigger thing than it was in terms of the international press. NBC sent a team over but they didn't do a lot. Only one Guyanese died in the Jonestown itself although some died later. The last victim if you will was the Guyanese ambassador to the United States who in a murder-suicide died four or five months afterwards. One of the things Jones had done – if you remember his pattern, he started out very popular and then the dark side would come forward and he would have to move. So he went from a small town in Indiana to Indianapolis to San Francisco to Oakland to Guyana, and he was negotiating with the Soviets about moving to the Crimea. He felt he was still a little too close to the CIA and the FBI, the people who were going to get him. So this paranoia kept everybody away. He had a system whereby he was exempt from customs and immigration inspection. He could bring ships up and unload them. He could do whatever he wanted to. One of the ways he kept control was that he had two demographic routes; the bulk of his followers tended to the older pension age African-Americans and then he had a younger people, the enforcer group of men and, of course, a younger group of women who he would attach to targets in the Guyanese government or elsewhere. In the United States he had the same pattern, and he would exercise control over those people through the women. And that was the case with the ambassador, to whom one of the women who had been attached and who was involved in the murder-suicide.

Q: Did that happen in Guyana or Washington?

HAYS: In Washington, DC. The Venezuelans would alternately rattle the cage and make soothing noises. One of the theories at the time was that Guyana was just going to depopulate itself because there were so many people leaving the country. I think there was a net minus 1% despite a high fertility rate because people were leaving mostly for the States and Canada but also for England or Australia or the Caribbean or wherever. The Guyanese in years past had had a very good education system, and in fact, if you go through the Caribbean, through the islands, and you look at who is president of the insurance company or the auditor general, or the head of the medical school, chances were pretty good that they would be Guyanese or of Guyanese origin.

Q: Or trained in Guyana?

HAYS: Mostly Guyanese who would then go out and find opportunities elsewhere. So the Venezuelan strategy was, I think, to prevent anything from increasing the hold the Guyanese had on their territory so they would object to any kind of massive development or investment in the area. A few rice farmers, some eco-tourism, fine, but if someone discovered oil in that area, the feeling was that the Venezuelans would object and perhaps more.

Q: During the period you were there they had full diplomatic relations with Venezuela?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: But that was really the concern more on the Venezuelan side than the Guyanese who presumably felt that they were on the lower end and had this large, monstrous neighbor?

HAYS: They had a large army which was much better equipped. The chief of staff of the Guyanese army had a big map on his wall of the Venezuelan map that had the zone of reclamation on it. He kept that to remind him what his job was, to see that that didn't happen. I talked with him about this, and the strategy was simply to be able to hold on long enough until the OAS or the UN or somebody could step in to sort it out for them, but not to relinquish control. They would keep people in the area. They would have no effectively fighting capacity, but nevertheless their presence would keep the claim alive.

Q: Did we have a military assistance training program of any kind?

HAYS: A small one. There were a few small programs. SOUTHCOM had a fairly regular series of visits. In those days the head of the army General McLean, who had been the police commander and very close to Burnham and then shifted over to the army, was generally considered pro-American. He certainly was pro-capitalist and maybe some of it was not in so reputable a form on occasion, as rumor had it. The army was primarily of African origin and Guyana was split into Indian, actually Bombay Indian origin and African origin. The smaller populations of Portuguese descent from Brazil, the Amer-Indians, of course, the Chinese population and a few Europeans and others sort of thrown

in. The two major groups fought, and in comparison to say Surinam where you had even more of a mix of ethnic groups, it was pretty much winner-take-all in Guyana. It was zero sum, it was perceived as zero sum; you were either with the DPP (the Indian party) or the PNC (the black party) and you either won or you lost. If you lost, you were out and you shouldn't expect any kindness or anything. There was a little bit of crossover; there were some blacks in the Indian party and a few Indians in the black party, but as a rule they were looked at if not as traitors at least as opportunists who couldn't be trusted in polite society.

Q: Which party controlled the government while you were there?

HAYS: The PNC, which was the Afro Guyanese party, had control which they had had since '64 when allegedly we and the British and others cooked the books to keep Cheddi Jagan, who was a communist after all, out of power. Then Forbes Burnham picking up a lesson from his new friends – at that point he was friends with LBJ, he used to go to the ranch and ride around and then he figured out he had more in common with our friend Fidel and learned how to hold fraudulent elections including one just a year before I got there.

Q: Did Guyana at that time because of the strong position of those of African descent have particular relations or involvement with Africa?

HAYS: No, not really. Forbes Burnham had tried. He had gone through West Africa and did some work. There was some attempt to identify where Guyanese had originated. But they quickly discovered there wasn't much to be gained from that other than sort of solidarity with the Group of 77 in which they were fairly active. And I think again because of their educational system they were pretty good at placing people in these international organizations. Sonny Ramphal, for instance, at this point was head of the Commonwealth. I saw Sonny two weeks ago at a conference and he hadn't changed at all.

Q: He was Secretary-General of the Commonwealth for many years. How about with India or the subcontinent?

HAYS: There was a debate over whether they should have ambassadors. They wanted to have an ambassador to Ghana and an ambassador to New Delhi. They ended up, at least in my time, of having it but not appointing anybody so they finessed the problem. There was a feeling you couldn't have one without the other, and they really couldn't afford either considering the costs. There wasn't a lot to be gained from it. In Guyana there was also the issue that when the Indians were brought to Guyana it was in theory a temporary step, they were indentured servants, and the expectation was that they would perform their period of service and then go back to India. And in fact, about a third of those brought to Guyana did in fact return to India. There was a fund that a worker contributed to over a hundred years that was to help facilitate the return and give people a stake to go back to India. One of the things that Forbes Burnham did that generated no goodwill was that he looked at this money and at this point almost nobody was going back. They had in

the thirties but no one was returning in the sixties. He said, "Well, this money is sort of sitting there and there's no point in just letting it do that, let's build a large performing arts center." I think it was tied in to a large conference or something they were hosting. So they used up all this money for that, and of course, this was without the Indian population's say, and so there was a lot of ill will over stuff like that that happened fairly often.

Q: You mentioned the Guyanese had positions in international organizations, partly because of their language aptitude, I suppose, and their education. Did the Guyanese army involve itself in peace-keeping, UN (United Nations) or other activities?

HAYS: They were interested in it. I think in my time at one point they sent some people which we paid for to help with some Haiti-related item. I remember that a group did go off; not a large group, a squad, maybe 15 men. But they were thrilled. They got new uniforms, new boots, they got to hang out with other soldiers, and so it was a tremendous experience and very useful because we were able to use that as an incentive with the army. I might mention that the army had been down-sized quite a bit during this time period. They just flat out couldn't afford it anymore, and there was also the national service – several steps beyond what our president is talking about now – it was almost mandatory service and based on the communist model. If you weren't in the army, you had to go out and teach or grow chickens or do something for a year or two. The guy who was head of that was the best soldier in the country, Brigadier Joseph Singh who eventually became the chief of staff. The military at that point had pigeonholed him in this other job, although he was by far the preferred interlocutor for our people. He was a solid guy, very squared away professionally.

Q: I was in Ghana from 1989 to 1992, more or less the same period. I am quite sure there was no Guyana high commissioner, ambassador, nor do I remember, quite frankly anything about Guyana except that occasionally we would get our mail that would be sent to Georgetown and probably vice versa. There was general confusion about the difference between Ghana and Guyana. With regard to Surinam, I do remember a few things that happened in those days because Jerry Rawlings had a relationship with them. How about Surinam? Were they concerned about that relationship?

HAYS: Yes, but less so. It was one of those things you hear one side and then you hear the other. From the Guyanese side, the story was, "We kicked their butts and ran them out of the disputed area and they wouldn't dare come back." Years later hearing the Surinamese side it was, hey, they tricked us and sucker-punched us, and because we're the more mature and steady state we didn't have to go back and teach them a lesson. So you take your pick which it is. Nevertheless, in these days Surinam held a much higher standard of living. The Dutch presence is, and continues to be, much stronger in Surinam than the British presence in Guyana. Surinam had electricity, Surinam had running water and Surinam had a fairly efficient food distribution net from farm to market to the consumer. There was actually immigration of 30 or 40,000 Guyanese who would migrate, often illegally, into western Surinam to work in day labor menial type positions. There was that kind of relationship. In general, the New River Triangle that's in dispute,

unlike the Essequibo which is 2/3 of the country and hard to miss, is unpopulated and of no economic interest to anybody at this point. If they find gold or something that will change, but at the moment you can't get there, nobody lives there, it's not something that people are going to get excited about.

Q: You just mentioned the somewhat lesser role that Great Britain has in Guyana compared with the Dutch residual interest in Surinam. Do you want to talk anymore about the role of the British High Commission in Georgetown or that of any other Commonwealth countries? It was pretty small I suppose?
HAYS: Yes. The Brits' license plates were again dip one and they got that pride of place. They had a considerably smaller mission then we did. They had the high commissioner, the deputy, one political junior officer, maybe two or three consuls and kind of a commonwealth cooperative and that was about it. Nevertheless, as the mother country they played a disproportionate role and the Guyanese worried about them. It was a love-hate kind of thing. Every Guyanese conversation would start out with how badly the British had ignored them, they hadn't put the money in, they hadn't built the bridges, they hadn't done this, they hadn't done that. But at the same time there was a residual pride in the empire and the queen and these sorts of things. Again, they were primus inter pares but not particularly more than that.
Q: Canada?
HAYS: Canada could have played a bigger role than it did. There were a lot of Guyanese in Canada. Toronto has a huge Guyanese population. The Canadians were in the middle of a downsizing, however, and they downsized the embassy literally to the high commissioner and his secretary, and that was in it. When I got there they probably had five are six officers, and they were literally down to the high commissioner who would rattle around in a very attractive old colonial style embassy. The Canadians had a few programs. They focused on such things as runways; they built runways all over the Caribbean and ports and things. They were obviously helpful, and I think that because they were not Britain they had a chance to kind of play a role. They weren't the United States and they weren't Britain. They had some influence but only to a point.
Q: Was a drug, anti-narcotics effort begun? Was that a problem?
HAYS: There was transshipment through Guyana; not a whole lot, because it's hard to get to Guyana. Even for drug smugglers it's hard to get to Guyana. I think the pattern picked up more, again jumping forward, for Surinam because the ships went to Amsterdam and there was regular shipping whereas with Guyana most of the ships would be just a milk run around the Caribbean and occasionally to New York. It wasn't the kind of hub of transportation that drug smugglers tend to like. There was domestic marijuana production. The army chief of staff had a farm outside the country, and he used to joke about showing his cattle and his oranges, his pineapples, and then he would talk about the cash crop that's on the other side of the hill there. We had it better in the embassy because DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) came in with one of their spotter planes to do their aerial surveillance. This property was close to the airport, and so there were a lot of people in the embassy who said he would never sign off on it. The first field they would take off over would be his, but in fact, he did and they didn't find anything. He was clever enough to plow it under before signing the paper or whatever; they didn't find it.

