THE GAMBIA

COUNTRY READER
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STEPHEN LOW
Labor/Political Officer

Dakar, Senegal (1960-1963)

Ambassador Stephen Low was born in Ohio in 1927. He received his bachelor's degree from Yale, and his master's and doctorate from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. In addition to Nigeria, Ambassador Low served in Uganda, Senegal, and Zambia. He was interviewed by Professor I.W. Zartman in 1988.

Q: When you became a political officer, your broad representation was cut down to one country, wasn't it?

LOW: No, I had responsibility for political reporting in Senegal, The Gambia, and Portuguese Guinea which represented the three African colonial traditions: Portuguese Guinea, British Gambia, and French Senegal. I found it an interesting opportunity to compare the long-term differences between those very different colonial systems. And very different they were. I was always impressed with the profound difference between the French and British racial and political attitudes towards Africa. The French saw no inherent difference between Africans and Europeans, but the only civilization of value was that which existed between the Seine and the Marne. As a result, the French strictly prohibited Romanization of the African languages ("dialects"). The British, on the other hand saw a profound difference between the African and European, and believed that Africans should be trained to live as a part of African society. They therefore did nothing to interfere with the missionary's zeal to Romanize African languages and provide as quickly as possible African language bibles. In French Africa a person could only be literate in French, schools only taught French, and the number of literate Africans was small, perhaps not much more than 10 percent, but they were very good. As everyone knew, Senghor had been assigned the job of correcting the French of the 4th French Republic's constitution. While in British Africa, people quickly became literate in the vernaculars, a literature grew up and newspapers flourished. Each approach had its arrogance and its realism. The Portuguese tended towards the French approach and a few Africans, or often mixed bloods, attained high levels of (Portuguese) education.

Again, I did the first reporting from Portuguese Guinea where a guerilla war for independence going on. On occasion, the airplane I was in was shot at. I visited there two or three times and also to The Gambia where I also wrote some of the first reports. I found that great fun. The leading African political figure in The Gambia was Jawara. I happened to have been visiting on election day in which his party won the majority. I still have movies of that first celebration by Jawara and his party. He was to rule The Gambia until just a few years ago. I think I was one of the first Americans to make contact with him. I also went over to Cape Verde Islands, although just in passing. I didn't do any reporting from there. I went to Mauritania. We were setting up a consulate which very soon became an embassy with Bill Eagleton as chargé.

Mercer Cook

Ambassador
Senegal and The Gambia (1965-1966)

Ambassador Cook was born and raised in Washington D.C. and educated at Amherst College and the Universities of Paris and Brown. During his career a professor of romance languages, the Ambassador served on the faculties of Atlanta University, the University of Haiti and Howard University. In 1961 he was appointed US Ambassador to Niger, where he served until May, 1964. That year he was appointed Ambassador to Senegal and Gambia, residing at Dakar, where he served until July, 1966. Ambassador Cook died in 1987. The Ambassador was interviewed in 1981 by Ruth Stutts Njiiri.

Q: What were your first impressions of Niger, Senegal, and The Gambia?

COOK: Well, first of all, I think we should ... remember that I was never a resident ambassador in The Gambia. Gambia geographically is really a little country. At that time, in 1955, they had a population of 300,000 people, and geographically it's within the realm of Senegal, really. Many of the people speak the same language, Wolof, and the Wolof that's spoken in Dakar can be understood in Bathurst. So I was never a resident there. I was simply ... on call and I guess I went to The Gambia about, only about three times during the year that I was ... ah, fulfilling that or trying to fulfill that obligation.

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Q: Yes. You covered quite a bit. I wanted to go back and talk a little bit more about U.S. presence in Niger, Senegal and The Gambia. You were fortunate to serve in the early days of independence of these countries. Can you talk a little bit about the U.S. Government's attitude towards these countries?

COOK: I think the U.S. Government, I think they must have had, as I look at the AID disbursements, they must have had some kind of, of system that would relegate these countries to a position, I don't want to say inferior, but there, there were more, obviously, more countries, some countries that were larger or more important to U.S. interests than these smaller countries.

When you think of Nigeria, which at that time, I think, had a population of over fifty million people, and compare it with Senegal with its four million, Niger with its three or four million, The Gambia with three hundred thousand, you do not expect them to occupy the same rank as a country like Nigeria, as a ... well, at the time, as a country like Ethiopia (Haile Selassie was still in charge there) or as a number of other African countries, but the United States wanted to be a presence there.

JOHN L. LOUGHRAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bathurst (1967-1970)

Ambassador John L. Loughran was born in New Jersey in 1921. After receiving a Bachelor's degree from Lehigh University in 1942 he served as an aviator in the Marine Corps during World War II. He later received a Master's degree from Harvard. His career included positions in Bonn, Liberia, Senegal and the Gambia, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Somalia. Ambassador Loughran was interviewed by Horace G. Torbert on June 22, 1988.