Nor did they find a whole lot else; they did find a few patches, but it was more for domestic consumption.

Q: Before we leave Georgetown, why don't you talk a little bit more about your role? Were you chargé a lot, were you DCM, and if so, were you mainly a manager?

HAYS: Let me vent a little bit on USIA as an agency. When I got there they had a PAO (Public Affairs Officer) and a pretty good sized local staff. In fact, they had a PAO and the trainee slot. They also had by far the best library in the country. There was a Carnegie library, one of many that Carnegie had founded. That was sort of the national library, but it had gone into hibernation twenty years before and the books were just rotting or beginning to rot from the temperature. The USIS Library was where every high school and college student would come to do research and they had a pretty good program of periodicals that were relatively up to date and they really filled a need. When the word came down that we're shutting the whole program, and I was chargé at this point. I couldn't believe it; this is the best thing that this country has got going in this area and we're just going to shut it down and give the books to the national library where they will sit in piles and rot over the next decade until they're totally unusable? This was the plan. So we went back and forth and they said well we have to cut back, we have budget problems. My point and my concern in this was I understand budget problems, but you don't need nine guys in Bonn to tell America's story. There are ways that Germans or Swedes or Mexicans or Canadians, for God's sake, can learn about America's story other than the U.S. government libraries. Whereas these small isolated countries – which granted their needs are a helluva lot more important than Guyana but nevertheless, when you look at what actually can be accomplished, I would say it comes pretty close to evening out. We can't shut down a program like that.

I then discover that executive authority. The one that says an ambassador has the right to say whether people are coming into the mission or not. It works the other way too in that they can't take people away from the chief of mission without the chief of mission's authority. I just refused; I said, no this is stupid, we can't do this, and so that engendered a flurry of telegrams back and forth and various phone calls from my hierarchy and I said this is nuts. Reprogram some programs in Mexico City. We can't let this go. And it went back and forth and back and forth. At the end of the day I got the phone call with my boss saying, OK, you made your point but give up. I wasn't quite ready to do that, and so in talking finally to someone in USIS I felt was fairly reasonable, we cut a deal which was that the American position would be reprogrammed away, but the library and the library staff who had been employees of the U.S. Government for eighteen or twenty years would remain which I thought was OK. I would like to have kept the American, but I thought keeping the library was my goal and I accomplished that. Unfortunately, six months after I departed post they shut the library down. They did exactly what I feared, dumped the books over to Carnegie library where, I'm sure, to this day they are sitting on a shelf in the back someplace of no use to anybody.

Q: What was the arrangement you worked out? Would you or another American officer have the nominal responsibility?

HAYS: Yes. I designated one of the junior economic officers as the acting PAO which worked out very well and while I was there it was somebody who was good at it and liked it. It did a number of very good things. He was effectively 50% PAO, 50% economic officer which was about right for Surinam because you probably didn't need a fulltime economic officer.

Q: And possibly not a fulltime PAO?

HAYS: Yes, exactly. There was enough work to have a fulltime PAO, but you can scale it back. But again to me it was the library that was important and we saved it for awhile but again as I left, it went away.

Q: You said that you got the word at some point from your boss that you should concede and give up and you worked out something with USIA. I'm curious, who was your boss? It's always an issue when you're chief of mission.

HAYS: It might have been Donna Hrinak, who was the DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) for the Caribbean. It might have been Sally Cowal.

Q: Having been a chief of mission, I know you don't necessarily have one boss; you have multiple bosses.

HAYS: To give my experience. When I got to Guyana I had been DCM in Burundi and I wanted to be DCM again or chargé someplace. And my old friend Gene Scassa called me up and said I've got this great deal for you. Of course, later I find out that there had been a candidate who broke his assignment and several others who had turned it down. So maybe it wasn't that bouquet of roses that I thought it was going to be, but nevertheless, I liked it. It was a bigger embassy than Burundi, more Americans, more FSNs, more of the whole bit. It was in the Caribbean although at that point, I didn't realize that you could be in the Caribbean and not have beaches. And so I signed up. I got there and I think we've talked before about some of the particular hardships of the post, but I liked the work and I what liked Guyanese people who were fun to work with.

But at that point, we went through one of these cycles where all the DCM-ships were three years. Either in Paris or Guyana, it didn't matter, you were there three years. I was ready to go at the end of two or I knew I would be. So I went back to Gene and said, "Look, what can we do here? He said, now's not the time, the ambassador is leaving, and this, that and the other, and so I said, "OK, I'll stick around." The ambassador was Ambassador Terry Tull up to that point. She left in the summer of 1990, and so I became chargé and I loved being chargé; it was great, you figure you're in charge, you get to do things, you get extra money, they pay you for it. So, all that is to the good. The construction of the new embassy was coming along. We had elections coming up so there were things both professionally and lifestyle things that were interesting. Then the ambassadorial candidate, George Jones, said , "Well, I think I'm going to take some

course that's offered by the War College and if I do that, I probably won't get to post until the last week of August of 1990."

As you may know, poor George got caught up in this discussion with Helms on the release of documents from his days in Chile. He couldn't get a hearing. At first it was held up a few weeks and then it was a few months and it got to be more and more. Meanwhile, my third year was coming to an end. This was 1991. The elections started to loom up on the horizon. Carter was beginning to come down and things were happening. I, meanwhile, had been assigned to the War College which I was excited about because it was something I wanted to do. About April, Donna called me and said, "Look, George isn't going anywhere soon. With the elections and everything we would like you to stay until either George or someone else can get down there." So I thought about that a little bit. Again, I liked being chargé, I was making good money and I wanted to be there for the election and I wanted to be there for the new embassy to open. So I gave my list of non-negotiable demands, all of which were, of course, totally ignored before I said yes. Staffing and the library was a live issue at this point. I said, "Why don't you assign a new DCM here, and I'll stay as chargé. Then when George comes, I'll leave and there will be somebody to provide continuity, rather than me leaving because I didn't particularly want to go back, and I knew enough and had talked to enough people who had been a long-term chargé to know that going back to DCM can be sometimes a difficult transition.

Q: It's also difficult for the new ambassador.

HAYS: It's also difficult for the new ambassador. Particularly, in a small community there are only so many people to know and at that point, I would have been there three and a half years. They said, yes, yes, yes. Of course, it never happened. Anyway, so I stayed. We opened the new embassy which was a great event. It really it is a spectacular building. There's no particular reason for it to be in Georgetown, but it is a spectacular building. The elections were coming along with various delays. To show you how the State Department intelligence system works, around the first or second of December, I got a call from John Clark who was the Executive Director for ARA, and he said, "Dennis, George isn't going to make it. We're going to have to nominate somebody new. Plan on being there and coming out next summer. We're going to take care of you." So that was December first or second. December third I got a call from George who said, "Great news, I'm approved." I said, OK, great. George was a wonderful guy, and I was happy for him, but I began to wonder what I was going to do. So he ended up coming in January of 1992. He was super, a great guy to work with, and he was very conscious of that relationship. I knew enough to get out of town, and so I went after three weeks of opening cocktail parties on three weeks' vacation, came back and sort of phased out. I left in early June. I have great memories of George and the post. It was a good tour despite the fact, when you tell people you spent four years in Guyana you get the raised eyebrows and the "What the hell did you do?"

Q: Not only are there no beaches, but probably the cruise ships don't even come there?

HAYS: There are no cruise ships, no.

Q: Do you want to talk a bit more about President Carter and the Carter Center? I didn't realize you were chargé at the time.

HAYS: I think I'd talked earlier about when I went down there Desmond Hoyte was the new president on the death of Forbes Burnham. There were very, very low expectations for him. There was some willingness to say maybe he'll do some economic reforms. And, in fact, he did do a number of economic reforms that sort of helped. It didn't solve all the country's problems, but it moved them away from the self-destructive course that they had been on. On the political side, no one expected anything. To his credit I think he wanted Guyana to rejoin the community of nations. They were under pressure from the Commonwealth, from us, from the Europeans, and they had been treated like this for over the years. He also thought because of his economic reforms and just from being in power that he could win, particularly if the candidate against him was Cheddi Jagan. Cheddi's fault was that he was a Marxist without a sharp edge. If he had been a Castro, a Rawlings or any of these guys he never would have lost power in the first place. He had it, but he let it go. So he was still out there. A quick story on Cheddi which is indicative of how things worked. He used to go to these communist party gatherings that they would have, and he would sit kind of in the back because he wasn't a head of state at this point (in 1968.) He was eight or nine rows back in the audience. This was the time of the Czechoslovakian invasion. Apparently, a couple of speakers had gotten up from the communist party from Australia and they had criticized the Soviet Union for its actions. So when Cheddi gets up and launches into this attack on them that how dare they question the judgment, the commitment, the dedication of our fraternal brothers in the Soviet Union who protect us? He went on and on and on. So he gave this little speech and they broke for lunch and when they came back he was sitting next to Brezhnev. From that point on he was always a front row guy for the next twenty years. He moved up. He also got a Dacha on the Black Sea. Anyway, Hoyte wanted to have the election, but he wanted to win it obviously. The trick was to get him to actually have free and fair elections, and then accept the results.

Q: How did the Carter Center become engaged?

HAYS: At the request of the Guyanese government. They were looking for somebody to authenticate their efforts or lend legitimacy to them perhaps. They didn't want the Commonwealth at that point even though they were obviously a member of the Commonwealth, because the Commonwealth had been beating up on them regularly and had taken a side that they were wrong and bad and at fault. The Carter Center, to the best of anyone's memory, had never commented on Guyana one way or the other and so they came in with a clean slate. Pastor was still at the Carter Center in those days and was the action guy for this. They sent down a number of people including Amy Beale, the young woman who was killed in East Africa some years later. Carter made it clear that he would not put his credibility on the line unless they actually did move to free and fair elections. The big issue was voter identification cards and how you determine that the people who vote, only vote once. The election was postponed several times, and Carter came several times to break through the log jam and keep the process moving. There were a couple of

occasions where I thought from sitting in on the meetings that that's it, there's a rupture here, and the Guyanese aren't going to come back from this one, but they did, they kept coming back. Hoyte, in particular, felt that to win a disputed election would send the country spiraling further down. They weren't going to get international resources, they weren't going to get investment and so they had to do something. They had to satisfy Carter. I was quite impressed. He insisted on concrete results and not the sort of thing that you release a statement and get on the plane and fly away and then they give you another statement.

Q: You went to his meetings and worked closely with him, or did he want to keep you and the embassy of arms length at some times?

HAYS: There were occasions when he would go one-on-one with Hoyte or he would do a small group by himself, but he was pretty good about including us in the next circle out from there.

Q: He would debrief you on his private meetings?

HAYS: Yes, so I became a big fan of Carter at that point based on how he handled this. We'll see what he does with Castro. That's coming up. He's been invited to go to Havana.

Q: You were there when the elections actually did take place?

HAYS: Actually not. They postponed them beyond that. I kind of regretted that. I left in June 1992. The elections had been scheduled; the last one I thought I would make was in April 1992 but they were postponed too.