Q: *They are quite different than Somalians, as we will find out, I think, in a few moments. At least they had one language. How long did the Monrovia assignment last?*

LOUGHRAN: It was just short of nine months. Assistant Secretary Palmer had a vacancy in The Gambia. The job had been offered to a man in Australia. He was the only officer in a small consular post and he said: "No way am I going to a one-man embassy on the west coast of Africa." So when he turned it down, I was offered the job, and once again it was a great experience. United States policy had decided, under Assistant Secretary "Soapy" Williams, that when The Gambia gained its independence, it would be served by an ambassador in Senegal, and we would not physically open a diplomatic presence. A consul would come down twice or three times a month to issue visas, but other than that, we would carry out our relationship with The Gambians from Dakar.

As you may know, "Soapy" arrived on the scene for the ceremonies of independence, and when asked by Dawda Jawara, the prime minister, what the United States was going to do about diplomatic relations, "Soapy," whether he forget his cue cards or not, I don't know, turned to Jawara and said, "Of course, we're hoping to open an embassy." (Laughs) I was able to say to "Soapy" Williams years later: "Thank God you did that." Because it was, again, one of the most challenging four years to be the sole officer in our smallest embassy in the world. However it would have been impossible without the dedication and assistance of my wife.

You may recall, Ambassador, that we utilized the one-time cryptographic pad for classified telegrams.

Q: *I didn't realize it was still going at that time.*

LOUGHRAN: It was still going in The Gambia.

Q: *I certainly knew it some years earlier.*

LOUGHRAN: It was an unusual opportunity to get out in the field and supervise the AID programs, work very closely with the Peace Corps people, and try to carry out well structured AID programs in a nation which was certainly not ready for massive assistance.

Q: *You did have, however, some technical people in residence there?*

LOUGHRAN: No.

Q: *They all came from Senegal?*

LOUGHRAN: They all came from Senegal when required. The Gambians had at that time an outstanding technical mission from Taiwan. The Taiwanese, of course, were hoping for the African vote to secure the continuation of their presence at the United Nations. They sent extraordinary people in the agricultural field, who did just exactly what these missionaries had told me in Liberia. They listened endlessly before they decided on any programming activities. When they did, they were highly successful, particularly in the rice-growing areas of The Gambia. They raised production in some sectors of the country as much by 800%, which was unheard of in Africa.

We also had, you may recall, the self-help programs, where an Ambassador or chargé was allotted a certain amount of money, and the ambassador and his officers, working with the Peace Corps, could start their own minimal projects. Kathy started a cooperative textile project, which is still working and netting the cooperatives well over 250,000 pounds a year, which is a minor success story. She was a catalyst, worked with the government and then stepped out, with a minimum investment of Ambassador Dean Brown's self-help funds. I'm not saying that every self-help program in Africa today is still visible and working, but it can be done.

Q: *How much of a Peace Corps did you have?*

LOUGHRAN: We had 18 PCVs.

Q: *What were they primarily doing--agriculture work?*

LOUGHRAN: All were in agriculture. Some in machinery maintenance, but 90% in agriculture. It was an outstanding, wonderful group of young men.

Q: *And you felt, generally, it was a successful concept and successful program?*

LOUGHRAN: Yes, indeed, I did.

Q: *My only experience with it was in Somalia, and I thought it was very successful, in spite of all sorts of problems we had with it. A lot of people, of course, have felt that it was of more benefit to the volunteers than to the country, but I didn't think that was true myself.*

You were in Bathurst then for quite a while.

LOUGHRAN: That was an unusual assignment. It was almost four years. I guess the Department was satisfied. I certainly was satisfied. I enjoyed the intimate relationship with the government in a difficult time, I must say. The Senegalese always thought of The Gambia as a pin prick in the center of their country. Gambians and Senegalese were all Wolof-speaking or Mandinka-speaking; they were brothers, sisters, and cousins of the Senegalese.

Q: *Colonial history.*

LOUGHRAN: But The Gambians, as you may recall, earned, in addition to their money from peanuts and rice, a tremendous amount of money from what was called unrecorded re-exports--or smuggling. (Laughs) So they were very happy, because they were certainly, as individuals, earning more income per household than their brothers, cousins, and sisters in Senegal. But there were no really untoward developments at the time. I think Senghor came down one time and maybe some students pelted him with bananas or oranges, but other than that, there was no real animosity between The Gambians and the Senegalese.

Q: *What did you do about school for your children there?*

LOUGHRAN: There were no places in the only high school. The headmaster and the government's education department expressed the hope that I would not bring my children out, because there were such limited places in the school and far too many Gambian applicants. I was certainly taken with The Gambians' desire and recognition of the value of education.

As an aside, yesterday I attended a working group in support of the textile museum here in Washington, and met the son of a former minister. I can still remember him as a 12-year-old when I was there. Five years ago, he received his Ph.D. in history and political science from the University of Virginia; he is now teaching at Howard University. My hat was off to all Gambian students because when I was there, the outside office was filled with 15, 20, or 30 who had studied every available scholarship possibility for foreign students in America; all they needed was their visa. Well, their big problem, as you can appreciate, was getting that ticket which proved that you had enough funds to get to the United States and back, so that you wouldn't become a ward of the United States. Many of them came, and many returned to their country participating in their own development.