Q: Why were they postponed?

HAYS: Continuing problems over voter identification and registration. They were postponed until July and then they were postponed until late October when they finally did take place. Hoyte lost, and Cheddi won and they had a change of power. Whether Cheddi was the best thing for the country was another story, but they did have an election and a good result.

Q: What sort of relationship did you have with Cheddi Jagan?

HAYS: Reasonably good. When I first got there, he was referred to as a "spent force", as one of the British politicians referred to him. There was a sense that he would never come back. In fact, the best thing he could do would be to step aside and let a younger, weaker, more charismatic leader come forward. Nevertheless, he held on and his party, the PPP which was very much his creation so the inner circle were all people who had been with him forever and stayed loyal. So he was there. There was criticism occasionally based on "hold your own", in other words a racial appeal when he would go off into the rice country where it was basically 100% Indian population. But he was willing to talk to us. I

didn't see him all that often because there wasn't really any need to for most of the time I was there. His wife, who was American by birth, was also an interesting character, sort of your urban grandmother. A nice little old lady, but she was by far the tougher of the two, both in terms of ideology and also in terms of ruthlessness in exercising political power. And she ended up being Prime Minister when he died.

Q: At the time you were there would she have given up her American citizenship?

HAYS: Long before, yes.

Q: Georgetown is on the coast. To what extent did you or others in the embassy go upcountry or down-country, whatever it is called? Were the Peace Corps volunteers in the country at that time?

HAYS: We were negotiating to have Peace Corps and by the end of my time we had a Peace Corps presence. They tended to be along the coast area, they tended not to be up country. This was very different from Surinam where they were deliberately sent upcountry. Yes, I tried to get up fairly often, but there wasn't much structure to do that. You could go to Kaieteur which is a spectacular waterfall with a 740' vertical drop with a whole river that goes over the cliff. That's the "one must see" tourist spot in the country, and we would often go down to the Brazilian border to another series of step falls there that was quite nice. The Rupununi area which is the whole southern part of Guyana was a high savannah. In fact, the world's largest cattle ranch is up there, something like 1.2 million acre cattle farm, bigger than the King Ranch. It was interesting also because at the time of independence there was a brief movement in Rupununi, the Americans who were there who had done cattle drives during World War II up to Georgetown and then off to Europe, thought about going over to Venezuela. They were actually in negotiations with the Venezuelans for this. There was only one airfield in this entire area, and it had been blocked with 50-gallon drums. The Guyanese eventually parachuted in some guys to clear the air field to bring in an airplane and one guy got killed, a local. But then they reestablished control of the area. But it was a huge open area.

And an issue for all these countries is the Brazilian influx. The fact, that this river is Brazil on one side and Guyana on the other has little impact on the immigration flow. You had thousands and thousands of Brazilians – in Surinam they tend to be gold miners, in Guyana they are homesteaders – which creates problems like people getting killed on the road because the Brazilians drive on the right and the Guyanese drive on the left. Several people died in head on crashes in Guyana because the other guy is on the wrong side of the road. But my fear given that there was no frontier, go West young man, go South young man mentality among the Guyanese – they all work to get out of the country to Europe or America – that within two or three generations all of these areas starting in Venezuela and working across Guyana and Surinam and French Guyana will be Portuguese speaking and effectively be Brazil.

Q: Where did you go next?

HAYS: I did a year at the War College and then to Cuban affairs.

Q: And you finally did get your year at the War College, even though it was a year late?

HAYS: It was part of the agreement they did keep.

Q: You went from Georgetown as DCM to the National War College. Did you want to say anything about that?

HAYS: Yes. There was one thing that struck me there. I took a course that was basically war gaming. The whole semester was on war gaming, and it culminated in a large exercise down at Maxwell Air Force Base, the Air War College, where they brought in people from the different War Colleges and we played this large war game. The scenario was the North Koreans were getting ready to invade the South, and they had all sorts of internal problems. The reason I bring this up is since I was the State Department guy they weren't going to let me touch any of their tanks or ships or anything. So I got the rest of the world to deal with. So looking at it, I developed a scenario that had ships being scuttled in the Panama Canal and troops massing at the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border and there was a humanitarian disaster in Africa. Lots of things that in real life would shift people's attention or focus, or at least freeze assets, or in the case of the Panama Canal, prevent them from ever getting there. What struck me was that all of these were ignored. The referees decided that it didn't happen. The ship didn't blow up in the Panama Canal, actually it was discovered, etc. And what I got out of that was that the solution to the problem was air power. It may have been because we were at Maxwell Air Force Base, but for the referees and judges clearly the answer to the problem was air power. As we have seen in many cases that may well be the answer, but I don't think it's going to be the answer in every case. It's sort of a dangerous thread, I thought, to rely on one aspect that may not be borne out in all circumstances.

Q: It sounds like there was predisposition in that direction.

HAYS: Very much so. There was no question at the end of the day air power was going to solve the problem.

Q: I assume your entire class of the National War College didn't go down to this. It was just a few members?

HAYS: This particular class was an actual class that we went to for the whole semester that built up to this. There were about 15 or 20 of us. Curiously, this was right when Waco was going on. They had these TV screens that would occasionally show the game stuff, but the rest the time they had CNN on and that, of course, was much more interesting than to see what the gamers were coming up with. Otherwise, it was a wonderful year.

Q: After that, where were you assigned and how did that come about?

HAYS: At the War College, I was promoted into the Senior Foreign Service, and so I was looking for my onward assignment right away because it was a one year course. I went back to ARA which was my home bureau and naturally talked with them first. Bob Gelbard was the Principle Deputy at that point and out of the blue he just said, "How would you like to be the Coordinator for Cuban affairs?" I said, "Well, that's nice, but I don't speak Spanish and I have Cuban-American friends and so I know something about it, but I don't know much about the island or the issues." In the usual State Department fashion, he said, "That's OK, you'll pick it up as you go along." So it sounded interesting, and I wanted to be an office director so I took it. I went back, and during the remainder of my time at the War College I started reading up as best I could on the subject.

When I came in, which was probably in mid-June when I graduated from the War College, and I started the next day in Cuban Affairs in June 1993 so it was just as the Clinton administration was getting its people into place. With Cuban policy there were a lot of cross currents as there always are. There were a lot of people, I think, who assumed that when a Democratic administration came in after twelve years of a Republican administration there would be a change, a rather radical change, to a policy of engagement and normalization as there had been several steps during the Carter time. Something that happened on the campaign trail changed that equation a bit. The then chairman Jorge Mas of the organization that I now work for, the Cuban-American National Foundation – whether it was reading the winds or what – had seen that Clinton was going to win, and so they had a meeting with Clinton at the Tampa Airport where they had a big bear hug, which was certainly publicized quite a lot around south Florida and his constituency. And he came away from that meeting with a Margaret Thatcheresque "Here's a man we can do business with." Whether it had a bearing on the election or not, it had a clear bearing on Cuban policy. Because Clinton felt there was a political debt or obligation or maybe an opportunity would be a better way to put it to pair off the one Hispanic American group which was traditionally, and still predominantly, Republican as opposed to Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Guatemalans, what have you. So seeing that opportunity, he was a not of a mind – and I'm reading in here – to do anything that would unduly upset that constituency, especially in the absence of any other constituency getting a benefit which then might be to his political advantage. In other words, if you change Cuban policy, particularly in the early 1990's, you would have a million and a half people very angry at you, and you would have almost nobody or a few thousand leftist intellectuals who would be happy with you.

Q: And they probably supported Clinton anyway?

HAYS: They supported Clinton anyway, yes. So you had at the Presidential level someone who didn't want to see problems. The Vice President, Al Gore I always thought cared more about the issue and knew more about the issue, but it was basically the same thing. And then you got to the next level down of people who very much did want to change policy and I think saw this as their opportunity to make a mark on history, on policy or what have you. They wanted to change policy, but they couldn't do it directly because the President didn't want to see that happen. He didn't want to hear about it. So

then you came down to the working level, that being primarily the State Department people, where you had Mike Skol who was the PDAS (Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary), Alec Watson was the Assistant Secretary and then there was me. I started out fairly traditional State Department, if you will, in the sense of "Hey, there's got to be a better way, there must be some common ground, some mutual interests, some confidence building measures, something that we can do here to thaw out the situation which has existed for the past 30 odd years."

Q: Talking is better than fighting?

HAYS: Talking is better than fighting or not talking. It became very clear to me as I read more, learned more, talked to people and particularly dealt with the Cubans themselves that they weren't interested in that. If not enjoying a basically hostile relationship, they saw no reason to change on their side in order to engender change on our side. They were happy to have us change our policy to their benefit, but they weren't prepared to do anything for it. I scratched my head for a while and came up with the explanation that their system is built on not just on political control but on economic control. In fact, the genius of Castro is that he's figured out that by controlling the economic life of the individual you also control the political life. And so everything in Cuba is structured around funneling the individual into a situation where there's only the individual at stake. There are no intervening or softening organizations or institutions. And Castro having looked at what happened in Eastern Europe and seeing what happened in Russia and other places said there's no benefit for me to go down this road, and therefore we're not. And so they have this very hard line, I think, when it comes to anything that changes the internal dynamic of the island.

So I became a fairly hard liner rather soon into my tenure although I didn't start out that way. Mike Skol was pretty much a hard liner, Alec not so much. He had other things, other parts of Latin America to worry about and so he delegated it to Mike. As for the White House guys, in particular at the NSC (National Security Council), Feinberg, Tony Lake, and Sandy Berger, gave me the very clear impression that what they wanted us to change the policy so that when there was an outcry, then we would be the scapegoats who could be sacrificed and chastised appropriately. It would be <u>fait accompli</u> and the dynamic is such that you don't go back in the absence of major new issues. They weren't prepared to tell us to do that, and again, I think particularly early in my tenure if I had been told we want to find a way to do this, this and this, I probably would have saluted and said, "OK, we can certainly move in that direction." But they would never actually say that. I'm sure they thought we were dolts or something. They were sending all these signals about what they wanted without actually saying it so at no point in the future could we go back and say the NSC told us to do this.

From my vantage point down below, it also appeared that they tried to broach the subject a couple of times with the President and were rebuffed with the line that if it's not a problem, why make it a problem? My sense, and I don't want to be too harsh, for Clinton Cuba was something that he just didn't want to deal with. He didn't see any particular advantage to having it an issue. He wanted it to not to be a problem. The only time it

became a problem was when it was forced upon him; the rafter crisis of 1994, for instance, which again was embedded in the midst of the Haitian crisis that was going on about the same time. So all of these pushing and pulling forces were going on there.

Q: Did anybody pay much attention to Cuban affairs other than ARA, it's Assistant Secretary and DAS?

HAYS: Peter Tarnoff was P, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. The best I could tell is that he and the then D (Deputy Secretary) Talbott at that point, divided the world into who would look after different pieces of it and Cuba fell into Tarnoff's area . And of course, he was in close contact with the NSC, with Berger, in particular, and so I put him in the camp of people who would like to see his underlings show some initiative and do something, and if it works, then everybody gets a medal, and if it doesn't work you've been a bad boy and on you go.