Q: *When you finished that assignment, you just moved next door, is that what happened?*

LOUGHRAN: Yes. Dean Brown was already under consideration for posting to Jordan. The nominee to replace him had not received his letters of acceptance from the Senegalese Government, so the African Bureau wanted somebody there with experience in the area. I visited Senegal frequently to see ambassador, Brown, and knew the situation fairly well. So the Department transferred me to Dakar as a charge. Subsequently, Ambassador Clark assumed charge.

It was only to be a year, and then, of course, Ed Clark was given the opportunity as ambassador to Buenos Aires.

Q: *Ambassador Loughran, you were just explaining that the new chargé in Bathurst had died, and you were asked to stay a little longer than you expected in Senegal. Do you want to pick up from there and tell us about the job in Senegal?*

LOUGHRAN: I must say, I was wedded to the word "service" in our organization, and it's meant exactly that to me, and I loved every aspect of the Foreign Service career. So when Ed Clark asked me--as I thought, in a moment of weakness--when he heard the devastating news of

losing his chargé in Bathurst, now Banjul, would I stay on for another year, I just jumped at the chance and said, "Of course, I'll stay on for another year. Delighted."

Q: *What was the name of Bathurst?*

LOUGHRAN: Banjul. They divested themselves of Lord Bathurst's name and it's now a good old Wolof town, Banjul. It will always be Bathurst to me.

Q: *You stayed for a year. What were our principal relation problems with Senegal at that time? What kinds of things did you work on?*

LOUGHRAN: The drought of the Seventies had already devastated the peanut crop and the rice crops in Senegal. The major problems were economic. Politically, under Senghor, the situation was stable. He was not an autocrat. He always told us, as a former member of the assembly in Paris and an agregé in languages, that he would retire, he would step down, and he would not find a bullet between his two ears. As you will recall, years later he followed through on that, retired and turned over the reins to the Dauphin, Abdou Diouf, who is now the President.

I think it was a remarkable period when AID was assessing the problems of this terrible drought in the Sahelian countries. There was a massive influx of personnel from all sorts of voluntary agencies, which, naturally, impinged on the operations of the embassy and the AID program, but I think Ambassador Clark was an outstanding leader and had some excellent officers in all of the programs.

Our position with the government was amicable, and certainly the programs were readily accepted. Again, as in so many of the African countries that you know of, infrastructure problems predominated--the roads, the trucking, the petrol stops, and just moving the tons of sorghum and wheat and rice and corn from the ports to the interior, and hopefully to do this in such a way that there would be a minimum of corruption at every phase. I say this without judging the Senegalese. I think it's just natural. You suddenly have had a starving family with cousins and extended family, and there's an extra bag on the back of a truck that wasn't offloaded or maybe purposefully not offloaded, and it's going to go into hands and go into the market economy. But I think that's the nature of the beast.

It was a period of becoming acquainted with an incredibly able head of state with a very good Cabinet, and also it gave me another opportunity, as DCM, to work closely with all of the AID donors from the EEC and from our own country and all the relief agencies.

Q: *How were your relations with the French Embassy and French authorities there? Sometimes this has been a problem in former French colonies. Did the embassy and you personally have good working relations with them?*

LOUGHRAN: Quite frankly, there's no question, when the former Francophone states accepted the CFA as the unit of currency, they were still very closely associated with the French Government in any undertakings. I think we were always suspect, in the sense that Jean Foccart, the famous eminence grise of General de Gaulle, looked upon us as a nation trying to move into

the area. I don't know what for. I don't think we were selling any great numbers of Deere tractors or locomotives from General Electric for the train system, or boats for fishing. But I think it was always in the back of the French minds that we saw an opportunity for economic expansion of our own exports. We had no intention of replacing the French; we were intent on competing. In the housing field, we did. We had an extraordinary housing program in Dakar, right close to the Youf airport. It was unfortunate that they didn't build in accordance with Senegalese standards.

But there were many successes in that field, and there continue to be to this day. I think it depended a lot on my two chiefs of missions. I can say with total objectivity that the relationships that Dean Brown and Ed Clark had with their counterparts and everybody in their missions was outstanding. Whether it's remained that way with others, I don't know.

Q: *By that time, did most of the Senegalese ministries fully staffed with French advisors?*

LOUGHRAN: Many, but much less than in the Ivory Coast. Senghor recognized the problem. He was aware of what Houphouet-Boigny had done in the Ivory Coast, lengthened the time that the French would remain. I think to this day, if I'm correct in my reading of the African scene, there are more expatriate Frenchmen in the "Côte d'Ivoire" than there were when I was there in the Seventies. On the other hand, there are fewer in Senegal. Whether this has worked to the benefit of the Ivory Coast and not to the Senegalese, I just don't know. I think the economy in the Ivory Coast is so much more diversified, with many, many more mineral resources, and many, many more types of oil, palm oil, in addition to other varieties and certainly tremendous resources of forest products, woods, for export to world markets which the Senegalese just do not have. Water resources, yes. Fishing resources, certainly; and of course, the peanut--or as the British named it the ground nut. But they have experimented with the cattle industry, feed lots, but it's, again, a long and very difficult problem to change the indigenous farmer to accept an American method of raising cattle.

JOHN HELM
Administrative, Consular, USIA Officer & Communicator
Banjul (1973-1974)

Mr. Helm was born and raised in Tennessee and educated at Carson Newman College. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he served in posts throughout the world, primarily in the field of Administration, including General Services, Communications and Foreign Buildings. His overseas posts include: Banjul, Gambia; Panama City, Panama; Seville, Spain; Quito, Ecuador; Mogadishu, Somalia; Tbilisi, Georgia; Bonn, Germany and San Salvador, El Salvador. His Washington assignments were also in the field of Administration. Mr. Helm was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: What was your training when you came in?

HELM: We had the usual junior officer course (A-100). It was supposed to be about a year. It was going to be eight-weeks of basic officer training, and then a six or eight week of specialized functional training, and they you were supposed to get language training. That was the agreed upon thing. I finished the eight weeks of basic training. At the end of basic training they gave you your assignment. The last week of basic training, the Course Director, Nick Baskey, came in and said, "Excuse me, is there anyone in this room that doesn't have a lease in the Washington area?" Everybody had been told they would be there for a year and they could sign a one-year lease. I didn't have any money, so I couldn't afford a lease, but I could live in my sister's attic. So that's where I was living. I held up my hand and said, "I don't have a lease." They said thank you very much and walked out. I had no idea what that was about.

On the last day of the course there would be a party, assignments day, and everyone would be told their assignment. I was the youngest person in the class. I was 22 years old, and I guess the class average was close to 30. So I was dispatched to go to Eagle Liquors and buy a bottle of alcohol to give to whoever was going to be the recipient of the "worst" assignment. I went over to Eagle Liquors and bought a bottle of Jack Daniels and came back. We had the ceremony and they gave out the assignments, where each of us was to go for our first tour of duty. This one's going to Paris and that one's going to London, etc. It came to me they announced that I was to go to Banjul. "Banjul?"

There was a large map on the wall. I asked the "honored distinguished visitor" (some important person from the Director General's office who had given an appropriate speech) if he'd be so kind as to point out Banjul on the map. I'd never heard of this place. He was a senior officer, I forget who he was, but obviously somebody of importance. He very grandly turned to the map and pointed to Africa and said, "It's not here. Where is it?" And he turned to another experienced senior officer …"Where's this Banjul?" "Isn't it on there?" "No, it's not here." By this time the whole crowd was standing in front of the map. Nobody, none of these Foreign Service people, could find Banjul on the map of the world. It was an old map. Banjul had changed its name. It had formerly been called Bathhurst and Bathhurst was on the map but they could not find Banjul. Anyway, I got to keep the bottle of whiskey.

And then they said to me, "Oh, by the way, we need you there right now." I said, "Well, what about the rest of my training?" They said, "We'll do that when you get back." There were a few things that had to be taken care of first, so I couldn't go right away. They put me in the Admin Officers course, and then pulled me out of the course about half way through to send me to post.

I started checking out of the Department. In the Foreign Service Lounge they handed me a four page list and you have to go to various offices to check out. One of the places on my checkout list was the office of Communications. When I went to the Office of Communications they said, "You can't go yet." "Why not?" "Well you're going to be the communicator, and you haven't had communications training." I returned to FSI and told the course instructor that I couldn't go because I hadn't had communications training. They immediately stuck me into a Communications training course. There was a great big gray teletype machine that they trained me to operate then to service. I knew how to care for the machine, to change the ribbons, paper, & punch-tape, adjust it, and clean it. It was an encryption-decryption teletype. I took the whole 6 week course in one week. I got the hurry-up special.

On the last day, the Teletype Instructor asked “where’d you say you were going?” I said, “I’m going to Banjul.” He then said “We trained you on this machine.” I said, “Well, yeah.” “We have a problem – Banjul doesn’t have one of these.” “Oh, okay, what does Banjul have?” And he pulled out a little stenotype machine that had been modified by NSA to be a crypto machine, and it was the worst piece of junk you ever saw. It was manual; it didn’t use electricity. It made little brown spots on a piece of paper, and you had to look at the letters under the brown spots and try to figure out what the word was. They trained me on that in about ten minutes, and said, “Okay, you can go to post now.”

Another office on the check-out list was the Medical Office. I got to medical and said, “Look, I just had a physical before I came into the Foreign Service, a couple of months ago". Why do I need another physical?” The doctor said, “You’re right, you don’t need another physical, but we want to check your teeth. You didn’t get your dental checkup.” They put me in a dental chair and they said, “Oh. You have wisdom teeth. All these wisdom teeth have to come out before you can go to post.” So I said, when am I supposed to get my wisdom teeth out? So I went back to see the junior officer personnel guy and said, “I have to get my wisdom teeth out. Do I get any leave before I go overseas?” And he said “We’ll give you a week’s leave if you’ll get your wisdom teeth taken care of during the week.” So I went back to Tennessee, got my wisdom teeth out all in one day, and was in absolute misery when I finally left for Banjul via Paris.