Q: How about other bureaus, Human Rights for example?

HAYS: Human Rights to a certain degree, Economic only peripherally.

Q: How about other agencies?

HAYS: The Agency, of course, maintained a strong interest, and they had been burned horribly, badly. I'm sure you know the story of the video tapes that were shown on Cuban TV. Basically, in the mid to late eighties, the Agency had a full operation with lots of contacts and agents in place. The trouble was that every single one of them was a Cuban agent, and that they were videotaped everywhere they went, every step that took, every meeting they had, every drop they made was on videotape. The Cubans at a certain point decided to go public with all this, and so they broadcast it all over television for several days, as a series of reports. The entire mission was destroyed; it was rendered useless. So in this time period they were still a little shy about going back. They had people there, but my impression was they were shell-shocked, and they were not being very aggressive about getting out again.

Q: How about the Department of Commerce or the Department of Agriculture?

HAYS: Again, only very peripherally. At this point, there was nothing like the current push on agriculture exports. Things were tough in Cuba. Remember this was the time when the Soviet subsidies had been cut. Gorbachev went to see Castro in 1989 and said, "I have some bad news and some good news. The bad news is we're cutting you off your five or $6 billion a year, and the good news is we have this new thing called perestroika and glasnost and you're going to love it." And of course, Castro, being smarter in these things than Gorbachev, said, "Don't do it, you're insane, don't do it, you're throwing it all away." Well, where is Gorbachev today and where is Castro? From Castro's logic that was the worst thing that Gorbachev could have done. Castro's still in power, and Gorbachev, he's not even doing pizza commercials anymore so who knows where he is.

Q: How about members of Congress, Senators?

HAYS: At that point, there had been a long period when almost no one had gone to Cuba. There was just no interest on either side really. By this time it was starting to come back. You were seeing congressional delegations, usually one or two as compared to what you see now, seven or eight at a time. They would go down and they were the traditional members of Congress who were interested in the issues. On one side, you had Senator Dodd and Congressman Rangel and Congressman Serrano and some others who, for lack of a better term, had come from sort of the leftist side of this. On the other side, there were three Cuban American members of Congress, two Republicans and one Democrat, two from Florida and one from New Jersey, plus others such as Senator Helms, Senator Torricelli who had been traditionally linked to the issue and was very active.

Q: Torricelli was then a Congressman, I think, wasn't he?

HAYS: He was a Congressman, that's right.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about the support or the relationship you had with the U.S. Interests' Section in Havana?

HAYS: It was pretty good. Joe Sullivan went down to Havana just about the time I came into the office. In fact, we did some of our introductory courtesy calls at the Pentagon and other places together. Joe, as you remember, was one of these guys who got caught up and couldn't get confirmed because he had various holds on him in the Senate at that point, and the Havana position was a chief of mission equivalent, although it didn't require a Senate confirmation. So he went there, and the other guy, Mike Kozak who was in the same boat for a while, went there after him.

Q: And Sullivan subsequently has been confirmed, maybe a couple of times.

HAYS: Yes, at least once and maybe twice, and Kozak also. The Interest Section at that point was beginning a complete renovation of the building which was the original embassy building. They had a fairly tough time. The Cubans were still pretty rough on them; the human rights officer was always being harassed, his car would be bumped into in traffic, and dogs would be killed, just nasty, petty stuff. Just letting people know that they, the Cuban security guys, are there. I went to Havana four times in two years. A couple of those were tied to the migration talks. The first time was the basic orientation visit for any new country director. The other thing that I think I did a little differently than some of my predecessors was to try to deal with the Miami community. I had gotten advice from one of my predecessors to never leave the transit lounge in the Miami Airport. You just don't want to do it. My sense was you couldn't really deal with the Cuban issue unless you dealt with both sides of the strait, or at least were aware of what was going on. I made an effort to go to Miami fairly frequently. I would accept invitations to speak at the University of Miami seminar or a Miami Herald journalist workshop or stuff like that. I would look for ways to go down there and then go out and

try to establish some form of contact with all the different Cuban-American groups, of which there are a lot in South Florida.

Q: How about dealing with the Cuban Interests Section in Washington?

HAYS: We had the formal contact and a little bit of informal contact. There was a man named Alfonso Fraga who was the ambassador who I just saw is now ambassador to Chile. He seemed to have been in the doghouse for a few years, but he seems to have climbed out again. He was head of the section, and I'm sure he's a nice man. He came across probably not in the best way. He was almost a caricature of a Russian apparatchik. He was a fairly short and stocky man, didn't speak very good English, didn't dress particularly well and he was very dogmatic. You could not argue any issue with him, there was no give, just absolutely none. So that dynamic was there, but on a professional basis we got along reasonably well. There was another guy Raphael Dausa, who I always assumed was one of their intel guys and is now up at the UN and who we also had contact with fairly frequently. With Fraga we actually did the first US Government - Cuban Government debate at the University of Minnesota, probably in early 1994, and then I did the same thing with Dausa at Ohio State six months later.

Q: Their main point of contact with the Department of State would be your office of Coordinator for Cuban affairs?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: But they also circulated elsewhere in government like most diplomats?

HAYS: It was a little tougher in those days. Normally Fraga would come in and see the DAS on most occasions. We tried to keep the level down to my level. This was the time that you could wander around the Department, no matter who you were. You could just sort of come in and wander around. It was strange. I remember one time he showed up unexpectedly. I invited him into my office, and I was sitting there talking to him, and it occurred to me that my computer was on and that it was on the index default setting the old computers had. One of the lines was the name of a Cuban colonel who was on the verge of defecting In Europe. I'm sitting there thinking, can he see the computer screen from where he's sitting? I was pretty sure not. His eyes would've had to have been pretty good to pick that out, but I managed to call in my deputy to talk to him and quickly canceled out of the screen. The guy eventually defected so they didn't find him. Let me mention Nancy Mason was my deputy at that point.

Q: How large was the office? You had a deputy? Were there others too?

HAYS: We were growing. At the time I started, there was my position, the deputy, there was an economic, a political, and a consular officer and two secretaries. I guess that was it when we started. We added people as we went through the rafter crisis and some of the legislative needs. We eventually grew to probably double that.

Q: Do you want to talk about some of the issues and problems that you had to deal with? Start with the rafter crisis or something else, if you'd like.

HAYS: OK, we can start with the rafter crisis. For about ten years we had been having periodic, twice a year, migration talks with the Cubans. The big issue for us was the repatriation of the Mariel excludables of 1980. In the Mariel boatlift, among other things, Castro had opened all of the prisons and asylums, the hospitals and everything else he could find to push people into the States. And so, despite this sort of blanket admission that was given, there were specific reasons some couldn't be admitted and there were people who were just never eligible. Many of them were held, and this was now twelve or thirteen years later, and they were still being basically held in detention.

Q: How many are we talking about?

HAYS: Of the ones we wanted to get back, there were about 3,000 left at this point. Some of them were extremely violent criminals, some of them were suffering from AIDS. There were all kinds of problems, not just you go back home. Actually, the Justice Department handled this, and of course INS was the other Federal agency that most directly dealt with Cuban issues. They wanted to send all these people back, and the ideal way would have been to put everyone on a plane at once and fly them down there. The Cubans, obviously, didn't want that to happen, but there had been sort of an accommodation where x per month would be sent down after a process of sending files so they could reacclimatize them to Cuban society.

Q: So they basically knew who was coming and agreed to accept them?

HAYS: Yes, they would have a name by name acceptance. In one of our early migration discussions we got to the point of saying fifty a month. So if you figure five or six hundred a year, it's going to take five or six years to empty everybody out. And often you wouldn't get that because you'd start at 50 but there would be reasons several would fall out, so on an average you might have 35 or 40 on a flight that actually went back.

The Cuban side was headed up by my opposite number, a man named Bienvenido Garcia who was the director for North America, and we worked out quite a nice system where we had home and away migration talks. So we took them to Atlanta the first time and held a couple of days of migration talks. The headquarters office in Atlanta was very supportive, and we took them to a Braves game and took them to Stone Mountain, out to restaurants and everything. It was a nice event. The next time, six months later, we went to Santiago, Cuba and had the same thing, the Tropicana. It was the wrong season for a ballgame, which was too bad. Then the rafter crisis broke out. Castro works very hard to maintain this aura of infallibility, but he makes a lot of mistakes. He usually makes mistakes in estimating how much people want to get away from his workers' paradise. Mariel, as you may remember, at first was a couple of people who went into the Peruvian embassy. He said if these gusanos want to leave, let them go, and overnight we had 10,000 people in the embassy there. And he said, OK, well, if these guys want to leave

they can go to Mariel and get out of here I don't care. It was up to 125,000 that left before he said no.

One of the things that we were arguing was that we wanted to send criminals back to Cuba. The Cubans were saying two things – that we were too restrictive on our immigration policy and they didn't understand why when the law said they could have 20,000 per year, they didn't get 20,000 per year. So we would always explain, well, that's a ceiling that every country has is up to 20,000 and lots of countries don't come anywhere close to that. And there's an overall. We would have these INS guys there with charts and slide shows. But they just didn't understand and said why should we get 20,000 and we only get 4 or 5,000? This is then forcing people to go in rafts. Part of Castro's genius is he has always made it difficult for you to stay and very easy for you to leave. It's one thing to be a dissident in Havana and another thing to be a dissident in Miami. It just doesn't have the same weight. So he doesn't mind people leaving, he never has, unlike the East Germans or others. If a million leave, he's got a million more. What does he care? It's not a problem, but he doesn't like the image of people in rafts and babies and the aerial photographs of people begging for mercy to leave the country. He never liked that. So over the previous two years there had been an increase in the number of rafters who left the country. It wasn't a lot, but it was definitely an up tick. At this time, the spring of '94, conditions in Cuba were getting very bad. The subsidies had stopped, the Cubans were sort of thrashing around to find some other way to bring in revenue, the Chinese weren't prepared to adopt them, the Europeans would do only so much and they wanted something in return and so times were tough. People were hungry, and there was a lot of internal tension and dissent.

When I came into the job, a lot of people said, "Oh, my God. We have to lift the embargo because people are starving in Cuba, everybody's hungry, everybody's starving and you need to lift the embargo." The embargo had nothing to do with people being hungry, in my opinion. What it had to do with is the fact that you had a tropical island that had fed itself for 400 years but now can't because they chopped down all the mango trees in order to plant sugar. The area is inappropriate for sugar, but nevertheless they did it. And interestingly they now import mangoes from the Dominican Republic to feed the tourists because they have cut down all the mango trees. People were hungry. There were a lot of electrical blackouts in the cities, even in Havana, although usually Havana gets the best of everything, but even Havana was suffering from blackouts. So people were angry and upset and a lot of them took to the water to get out.