I was sent to Paris because I was to be the cashier at the post and they had to give me two days of cashier training. Then I flew to Dakar and I had a day of consultation in Dakar. I was at the Embassy and I went to see various people there. One of the people I went to see was the consul, Jim Blanford, and he said “You know you’re going to be the Consular officer at that post.” I said, “No, I didn’t know that. What does a Consul do?” "Well, a consul issues visas and helps American citizens". I said, “How do you do that?” He said, “You take the passport, bend it this way, put it in this machine, pull this handle and you write this down over here, and that’s how you issue a visa.” “Oh, okay.” “You don’t issue passports so I don’t have to show you how to do that.” “Okay, alright, I guess.” Then he said, “There’s a book called 7 FAM, (Foreign Affairs Manual) and when you get there, read that. There’s an Immigration Act. You might want to read that.” So off I flew to Banjul to be Admin officer, Consular officer, I found out I was also the USIA (United States Information Agency) officer in charge of the library and a reading room with one employee.

Q: What was the country?

HELM: The Gambia. Formerly called, The River Gambia Colony. The Gambia’s a nice country, 20 miles wide, 200 miles long, half underwater at high tide. It had been a British colony. People are generally friendly. Gambia had a couple of interesting things going for it. First, it has a beautiful beach. It’s only 20 miles wide, but the whole 20 miles is a beautiful beach. The Gambia river bisects the country. The town of Banjul is at the mouth of the river. For the ten miles south of the river, there’s a solid line of resort hotels built by the Swedes. The Swedes would fly to Gambia, play naked on the beach for a week, and fly back to Sweden. For a young fellow, there’s a certain attraction. (Laughter) It seemed to attract a lot of the younger Swedish women. There’s no sunlight in Sweden in the winter; they can come to Banjul and get sun.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

HELM: The ambassador was O. Rudolph Aggrey. I met him when I went through Dakar on the way into post, and then once during my tour he came down for a weekend. But the chargé d'affaires, (the permanent chargé) was Jim McFarland. He spent his whole career as a political specialist in Germany and Austria, and previously decided to retire, and then changed his mind. He'd gone to Personnel and said, "I've changed my mind, I don't want to retire. Do you think you can find an assignment for me someplace?" "Certainly, we have a job for you." Thus he became Chargé in Banjul. His wife was on the books as the secretary. And then there was me. We had one office FSN (Foreign Service National), Ibrahima Jatta. We had a driver, caretaker/night watchman, and the USIA Librarian.

Q: You were there from when to when?

HELM: I was in Banjul from early November (1973) until December 23rd 1974. I was only there about 13 months.

Q: What was going on in the Gambia at that time?

HELM: Absolutely nothing. Well let me back up. The Gambia was a very small impoverished country in West Africa. At the time we didn't really have an AID program. The country grew peanuts and had a peanut mill, and it exported peanuts. The country, at a very low economic level, was self-sustaining. There was no great starvation. They could grow enough food. They lived fairly well in the traditional African way of life. Folks were generally happy. Politically, the president of the country had been prime minister – that's another story.

The Brits had the colony, and they weren't making any money off of the Gambia colony. The hadn't made any money for a long time (since the slave trade was abolished). It had been established in the 1700s in competition with the French in Senegal. But the colonial power hadn't really developed it. Nothing much had come of it. During the '60s, the UN (United Nations) was forcing the colonial powers to divest themselves of their colonies. Gambia didn't want to be divested. People there understood that the Brits were a benign master and poured more money into the colony than they took out.

The Brits, on their part, searched the world for college educated Gambians, and only found a couple of them, none of them in Gambia. In fact there were relatively few high school educated Gambians. But they found a Veterinarian in Jamaica who was Gambian. He had a college education. They asked him to become the prime minister of Gambia. At the time he was married to a Jamaican (Christian) lady. He divorced her, went to Gambia, took on the Islamic religion and married two women. At the time of independence, he went from being the Permanent Secretary to Prime Minister to President. He was the guy that ran the country for years. I'll think of the name in a second: Jawara. I couldn't begin to tell you his first name. [On April 24, 1970, The Gambia became a republic following a referendum. Until a military coup in July 1994, The Gambia was led by President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, who was re-elected five times. From www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5459.htm]

He was an interesting guy. The way The Gambia worked while I was there, the British High Commissioner ran the foreign policy for the country. He "advised" the president on what to do, and we advised the president on various aspects of foreign policy. Gambia had a vote in the UN General Assembly. So we had issues that we wanted. The president had been a British Christian living in Jamaica and had developed a taste for scotch whiskey. Had returned to Gambia and had renounced Christianity to return to his original Islamic beliefs, but he hadn't lost his appreciation for scotch whiskey. But being a good Moslem he was having a hard time obtaining it. So he would come by the chargé's house. I won't say every Sunday afternoon, but many times.

The chargé would feed him scotch whiskey and had one-on-one time with the president of the country. The guy would basically tell the chargé everything that was happening in the entire country. The chargé would make any demarches that needed to be made.

There could be no servants or other Gambians, on the property while the President was drinking whiskey. Mrs. McFarland didn't want to be there because she just didn't feel welcome. So I would be brought over, and I was the bartender. I made the drinks. The chargé would sit out on the verandah overlooking the Atlantic Ocean - in the intermediate distance, the Swedes gamboling on the beach in front of him – and ply the president with whiskey and basically go over the entire foreign affairs of the country. I just made sure that the fellow's drink was always fresh.

Q: Well you probably made a greater contribution to American diplomacy than many have.

HELM: We've seldom, in countries that I've been in, had that type of access to the head of state.

Q: Were there other embassies there?

HELM: Yes, there were. The Brits, the French had an embassy, a couple of the African countries had embassies. The Brits represented the entire British Empire.

Q: The High Commissioner?

HELM: Yes. I worked seven days a week, 10 hours a day, one way or another - a young single guy. There were very few diversions, and then once the rain season comes, of course the Swedes go away. About April the Swedish/European tourism season ends until November.

Q: How sad.

HELM: They shut the hotels down, the bars close, and then it becomes Africa again. I had a lot of interesting duties. Visa work: I mentioned before that I had absolutely no visa training. None. And the charge felt that was a deficiency, that I really should know something about visas. At the time there was a correspondence course on visas from FSI (Foreign Service Institute). He insisted that I sign up for this correspondence course on visas, and I wrote off and signed up for it. Mail was always a problem there. Eventually some paperwork showed up and I started taking the course. In the meantime, every day, there were visa applicants. What was I going to do with

all these visa applicants every single day? There was a line out in front of my office of visa applicants, and I just didn't know what to do. I lacked the self-confidence just to start issuing visas. I'd been told that you get bad, bad marks on your record book if you issue bad visas to intending immigrants. We didn't do immigrant visas. It was just tourist visas.

So, I refused them all. Every one. And I filed my monthly report of visas issued and refused, and my refusal rate was 100 percent. The first month, nobody said anything. The second month, nobody said anything. Third or fourth month, I still hadn't issued a visa. In the fifth month, a young man applied and I refused him, too. Then I was called in to the chargé's office.
(I didn't get formally called into the chargé's office very often because we ate lunch together every day. We conversed at the local restaurant, he told me what to do, and I basically attempted to do it.)

He yelled at me, this was the first and only time he ever raised his voice in anger. But he was most upset with me. I'd just refused to issue a student visa to the son of President Jawara. He's not a student. He didn't graduate from the local high school, he has no form I-20, he has not applied or been accepted anywhere." He claimed to be an "intending" student. I was told to go over to the palace, find the passport, bring it back and issue a visa right then. If I didn't do it, I could just go to the airport and get on an airplane. I was very upset with this, but I complied. I went over and issued this intending student an absolutely totally bogus visa. But I issued it. And everybody was happy after that.

Then I started having to issue visas because now the chargé was standing over my shoulder saying, "You can't refuse them all, you have to issue some visas, there must be someone here you can issue a visa to." So I started issuing visas, and shortly thereafter started getting blue sheets of paper from the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) telling me I was a bad boy. I didn't know what to do. But, I figured that the Chargé was a lot closer than the INS, to hell with the INS. And so I issued visas.

I did all the admin work at the Embassy. One day I got a call from the Captain of the Port telling me that the Embassy had two crates sitting on the docks. "They've been here for a very long time and if you'll get them out of the port today, I won't charge you thousands of dollars in port charges." The port was two blocks away from the Chancery so I walked down to the port to see the Port Captain. He showed me two enormous lift vans. I said, "I don't have any paperwork, I have no idea what's in it, it's not even addressed to the American Embassy." He said, "I don't care, it's yours, you have to take it. Today." I said, "Well I have no means to take these things. These are gigantic." These were crates that were larger than standard lift vans, six feet by eight feet, six feet tall, two of them. So he called some men over and they had little iron carts. 10 or 12 men picked one crate up and put it on an iron cart and pushed it all the way to the embassy and unloaded it in the carport. Two crates absolutely filled the carports. We had no place to put the chargé's car.

The chargé came and his car had no parking place. He said for me to "Get those crates out of my parking place, right now." "Yes sir, be happy to." So I started opening the crates, and it was family planning material for the Gambia Family Planning Association. Well it turned out that the Gambia Family Planning Association had been disbanded by Government edict some time

before and no longer existed. And in fact, the very existence of some of this stuff was enough to get you put in jail in that country.

Q: All condoms?

HELM: Well, now let me get into this. Yes, I had a couple of cubic yards of condoms and I had no place to put them. I got in there, and there was a product of the time called Delfin Foam. It was a little glass bottle of some sort of compressed contraceptive foam. But you had to have a special syringe-like device to get the foam out of the bottle, and there were no devices in the whole shipment. So I had these little bottles, little glass pressure bottles, thousands of them, and I kept digging into this containers. There was a medical device in a case, sort of a big syringe that was an abortion machine of some sort. And I had a few other medical instruments of that type, ob/gyn type devices, the sort of stuff my father had in his doctor's office and other things. I kept digging into the crates. There was an electric typewriter. At that time Embassy Banjul did not *have* an electric typewriter. That was our first electric typewriter. And glory upon glory, there was a Kalart-Victor16 millimeter movie projector. And my post didn't *have* a Kalart-Victor 16 millimeter movie projector. And this was just wonderful! And they had all these movies, hundreds of movies in metal cans. And they were awful. They were movies on how to perform abortions, there were movies on the birth of babies.