The most serious incident of civic unrest occurred in early August 1994. There was a riot in the dock areas. People went after the dollar stores and the foreign hotels and started trashing them. The Cubans isolated the area, cleverly cordoned off the area to keep people from coming in and imposed a blackout of the news so that other parts of the island couldn't find out about this. Once they had it cordoned off and people got tired or drunk or frustrated or whatever, then they sent in these construction brigades who had the good jobs of building hotels but also had a political function of taking tire irons in and whacking away. So they were able to contain that, but I think it worried them. In this time period, Raul, Castro's brother, who is the guy who looks after the army was able to

convince Fidel that they needed to relax the food issue, the farmers' market, they call it, and the food starvation issue went away immediately. It's still a very tightly controlled with about 9% of the land under more or less private control, and they produce something like 53% of all the food. Clearly it worked but they only let it work for so far.

More and more people were rafting out. Castro was making noises like Mariel, i.e. people were betraying the revolution and he really didn't want them and so our government was getting more and more concerned. CNN, I think on two occasions broke in to broadcast speeches by Castro live which is always a mistake and after about an hour and a half, they break in and say we'll be back but now we'll go to regular programming. Nevertheless, there was clearly a threat there that he was going to let things go. And in fact, he did, and it reached the point where the border patrol they had, the police and the army, would stand by. There was no announcement; there was not anything formal, but the Cubans would notice that the police patrol didn't come within 100 yards of where they were building their raft to get away. Once that word got out, there was much more of a flood. There were lots and lots of people; babies, grandma, everybody getting into rafts and be going. A lot of people died. No one knows how many, but there were a lot of people who were dead. And again, as I mentioned earlier, there was a Haitian migration crisis going on at the same time.

One of its things that changed the dynamic was when we saw people drowning the Coast Guard came in closer, and they were just off the twelve mile marker. So now the equation changed. You didn't have to build a raft to get 90 miles; you can build a raft to get you twelve miles. And so there was another huge wave of people building rafts.
In the whole time leading up to this, there was a lot of talk about no more Mariels. We didn't want to have another Mariel. The distinguishing feature of the Mariel, of course, was that people in South Florida got on boats, went to Havana or Mariel, picked people up and came back. That's how people got there. So always fighting the last war, we had great contingency plans that actually worked exceptionally well to prevent that from happening. There would be a state of emergency declared, the Coast Guard would quarantine the corridor and boats would not be allowed to leave South Florida. So that was the plan. I remember clearly at one interagency meeting asking what about people coming in boats from Cuba? The Agency had done a study from their satellite reconnaissance. They had taken a 100 or 200 mile stretch of the north coast of Havana, and they counted every boat, and they said if every boat leaves Cuba full of people maybe eighteen or 20,000 people can come out. The assumption was that if they got into a boat and came to South Florida the boat would go back. That's the maximum number of people who could possibly come out. What nobody, myself included, thought of, of course, was what if they build more boats because in order to do that they had to have the complicity of the Cuban government. We didn't quite make that leap that here's something that could happen. It was a valuable lesson.

So we started seeing people building these boats, using old tires, and pieces of wood and what have you. And the numbers kept going up and up and up. There was also a contingency plan to receive people in the United States. INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) had a plan that we would bring folks in. There was a discussion

whether under the circumstances it would be temporarily or permanent parole that they would receive. It's worth remembering that Clinton had a very bad experience with Cubans who were sent to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas when he was governor. Some people said he lost the election, the only election he ever lost, because of the handling of that. There were riots and everything.

Q: That was at the time of Mariel?

HAYS: Yes. There was a plan to use Homestead and other military bases as safe havens and then the decision would be made if any or all would be admitted to the United States or whether they would be returned or whether they would be processed through third countries. All these options were out there. The point was that there was a plan to deal with this.

Q: You said people were also leaving Haiti at the same time and there was a question of differential treatment? Perhaps that's what you're coming to next.

HAYS: Yes. For instance, we were looking at where we can hold people. Surinam, for instance, came up. CINCSOUTH went to Surinam and met with some of the people I refused to meet with later on. Nevertheless, he made a deal and there was an arrangement there to take refugees, both Haitians and Cubans. They actually sent in some construction teams to build some slabs, but they never got around to it. For one thing it is a long way away from there. There were other third country teams going all over the place asking countries to take large numbers of refugees. Some of them, like the Turks and Caicos were willing to take refugees, but someone pointed out that the odds in any given year of hurricanes hitting the Turks and Caicos is something like 70%. What happens if a hurricane comes and you have 20,000 people in tents? It's probably not a good thing. So all of these things were bubbling around here. It reached the point where there was a perception that the numbers coming out were so great that it was going to overload the system in South Florida. In 1994 there was an off year election and it was coming up. The governorship of Florida, for instance, was coming up. Lawton Chiles was running against Jeb Bush and how this played was obviously of some concern. When Castro opened up the floodgates and let everybody go, we were seeing 600, 700 or 800 a day that were coming out. They were being picked up, and then they would be ferried to South Florida and processed through the system. The system actually was able to handle that number. It was working. It was tough, it was expensive, but basically, it was a process that was working.

The perception, however, was that we had to stop it. In order to stop it, we had to get rid of Castro, that was it. The argument that myself and a few others tried to make is that we always see this as us having a problem. We forget that the other guy has a problem too. In our case, we clearly had a humanitarian issue. All these people showing up and families separated, people drowning and all this stuff which is not good. From the Cuban perspective though, it's a different thing. Inside Cuba it had reached the point where basically the country had come to a standstill. Everybody was either getting onto a raft, building a raft, selling material to build a raft or standing around and watching all of the

above. So basically the country ground to a halt. Nothing was going on. And that has regime-threatening aspects to it. It was my opinion, we never seriously considered what that meant in terms of policy or in terms of negotiating power; understanding that Castro had a problem too. It wasn't just our problem that we needed his help to solve. I mean he had a problem. He needed our help to solve it also.

Q: We were talking about your assignment as Coordinator of Cuban Affairs in the early 1990's in the early Clinton administration, particularly the rafter crisis. You had described it in quite a bit of detail. Maybe we ought to turn to the resolution, particularly how the policy issues were dealt with at that time.

HAYS: As August 1994 went on, the number of rafters kept increasing more and more and more each day. It is important to note we, the U.S. government, had a plan to deal with the rafter crisis. Primarily it was a plan that was written in the wake of Mariel. If you remember what happened with Mariel, people from South Florida got in boats and they went to Cuba and picked people up and brought them back. There was a way to deal with this which was basically the Coast Guard would shut down the ports in South Florida which would then prevent people from getting to Cuba. The thought was that would minimize the outflow. We actually thought about people who would get on boats in Cuba, and as I remember the Agency had done a survey and had looked from one end of the coast to the other and there was a feeling that if every boat in Cuba was used, about 25,000 people could get out. This was working on the assumption that the boats would not be returned to Cuba. The people would get out, and they would either capture the boat or it would sink.

Q: Not much attention was given to the possibility of building new rafts?

HAYS: That's correct, and because the Coast Guard and Navy knew that people were drowning, they moved in closer right up to the twelve mile mark and therefore you didn't have to build a boat that would go 90 miles, you only needed to build a build a boat that could go twelve miles. So the numbers were increasing and pressure was building, building, building. South Florida had a system in place to process the level of people that were coming out so we were in a crisis but it was not an overwhelming crisis. Two side issues impacted on this; the first one was that there also was also an outflow of the boat people from Haiti at this time and there were the questions of distinction between Haiti and Cuba. The short answer to that, of course, was we had used military force to restore "democracy" to Haiti whereas that was not an option that anyone was considering with respect to Cuba. The second thing that was happening was there was a gubernatorial race with Lawton Chiles running for reelection again against Jeb Bush. These were factors.

When the various options were looked at, as to where we could put people, one of the problems was that there weren't any real good places. We could do third country placement up to a certain point. We looked around, including at Surinam, interestingly. That was an option, and they went so far as to put down concrete slabs to prepare for that. But it came back again and again, just like it has with the current immigration, to the fact

that in Guantanamo Base we have an area outside the U.S. jurisdiction and it's a military closed area with nowhere to go.

The decision to turn people back to Cuba or rather to send them to Guantanamo was never fully vetted in the interagency system. In fact, the decision was made, and I'm pretty confident about this, by Mort Halperin who was at the NSC at this point basically typing up a resolution and taking it to Tony Lake. The two of them then took it to the President, who I understand asked, "Is everyone OK with this?" He was told, yes, this will work. I can tell you for an absolute fact that no one else in the U.S. government knew this was going to happen. I was called by Senator Graham who was asking me because he had heard rumors, and of course, I said, "No, nothing like that is going on." I was in the room with Janet Reno who had no idea that this was going to happen, the Agency didn't know and certainly, the State Department didn't know. There was a fait accompli that basically went out from the White House that changed 40 years of U.S. policy. Then it was a question of scrambling to implement what the president had decided. Needless to say, there were a lot of loose ends. There were a lot of Cuban refugees who were in Miami in the final stages of processing; there were some who were just coming off the boats; some that were on boats who had not yet come ashore and there were some that were ten or twenty miles out. Where did each of these groups fit? And there were some executive decisions. The county administrator in Miami at one point just told the bus drivers to keep moving, and he got people out of the detention centers – probably about five hundred people – that otherwise would have been locked up in these containment facilities.

So as we were scrambling, of course, there was political fallout from that too. There was a delegation that came up the following night from Miami including Jorge Mas Canosa, members of the Miami City Council and some prominent Cuban democrats who met with the President. They basically provided their blessing in return for certain actions of tightening up on some travel remittances and some other areas. The sub-note on this is that the community in South Florida did have a slightly different view in 1994 than it did in 1980. Again, in 1980 it was people who themselves at risk to go back to Cuba to pick up immediate relatives: their mother, a grandmother, a brother, a cousin, the guy they went to school with, somebody. They had a purpose for going. In 1994 it was more random of people just coming out so there were not the same family ties there. So although the community very much was opposed to the idea of sending people to Guantanamo or, Heaven forbid, sending them back to Cuba, there wasn't the same sort of familial tie to this crisis as there had been to the earlier one.

Now we were sending people to Guantanamo and in return for this, of course, Castro was going to tighten up on the exits, but there was still a fair number of people coming out and Guantanamo was getting more and more full. I remember there were a lot of conversations about how many people could be in Guantanamo at any one time. The Turks and Caicos had about an 80% chance it was going to get hit by a hurricane, and so nobody wanted to put people in the Turks and Caicos even though they were prepared to talk to us. In Guantanamo the figure was always about 25,000 and that included the Haitians of which there were about 10,000 or 12,000 at that point already there plus the

Cubans. They said, “Oh, my God, we can’t take anymore, we can’t take anymore. There’s no room, there’s no space.” Finally, after the fifth or sixth meeting one guy asked, “What if we use the golf course?” And without missing a beat, the DOD (Department of Defense) guy said, “Then I think 150,000.” So they weren’t prepared to volunteer to give up their golf course, but it was there if somebody asked the right question which they finally did, and we never did have any more discussions about space.