I met with the chargé and I asked "what was I going to do with this stuff, this is absolutely verboten, it is illegal to have this in this country. He says, "Well, here's what I want you to do. I want you to take the abortion machine and a few of the other medical devices, and I want you to take the ferry across to the other side of the Gambia River. When you're half way across the river, I want you to throw them off the side of the ferry." So I did. The other medical instruments we gave to the local hospital. I put then in a box, took the box over to the hospital, walked in, set it on the front desk and ran out the door. I took the movies and put them in a barrel and burned them. The condoms? Every visa applicant, whether they got a visa or not, got a gift from the United States Government in the form of a strip of multi-colored condoms. They would ask, "What is this?" We'd say, "We don't know, but it's yours." "Well in that case, give me a handful." We'd say, "Certainly, here, take a handful." So we distributed condoms all over the city, but nobody had a clue what they were for. But you'd see children playing with them as balloons.

That was pretty much what was happening in Banjul.

Q: Is there anything else you should mention about Banjul?

HELM: Well, it's where I met my wife.

Q: Don't tell me she was Swedish, gambling on the beach.

HELM: No, she was a Peace Corps volunteer. We did have a 50-volunteer Peace Corps detachment.

Q: In this small area?

HELM: Yes.

Q: What was the Peace Corps doing there?

HELM: They had all sorts of different tasks, primarily education. They had a team of men who were well drillers. They had one lady that was a city planner. They had one electronics graduate that was working with the local telephone company. Basically he was the technical director of the local telephone department, because the British guy that had run the place had quit. One of the things I accomplished was to get the Embassy its very first telex machine by giving that Peace Corps volunteer a case of whiskey, and he re-allocated a telex machine from some other company and gave it to me. We no longer had to go and sit at the public telegraph office to type our outgoing messages.

Q: What was your wife doing - or, your wife-to-be at that time?

HELM: She was a teacher. She lived in the village of Farafenni, which was some ways upriver. Farafenni is at the ferry crossing over the Gambia River on the main highway that connects the Casamance to the main part of Senegal. She taught English and science in that village.

Q: Did you get married there?

HELM: No, we didn't get married there, but when my tour ended I left Banjul and moved to Panama. When her tour ended she went back to her home town of Hudsonville, Michigan. We stayed in contact and got married some time later.

Q: You left there in '74?

HELM: Yes, December 1974.

Q: Where'd you go?

HELM: I went to Panama, via FSI.

Q: First you took Spanish, or did you do something else before you went to Panama?

HELM: Well, let me go back and pick up two more little quick items from Banjul. I mentioned that I got a movie projector with the family planning stuff. There was a Department of Defense supported movie circuit and they would send movies around West Africa. Every month you got two movies. When the movies would come in, I would set the projector up at the chargé's house and he would show movies to his fellow ambassadors and his contacts from the ministries. Then the following weekend I would show the movies at my house for the Peace Corps volunteers, and pretty much anybody that walked in. I would go to the Japanese shrimp factory and get ice, buy a case or two of Amstel beer to put in the ice, and people would bring their own sodas or beer. We would have a nice party. Pretty soon I started picking up the younger guys from the ministries, and the second tier diplomats that were not invited to the Chargé's house. I was

drawing a crowd of 50, 60 people on my movie nights. That was fine, I didn't mind that - I had a big house. I had servants to clean it, so I didn't have to do much. I usually put out about five gallons of roasted peanuts. That was the sum total of hors d'oeuvres.

Q: You were in a ground nut economy, weren't you?

HELM: Sure. That's what everybody did. So anyway, some Chinese guys started coming. These were nationalist Chinese and our relations with that group were a little dicey in 1973 & 74. We were supposed to be friends with them, but we weren't supposed to be too friendly. So the Chinese ambassador would not get invited to the chargé's house. All the young guys that worked on his agricultural mission would come to my house and see the movies, but he couldn't. After a few weeks, he too started coming. The chargé was a little upset about that, but neither of us really knew how to tell him not to come because it was such an open situation. The chargé finally decided that no harm would come of it. Furthermore, nobody knew about it or gave a darn about Banjul anyway. And then, a couple of times, I was invited to the ambassador's house for dinner. The Chinese ambassador taught me how to use chopsticks. Good food, unbelievably good. And then one day they came and said, "Well, we're not coming again, we're all leaving." It was very sad. They all went out and got on a plane and left, and the next day the Red Chinese came and moved into their same compound and took over the same agricultural projects. But Red Chinese didn't come to my movies. The changing of the Chinas was kind of a poignant moment.

On a lighter note, one of my duties as communications officer was to go out to the airport every second week and meet the courier. The courier would fly in, get off the plane, walk around under the plane. I'd be standing there, we'd open the bottom of the plane, the courier would take out a Large mailbag sized diplomatic pouch, open it and give me our little incoming pouch and I'd give the courier our outgoing pouch which was usually, if we had anything, the smallest bag they make. It would hold a few letter-size envelopes. He'd stick it back in the mailbag, load the mailbag back into the airplane, and then we'd stand around and talk until the plane was ready to go. He would be the last one back on the plane and I would watch the plane leave.