As all the people were pouring into Guantanamo there was a realization early on that this was not sustainable over time. The question was what can we do with all these people? And again, remember this was imposed on the Federal bureaucracy against our judgment and will, but there it was. So there was a discussion of different options, one was the Hong Kong option where you turned Guantanamo into a free market colony which would be an example of what Cuba could be as opposed to what it was. Someone added up how many billion dollars that would take and that was dismissed. So instead, it was well, what we can do to help keep this operation self-sustaining, and the military had some very legitimate concerns about what would happen when you kept all these people locked up. The population was predominantly young males, although there were little kids, young girls, pregnant women, old folks, there was the whole mix. What we were doing was for a humanitarian purpose. I don’t know that we ever articulated this as a policy, but everybody knew that we would try to get the most vulnerable people in Guantanamo out on parole on a humanitarian basis. Pregnant women, there’s an easy one. Elderly people who had medical problems, there’s another easy one. Then you get into kids, particularly the kids who had immediate relatives in the States already, and then you got to young girls, who I don’t want to say became prostituted, but who suddenly became subject to a lot of stress and strain. What you're doing is that you’re taking the people out who to some degree are the calming, stabilizing part of the population, and you are left with young males who can only play so much volleyball before they really get tired. A few people voluntarily went back to Cuba, but not that many.

In my trips to Gitmo (Guantanamo Bay Naval Base) I was struck that the Cubans did a pretty good job of organizing themselves by camps. They had camp leaders, if somebody was a doctor, he took over that role, if somebody was an architect, he started designing and building new latrine systems. Whatever it was, they were doing a pretty good job of it. Every time we took a new group out, we tried not to advertise it, although the areas of South Florida wanted to hear that the pregnant women were coming out. Castro, of course, didn’t want to hear it, because his point, with some legitimacy, was that if you make it look like it’s just a weigh station – you go to Gitmo and play volleyball for four months and then you go to Miami – that will increase the outflow. So every time we lowered the population of the camp we would worry about rising numbers of rafters coming out. We were faced with how to resolve this problem. The best option we had, which wasn’t much, was to tell the Cubans, “Look, this is not sustainable.” We wanted to get the message across that this time we mean it. We would basically grandfather in everybody who was in Guantanamo, except the hardcore criminals and the insane, but in the future we were going to be really tough and would only do third-country placement if people were caught.

We were now up to April 1995, and it was time for another of the semiannual migration talks. The Cubans had bumped up their representation from a year ago, and had gone from basically my counterpart which is where the talks had been up to that point to Ricardo Alarcon, who was arguably the number three guy in the hierarchy there and President of the National Assembly. Originally, they had scheduled these talks on the seventeenth of April which, of course, is the anniversary of the Bay of Pigs, not a good day to have this. So I suggested we push it back a day to have it on the eighteenth. When we got to the talks in New York at the Cuban mission, my instructions were to find a way to get the Cubans to agree to our continuing to draw down numbers at Guantanamo without having them threaten to open the floodgates again. Unbeknownst to me, there were secret negotiations going on between Alarcon and Tarnoff, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. They were meeting in Toronto. On the seventeenth, the day we didn't meet, they had a meeting, and then we met and then had a break, and they met a second time.

Q: Unbeknownst to you?

HAYS: Unbeknownst to me. Why was it unbeknownst to me? I suspect it was because what was proposed, I felt, was not very well thought out. We took a deal that wasn't in our best interests and wasn't what we could have gotten. In fact, we didn't ask for anything and so we didn't get anything. If I had been asked earlier, I would have bureaucratically, like a good Foreign Service Officer, written a memo and sent it around to everybody and said, "Here are some things, and here are some other things, and we can ask for this, this and this. At a minimum for this particular deal to go through, we need to have this, this and that." So it didn't happen. I think the White House was interested in resolving this issue. This gets back to something I'm sure I said earlier; it was a nice doggy, don't bother me type of approach rather than a more pro-active one. In any event, as I was going back and forth with Alarcon, and I had my team including INS (the Immigration and Naturalization Service) and other people all sitting around with none of them having a clue what's going on either, the other discussion was taking place. Curiously, Alarcon pulled me aside during the second day, and he gave me a hypothetical which was in fact the deal that was offered. As I remember I said something like, "Oh, that's very interesting. We'd like to look at that." And I sent it back in cable form. Here's a proposal. However, he's asking for this, without giving that and what have you. I didn't think much more about it other than it was an interesting kind of idea. The talks concluded inconclusively, other than an agreement that we would meet more frequently like in three months rather than in six months.

Q: These talks were alternating between Cuba and New York?

HAYS: Before the crisis, we had a good deal. We would take the Cubans to some place in the United States, like Atlanta which had been the previous one, and we would go to a Braves game and see Stone Mountain and that sort of thing and they would take us to someplace in Cuba. The one I went on was to Santiago and we already had it planned out; we were going to go to New Orleans and they were going to take us to Trinidad. It was very collegial and we did some serious business, but we could also see something of each

other's country. Once Alarcon came in he insisted that it either be Washington or New York because they had missions there and he had to be at his mission. And Washington was out for us, and so we ended up with the Cubans always going to New York and in return they always sent us to Havana.

As an aside, after I finished these talks, I had a scheduled speech that I was giving in New Jersey which has the second largest concentration of Cuban Americans. Although I'm generally perceived as a hardliner on the issue, I was attacked as some form of "communista" by this particular group. In particular, they said, "We know there are secret negotiations going on, and you're not telling us about them". I stood up there and said, "Look, I'm telling you, if there were secret negotiations going on, I would know about them. So I can assure you there are no secret negotiations going on at this time." I went back to Washington, and I had the flu, and so I took a day off and then I started getting phone calls, "Something's happening, something's happening" from a friend in DOD. The Agency said, "Hey, what's going on? What's happening? Something's happening." And again, I didn't know there was anything in particular, but there were enough phone calls that it was clear that something was going on.

Let me very briefly talk about my specific concern with the decision, which was to forcibly return people to Cuba. In the agreement that was signed, it specifically said that the government of the United States and the government of the Republic of Cuba jointly guarantee that no adverse action will be taken against people who are returned to Cuba. That's interesting because if you see what is told to migrants now by the Coast Guard, the little form that they read, it says the Republic of Cuba guarantees. Somehow the United States was taken out of the guarantee in the things that we tell people. In theory, an inspection is supposed to monitor and travel around to do that. The reality is that they were totally incapable of doing that other than on a very cursory and spot check basis. Furthermore, the very first guy who was sent back under this program, Professor Zamora, was fired from his job, booted out of his house and his wife was discriminated against. We protested, and the Cubans said, "Well, we're going to continue to pay his salary but obviously, this man can no longer have anything to do with impressionable youth." He was a university professor, and he can still get his eight dollars a month to live on, but nevertheless, it was clear that adverse action took place. The very first guy that went back!

If I had been asked before all this happened or even while it was happening what we could do, I would have said my moral objection is that we have to be sure, in fact, that the Cubans live up to this. In order to do that, we should use this opportunity to try to get the Red Cross or Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch or any internationally recognized human rights group to have full access to these individuals when they go back in to Cuba. And I'm absolutely convinced, as much today as I was in those days, that we could've gotten that because the Cubans had a problem and they had to solve it. As I talked about earlier, I don't think we took that into account. We just saw our problem, and we had to solve it. If we had, we could have said, "We want you to change the law that makes it a criminal offense to try to leave your country." This is what a lot of these guys are hit with now, they're imprisoned because they tried to escape, they got caught

and so now they're doing three, five or seven years in prison. I'm absolutely convinced that if we had said this law violates every international standard there is and you need to repeal it, they would have done it. We were not asking Castro to commit suicide or whatever. We were asking about something specifically related to the action at hand. If we had just had the balls or the guts to request it, we would've gotten it, but we didn't. So I finally got called in by my boss, Alec Watson, Assistant Secretary for American Affairs, who said, "Dennis, look, here it is. Here's what happened."

Q: So the agreement had already been signed in Toronto by Undersecretary Peter Tarnoff?

HAYS: Yes, and it was going to be announced the next day at the noon briefing. He told me at five o'clock the evening before. This came as a shock, as you might imagine. I asked the exact same question; did we get this, did we get that and the other thing? No, no, no, we didn't get anything. A deal's a deal, take it. I went back and told my deputy, Nancy Mason, about this. We shook our heads and went home. Interestingly, both of us independently decided to resign, both Nancy and I. As luck would have it, as I parked my car in the State Department parking lot the next morning, who do I see walking next to me going to the elevator but Peter Tarnoff. I think that was the first and only time that that had happened; we just happened to be at the same place of the same time. I always liked Peter, he's a bright guy. I don't agree with what he did, but I understand why he did it. I told him, "Look, I can't do this, because as Coordinator, I would have been responsible for carrying out this policy, for actually overseeing the forcible return of people in chains, literally, back to a system where they would have no protection." So I got to my office and Nancy came in and told me she couldn't do this and she was resigning. And well, me too. So it went from there. Parenthetically, let me just say, it does not mean because it's the wrong policy, the President doesn't have the right to do it. Somebody has to be in charge. I accept that fact. If I had been included in the decision-making process and had an opportunity to express my concerns and reservations, would I have stayed? I might have, but given the set of circumstances and the fact that we got a bad deal and that I would be in charge of implementing this deal and I had given my word that there were no secret deals and in fact, there were, I'm either totally incompetent or totally out of the loop or both. This is entirely possible on all accounts. It was not something I could do. So I left and Nancy left.

Q: This was within a matter of hours, days?

HAYS: This was the very next day.

Q: This was April, 1995?

HAYS: We had met toward the end of the week, there was the weekend, and then I think it was Tuesday when I saw Alec.

Q: Toward the end of the month of April?

HAYS: It was May 2. I know exactly what day it was. It was May 2 when this all broke. I didn't resign from the Service; I just asked to be reassigned from the position. Although my expectation was I would get a choice table down in the cafeteria and sort of bide my time and hang out until I went away. Fortunately for me, there was a fair amount of press interest in this and questions asked, and Warren Christopher, bless his heart, said something to the effect of, "Well, we understand why Dennis and Nancy did this and we respect their standing on principle and there'll be no adverse affect on their careers."

Q: The Secretary of State?

HAYS: The Secretary of State said that, so I said God bless Warren Christopher. I had already been in the process of going to Surinam as ambassador at this point. I know there was discussion of why bother with him, he's a dead issue here, let's give it to somebody else. Again Mike Skol, the PDAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) and my other bosses pushed me forward. Friends have told me the story that the NSC guys and the political guys weren't too concerned because they said, "Let's let his name go forward because it will get axed at the White House and then it will be somebody else is doing the dirty work, and we're clean." What they forgot to remember though, was that it's not the NSC at the end of the day that chops off on ambassador's appointments; it's the Office of Presidential Personnel who work very closely with the political office of the White House. As a side effect of this, of course, I was extremely popular in South Florida; they loved me. I was very clear, I didn't attack the President, I didn't question him and this sort of stuff and I didn't talk to the press, not much anyway except for a few old friends. They liked me, and so I was literally the first name that came back approved, which caused some consternation and head scratching. I know this for a fact.

In the meantime, I went off to be Director of Mexican Affairs. There were two vacancies in ARA, Caribbean Affairs and Mexican Affairs. With Caribbean affairs you picked up Haiti, and I had questions about our policy in Haiti, and I said I'm not going to go from one Caribbean island problem state to another and then have something horrible happen there. I don't want to do this again. Once is plenty for a given career. So Mexico seemed like fun. And I, in fact, had a wonderful time being Director of Mexico, although it was only for about eight or nine months.

Q: So that took you into 1996?

HAYS: Yes, into 1996. I was held up eight months after the confirmation hearings mostly by Janice O'Connell on Senator Dodd's staff who didn't like my Cuba policy and many other things. So bureaucratically, she was able twice to kick me off the business committee hearing by doing a letter asking questions at five o'clock the day before, which then takes a day to work through the system. In the meantime, Senatorial privilege being what it is, my name was removed. Instead of going to post as I was supposed to in August or September of 1996, I ended up going in March of 1997.

Q: She basically kept it within the Foreign Relations Committee? You had a hearing but then they didn't take action on your appointment?

HAYS: I couldn't get out of the business committee.

Q: So you finally went in early 1997. Anything further on Cuba or from your time working on Mexico?

HAYS: Nothing particularly noteworthy.

Q: OK. You went to Surinam in early 1997. You had described earlier the discussion of putting rafters, Cuban refugees, there, and the military had gone down and had discussions with senior people in the government that you didn't have anything to do with. Why don't you talk about what you did do in Surinam and what the situation was there at that time, in 1997?

HAYS: Surinam is a wonderful place. It's the end of the earth, but it's a wonderful place once you get there. The key things that influence Surinam right to this day are: 1) they were a Dutch colony and not a British or French colony, and 2) there wasn't a very strong independence movement there. The Dutch literally had to kick them out of the nest, and the story is, with some verification, that they actually bribed a few of the local parliamentarians who by a one vote margin voted for independence. As part of the golden parachute, the Dutch gave basically the right of free immigration for a time period. When they gave that it was like, who wants to go to Holland? It's cold and rainy and gray. You can be in the warmth of Surinam and live like Dutch citizens. This was in 1975 when it became independent. By 1980 the government through petty corruption and just inefficiency was falling apart, and there was a protest by some sergeants to get better pay, better conditions. When they did this they discovered that the government collapsed around them, and they had an opportunity, which they seized, to take over the government. Their leader, a guy named Desi Bouterse, took over at that time. By a year or two down the road he was also having a lot of problems maintaining control. There was a fairly active democratic movement opposed to him. His grip was getting looser and looser. Curiously, there was a Cuban connection. There was a Cuban colonel, Gonzalez was his name, who came in as an adviser. People told me he told Desi, "Look, the reason you have these problems is because you didn't have a bloody revolution. People don't fear you."

By 1982, there was a famous incident when Maurice Bishop from Grenada came and paid a state visit to Surinam. Desi held a big rally for him and got about 1,500 people to rally to meet Bishop. There was a labor leader, Cyril Dahl, who held a counter demonstration and got 15,000 people out. So Desi was terribly embarrassed by this number one and then to add insult to injury, that night at the state dinner Cyril, who was the head of the union among others, including the electrical workers, cut the power to the Presidential Palace. So there's poor Desi with his revolutionary comrade-in-arms sitting in the dark. That was late October. Whether that played directly into the events, I'm not sure, but in early December Desi and company decided to strike. They went out and rounded up about twenty people they thought were their opponents -- labor leaders, attorneys, a couple of the military guys who had turned against them, and took them to

this old fort and tortured them and killed all but one of them. This sent a huge shock through Surinamese society, because this had never happened before. The Surinamese didn't kill each other, they were calm and peaceful with everyone getting a piece of the pie. It was clear that the revolution was now blooded and it was likely that more of this was going to take place. I'm doing this as a lead-in.

Q: This was in 1982?

HAYS: This was in 1982. By the late 1980s, Bouterse was trying to maintain his power in the army, but he was prepared to turn civilian control over to the government, which happened. There was then what was called the "telephone coup" in 1990 where Bouterse called the president and said, "You're screwing up. You're out." And he took over again. And then there was another time after that a few years later when he pulled back once again and allowed new elections to take place and a democratic opposition government came into power. Just before I got there in the '96 time frame, there was yet another election and a political party which he was identified with won. A man named Wijdenbosch became the president of the country and he was seen as a lieutenant of Bouterse, but Bouterse himself did not come forward. When I was on my way down there, the question was, do we deal with Bouterse or not. When Barry McCaffrey had gone to Surinam to talk about placing refugees he dealt with these guys, Bouterse and his lieutenants.

Q: He was the Southern Command?

HAYS: He was the Southern Command, at that point. In the interim, the embassy was recommending and apparently the Department was prepared to accept a level of engagement with him. De facto he was in power and so we need to talk to him, and we have American business that wants to get into oil. None of that is going to happen if we don't talk to this guy. I felt very strongly that that was a mistake and would send the wrong message right from the start for the American ambassador to meet with this guy. I might mention it hadn't really been an issue for my predecessors, because he was not playing that role at that time. The other government was in power. In fact, both of my predecessors said they had never met him, whereas when I got there he was all over the place, at every reception, every party, every everything, you would run into him. Nevertheless, I felt very strongly that we shouldn't have anything to do with him, and quite frankly, because it was Surinam, the Department was prepared to humor me. They didn't insist. They said well we've got the shrimp guys, we've got the oil guys, we've got the other guys and we'll try to work it out. I feel that the Wijdenbosch government certainly had its problems, but they increasingly separated themselves from Bouterse and his hard core. I believe that Bouterse is still involved in narcotics smuggling, and I think he's got a piece of alien smuggling and other issues that are around there. On top of everything else, it would've been a mistake to deal with him, although most of the other embassies did in fact. Their ambassadors would go see him and invite him to national days. Except for the Dutch. The Dutch were busy trying to indict him at this time for both drug smuggling and for human rights, the deaths of '82.

Q: He had no official position at that point?

HAYS: He was head of the party that had won the election, and so by that, especially in the beginning, it was felt that he was pulling all the strings. I think that became less and less the case until at the end when there was another election he and Wijdenbosch ran on separate tickets, separate parties. They had split completely and this impacted on both of their vote totals. Surinam was one of these countries that, even more so than Guyana, had a small population and a big land area, the size of the state of Georgia. The population was only half a million. Another key factor is that in the eighties when all of this was going on, literally half of the population left the country and took advantage of the opportunity to go to the Netherlands. Disproportionately, of course, it was the educated, the entrepreneurial group, and the professionals that went. The country is still recovering from having half the population, like 350,000 of 700,000 go. It's now gone back up to half a million, although I think it's more like 600,000.

The difference between Surinam and Guyana is that in Guyana you have basically the two large population groups; the Afro-Guyanese and the Indo-Guyanese who are engaged in a zero sum fight. I win you lose, and vice versus. In Surinam, you have not only the Afros and Indos, but you also have a large Japanese population, a huge Chinese population, the Iranians and the Maroons, the escaped slaves from the river system. If you want to see an African village of the seventeen-hundreds, the only place in the world is Surinam. They still have the same customs, the same food, the same dress, the same language and everything. The amazing thing is if you look at continental drift right where South America goes into Africa, Surinam and Ghana touch. Most of the slaves brought to Surinam came from Ghana. Geologically, 500 million years later they are only next door.

Q: I can remember being in Ghana from '89 to '92 when there was very much a feeling of a Surinam connection. It was partly Jerry Rawlings who thought the connection was close.

HAYS: Jerry and Desi were buddies. You also had a slightly larger European population, you had Sephardic Jews who had been pushed out of Brazil in the eighteen-hundreds. At the same time there was a potato famine in Ireland there was one in Holland and massive numbers of Dutch moved to Surinam in less than two or three years. The ones that didn't die of yellow fever or malaria re-migrated to New York at some stage. As a result, no one group can dominate; so everybody has to have a deal and whatever government there is will have somebody from each of the ethnic groups represented. So everyone gets a little piece. With the exception of 1982, it may not be efficient, but they don't kill each other over these things because everybody gets a piece.

As a country, on my way down there, the big issue was Asian logging companies that were going in and clear cutting vast swaths of the Amazon and how to convince the Surinamese they need to stop this. The average Surinamese would go, "Trees? There are billions of trees, so they take a few; so what? They grow back." So it was tough to get beyond that, and my predecessor did some good work and I tried to follow up on it. But at the end of the day, what happened is that the dynamics of it, the economics of it,

changed to where there wasn't quite the pressing need for it. So there was still logging, but it was a little bit better controlled and a little bit better taxed and authorized. The other issue, of course, is gold. There are 40,000 Brazilian gold miners that operate illegally or semi-legally in Surinam, mostly in the south, but increasingly they follow the gold and the gold is in the north.

Q: Small scale?

HAYS: Small scale, but 10 to 12 man crews, some river barges and these sorts of things. It's mostly unregulated. Most of them use the mercury recapture method but then dump the mercury. There are ways you can do these things and recapture the mercury through the process and use it over again. Mercury is relatively cheap, my father and my grandfather did it this way – the fact that they both died at 45 years of age doesn't seem to impact on them too much – so they continue to do it. As a result, you had this moving up through the country poisoning the river systems, killing the fish, prostituting the Indian women. It's a horrible kind of rolling force. One of the things I was always trying to do was to get the government to take this seriously and to deal with it. I was one that always believed that the Achilles heel of these guys is diesel fuel. They have to have diesel fuel to run their pumps and hydraulic systems and everything. And with gold you can put it in a backpack and you can walk it if you want. But with diesel fuel, it's big and bulky and messy, and you either fly it in or you bring it through the river systems. So you don't have to control the whole country, you just have to control the key points on the rivers and the landing fields, and you could have control over the miners. That never happened because there were people who are making a little bit of money from the Brazilian miners in terms of "concessions", and they would rather have that steady stream of income than take a chance, even though they'd make a lot more money doing it in a more environmentally healthy way and a more sustainable way but that's not their interest. Their interest was "This I got".

Q: Were there American mining companies interested in going in on a large scale?

HAYS: There were primarily Canadian. We represented Canada's interests there. I would get regular visits. In Guyana in my days there, the Canarc people wanted these huge, massive mines built. In Surinam there were similar ideas, and I had mixed feelings because they denude the landscape when they're done. But they kept pushing, and the Canarc people had production, they were actually producing gold in Surinam, but they were always under pressure that they needed to do more. There is also a story about people displaced by the rising waters of the dam that was created for the Alcoa hydroelectric facility for alumina production. The story goes that there were people in the camp who were negotiating pretty hard about what they were going to get to be relocated. When they noticed that the water was over their ankles, finally they were forced to move because, literally, their village was drowning. They relocated to a different area not too far from the shores of where the new lake was, but they felt fairly bitter that the planned schools, churches, community centers and those sorts of things never really came through. Now move forward 20 or 30 years, and it turns out that they put their village right exactly on top of where people wanted to build this massive gold mine. So then they

had a new camp. They were negotiating tough and their position was, hey, we want you to build us the new village and then we'll see about moving to it as opposed to taking your word and go there and then you are to rebuild. That went back and forth and dragged on and on. I got an e-mail from a Surinamese friend that was on the board of this thing recently, and he said that they finally think that everything is done and they can begin construction by the beginning of the year.

Major U.S. interests included Alcoa and the bauxite. During World War II three-fourths of the aluminum for the Allied war effort came out of Surinam. In fact, there were upwards of 3,000 American soldiers based in Surinam during the War to protect the bauxite mining facility. There was concern German U-boats would come up the river. The other World War II story is when FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) was on his way to, I think, the Casablanca Conference there were two identical airplanes that were in his party. The one that he was not in crashed in the jungle in Surinam. There was still a descendant of the pilot looking for the wreckage, for where the plane had gone down. Anyway, for alumina this huge facility that Alcoa built was the first major processing facility in the third world.

Q: They export alumina to smelter somewhere else?

HAYS: They would take some of it as aluminum but that wasn't economical and so while I was there there was only had a small percentage of that. They would ship alumina to Norway during the time that I was there for further processing. There's lots of hydro-power in Norway. A very short story on bauxite in Surinam. You may remember across the border in French Guyana it was close to Devil's Island and a bigger penal facility. The prisoners would occasionally escape and make it into Dutch Guyana. Maybe the Dutch would send them back or maybe they wouldn't. It kind of depended on how they felt or what the guy offered. So they caught this one French refugee from the prison, and they were about to send him back and he said, "Look, I know something that's of value to you. If you let me stay I'll show you what it is and where it is." And they said, "Well, be a little more specific." He said, "Well, I come from the area in France which is where bauxite comes from. In getting here I came across some hills that look exactly like some hills from my home region. So the Dutch said, "Okay, maybe that will work." He walked them back through the jungle and retraced his route, and they found the area where five years later they came in and started mining for bauxite. It was just when they were figuring out how to make aluminum, at the end of the eighteen hundreds. And so that's when the whole industry started.

The area was shrimp. If you go to Red Lobster, you probably eat shrimp that comes out of the Surinamese/Guyanese waters; the key factor there being the Amazon. It pushes out a great deal of sediment and the waters push it up along the northern coast of South America which is why there aren't beaches along there. You don't get any beaches until you get past the Orinoco. What you have is sediment-rich water, and as you fly in you can see the water go from blue to brown. That's anywhere from 12 to 50 miles off the coast depending on the time of year. But if you were a shrimp, heaven would be the

waters off Surinam or Guyana because it's just so rich in stuff. So that's a fairly major operation.

Q: At the time you were there it was mostly American?

HAYS: No. They were bought by Americans. SEAPAK out of Savannah purchased most of it. There was a Japanese company there and, of course, all their good shrimp, 99% of it, went back to Japan, and 1% went out the door to the diplomatic corps. Then there were another couple of Surinamese-based companies with American investors. Unlike Guyana where there actually was an American company, these were local. Key factors that were kind of growing along the way - narcotics. Paramaribo became a through point to Europe because KLM had so many flights directly to Amsterdam and also cargo ships and things that would make that route. So we worried a lot about that.

Q: Was there a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) office in the embassy?

HAYS: We had one that was not based fulltime with us. We had some come out of Curacao. I kept pushing in good State Department bureaucratic fashion to build that empire. I almost had them to where they were going to put an office in Surinam, and they may have after I left. I don't know that. Curacao was a great place to live, but the action was in Surinam.

The other thing that was happening was there was a very active alien smuggling route. One of the things that went well was our discovery of a route. What would happen was in Fujian Province in China you would have guys who would get the Surinamese Consulate in Hong Kong to stamp their passports, and then they would get on the KLM flight to Amsterdam and they would stay in the transit area so they never were admitted into Amsterdam. KLM didn't care, the Dutch didn't care and then they would fly to Paramaribo. From Paramaribo they would be flown to Caracas and then from Caracas they worked their way up through the island chain or Mexico and then come across (to the U.S.) It was clear there was Surinamese government collusion going on because they had had get that stamp in the first place to get on the KLM flights . We were able to pretty much up uproot that and got two Surinamese officials in China recalled and charged. We were feeling quite happy with ourselves which probably meant we put a damper on things for about a month. Then there was a new route that came along. But it's a huge industry and it's one that is going to continue to be a problem.

The way they work in Guyana where they had a similar problem was a little more formally organized. The people from China would come to Guyana, and they would work in a Chinese restaurant as a busboy or something and they would learn English and they would work their way up and save their money. After five years they would be the sous chef or the chef. In another couple of years they would buy the restaurant from the previous guy who now migrated to New York. They would need more people and after a few years they too would have enough money and the wherewithal to get to the States. And so it was a whole acculturation process. In Surinam, it was just get off the plane, get on another plane or get on a boat and away you go.

Q: Much American tourism?

HAYS: No. Very little. Again, it's hard to get to. They had FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) problems. They were a cap three country, and they could make cap two which means that you continue to run any flights you had but as an economy measure, they had decided to suspend service to Miami because it was low season and as a result they couldn't fly directly. So you had to go to Curacao and wait, and then finally fly down to Paramaribo. There's also very little infrastructure. The thing that Surinam offered as is basically untouched area. The only area on earth that can support human habitation that never has in big swaths. The Indians stayed in certain little areas and that was about it. In fact, there was a tribe that was so far up in the river systems that in 1967 they were contacted by first other Indians and then an ethnologist. The story goes that they didn't know there were any other humans on the planet. They had a village of about 250 people which was their self-sustaining size, and they were a good 50 miles from the nearest Amer-Indian village and there was just no contact. I suppose they would occasionally see a big bird flying overhead and wonder what that's all about. And this was in 1967. And here you're isolated out there. Once you would get up into the river systems, it is pretty spectacular; nice little waterfalls, big anacondas, big crocodiles and those kind of things. There are couple of different groups, Conservation International has a number of projects there; the World Wildlife Fund also. They do the turtles, they do the coast and the CI does the interior. There is a potential there.

Q: And there is a large Surinam population in the United States?

HAYS: Most people still, if they have family ties, go to Holland. There are some, but nothing like say, Guyana or most other countries. They speak Dutch and so they are able acculturate a little quicker although most educated Surinamese speak English, unaccented English. It didn't do my Dutch any good. Everyone spoke perfect English. If they think about going to the big city, they go to Amsterdam.

Q: You studied some Dutch at the Foreign Service Institute before you went down since you had a long wait?

HAYS: Yes. I had nothing better to do.

Q: How long did you stay? You said you finally went in early 1997.

HAYS: I was there until the summer of 2000.

Q: A little over three years then?

HAYS: Yes.

Q: Anything else about Surinam that we should discuss? How big was the embassy?

HAYS: We had probably nine or ten Americans and then the usual 50 or 60 Surinamese. We went through the kind of embassy upgrade systems which made little sense. The embassy fronted onto one of the busiest streets in the city. And so we ended up buying the land on three sides of us, but the ambassador's office was directly on this main street. One of the instructions I got from the Department, I ignored completely. You have the front of the building and the sidewalk, then a two lane street, then there was a median and then there was another two lane street and across from that was a governmental office which was where the vice president and a number of other people sat. In the median strip was a human rights monument, a big huge abstract sculpture. After a DS (Diplomatic Security) team came by, they said, "Dennis, we want you to go and tell them to move the human rights monument, and then redirect the road around the embassy." It happened the day I had this cable was the anniversary of the 1982 murder. I'm looking out; the widows, the daughters and sons were weeping, the flowers and wreaths are there. And I thought, "Hmmm, and I'm going to go tell them to move the monument so that we can redirect the major street through town?" So I said no, no. We'll worry about that one later.

Q: Move the embassy!

HAYS: That was my suggestion two days before. We could have gotten something better.

Q: So you left in the summer of 2000 and did you retire at that point?

HAYS: I retired, or was retired, at that point which was a surprise to me, but there's the system you have.

Q: Could you have stayed in another year?

HAYS: No. I was tic-ed (time-in-class) out. I do wonder back to my Cuba time. I know that there were several jobs that I was proposed for that never went anywhere. A possibility, the one that I soothe myself with, is that my momentum carried me into Surinam but not beyond. And that's OK. It worked out, and I'm not sure what I would have done had I come back at that time anyway.

Q: How many years in the Foreign Service did you have then?

HAYS: It would have been about 24.

Q: And I know you took a position with the Cuban-American National Foundation. Would you say just a few words about that?

HAYS: I was all set to do trade promotion for the Mid-Florida Economic Council, which I thought was going to be fun and I had one day a week with them and I could teach at one of the universities there, maybe global politics.

Q: You would've been in Florida?

HAYS: Yes, in Florida. I was all set. This was the Elian Gonzalez time. There was a feeling, which I think was correct, in the Miami community that the passion was overwhelming the message and that Cuban-Americans along with blonde college males were the only two groups in the country that you could attack indiscriminately without getting into a PC (Politically Correct)-type drawback. The community was suffering and the policy was suffering because of this. There was a sense that having somebody in Washington who could not be accused of wanting to put people back on the plantation or take books out of their hands. I care about Cuba, as you know. It was an interesting offer and for a lot of reasons worked out well. It brought me back to Washington which I like. So I took it, and I've had a wonderful time. The thing with Cuban policy is it's always new but it's always the same. You fight, fight, fight all these battles and you wake up and you find out you've got to do it all over again. So three years again, sort of using my Foreign Service mentality of three years and then it's time to go do something else. This was a good time to break.

Q: I don't think I asked you in terms of your coordinator position; how often have you gone to Cuba?

HAYS: I guess a total of four times; orientation trips and then the migration talks. The first time I went I was given a very large mahogany box full of Cohiba cigars. The second time I went I got a medium sized box of Montec. I think that sort of reflects their impression of how helpful I was going to be to their cause. The second time I went was for the migration talks. We went to one of the safe houses, and we had a very nice dinner with our counterparts. And we had coffee and more coffee and they came around with coffee again. It was clear that we were waiting. The presumption was there was a possibility that Castro would come and meet with us briefly. After we had waited probably an hour and a half in that mode and it was clear to us why we're waiting, we weren't going to get up and say we've got to go. Finally, about one in the morning it was have a nice evening, good night, see you later. We got back on the bus and went back to our hotel.

Q: So you never met Castro?

HAYS: No. I met the big brother, Ramon who looks an awful lot like him. And every other guy on the delegation was propositioned every half an hour, there were people knocking on the door, and me, nothing, no one ever came. I don't know what they were waiting for. I guess there was some advantage to being the head of delegation there.

Q: Dennis, I'm sorry it has taken us this long to get together but it has been a very useful conversation.

HAYS: It was a lot of fun. Thank you.

End of interview