One day I was out there and the courier came and we opened the bottom of the plane. You'll notice I said "we opened it." We'd been doing this so often, the airport guys told me I could open the plane and close it. You wouldn't expect that of a commercial airliner, but anyway. Opened the cargo door, and there was a crated sheep. But the sheep had gotten his head through the rail of this crate and turned his head one way and chewed up somebody's beautiful leather suitcase and was dragging their clothes out of it. The sheep had also turned his head the other way and had chewed up our pouch and was dragging our classified documents out of the pouch and all over the inside of the airplane, not to mention probably eating some. The courier turned pale and said, "What am I going to do?' I said, "There's nothing you can do. I don't have any place to lock up all your stuff. I can't just take you off the plane and deal with you here." "Oh my God what am I going to do?" I said "Here's what we're going to do. You're going to get back on that plane and act surprised when you get off in Accra, Ghana." He said, "Can I do that?" I said, "Yeah. Just shut the door and the sheep will just keep eating." He said, "At least let's move the pouch" so we put somebody else's suitcase between the sheep and the pouch. Anyway, that's enough on Banjul.

RUDOLPH AGGREY
Ambassador
Senegal and The Gambia (1973-1977)

Ambassador Rudolph Aggrey, whose father immigrated to the United States from Ghana in the early 1900,s entered the USIA in 1951 after receiving a Bachelor's degree from Hampton Institute(now Hampton University) in 1946 and a Master's from Syracuse University in 1948. His career included positions in Nigeria, France, Zaire, and ambassadorships to Senegal, the Gambia, and Romania. Ambassador Aggrey was interviewed by Jack O'Brien in 1990.

Q: Good enough! That's fine. Well, you were there for roughly two years?

AGGREY: There for two years. And in 1970, David Newsom, who was assistant secretary of state for Africa--whom I had known in my previous job in the Department of State, when he was Deputy Director for North Africa and I was Deputy Director for Public Affairs--David Newsom asked me, and asked the Agency, if I could come to the Department to become director for West Africa. And the Agency allowed me to do that. And I came over and served from '70 to late-'73, at which time I was nominated by President Nixon to be ambassador to Senegal and The Gambia.

Q: That meant that you had spent a lot of good time in State, to be prepared for an ambassadorship. At least you knew the bureaucracy and some of the communications patterns and so on. So did you consider yourself well prepared for this ambassadorship?

AGGREY: I thought that I was well prepared for it because I had spent a total of about seven years in State in my two assignments. I had traveled widely in Africa. I knew its problems. I knew its people. At the same time, I had had to deal with U.S. interests in the Department of State, in a supervisory role for West Africa.

I knew the system. And I knew the personalities as well. So when I was proposed to the bureaucracy for the position, I had, in fact, briefed two previous ambassadors-designate to Senegal. And finally, the word came down, "Well, why not this man?"

Q: Sure. Well, how did you divide your time between Senegal and The Gambia?

AGGREY: We had a full-time chargé in The Gambia, who was a senior career officer. The first one who served with me was a senior officer. The next one was mid-career, transitioning to senior. I spent most of my time in Senegal. But I did go to The Gambia about once a month and when special events or circumstances dictated.

MILES WEDEMAN

Director for the Regional Economic Development Services Offices for West Africa, USAID Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (1974)

Miles Wedeman was born in Maryland in 1923. He received a BA from Swarthmore College in 1943 and his LLB from Harvard in 1949. He also served as a lieutenant overseas from 1943-1946. After joining USAID in 1962, he did development work in Nigeria, Liberia and Uganda. He was also assigned to Korea, Cambodia, and Syria. Mr. Wedeman was interviewed by John Kean in 1995.

Q: Well, this meant that you and your people were in touch with organizations and governments throughout the region and traveling. Did you then have opportunity to interact with the missions on how things were going and whether priorities were properly lined up? What was in terms of the strategies for the country or for the region, how did you interact?

WEDEMAN: It varied from place to place. In the cases where there was a Mission Director as against an Aid Representative, although this is perhaps a slightly broad statement, the Mission Director generally would want people from Abidjan to come to work on a specific project and to take orders from him. This provided problems particularly in the case of Mali. The Mission Director said to me, "When your people come to Bamako, they work for me." My reply was, "They do not. They are there to provide you with independent advice. You should be happy that you have a source of independent advice from people who have acquired so much experience in the entire region."

In the case of country programming - with some exceptions - we did not play a significant role. One case where we did, interestingly, enough was in the Gambia, which I think may have had an Aid Representative, I'm not sure. In that instance we were asked to prepare - I can't remember what the name of the document was - but it was a five year planning document, programming document. We did the whole thing, providing the necessary experts. It went very well and I admit it I was very happy with it. We were certainly in the Gambia to render advice, but you had to tread a very careful line in giving advice as to the direction of a program. For example, in the case of the Casamance region in southern Senegal, a multi-donor effort was getting underway involving the World Bank, the Dutch, and the United States. The initial concept on the part of AID, particularly in Washington, was to go slow - this was a river basin development scheme - and not try to do too much until we knew whether ideas worked or not. But the Mission Director in Senegal wanted money. He wanted large sums of money - I can still remember it - he wanted $17,000,000 committed, authorized in the first year. Our recommendation was $2,000,000 and it ended up being $2,000,000. That final decision of course had to be made in Washington. We did not independently, by the way, go to Washington with our recommendations, but Washington for example, in this case was aware of the fact that REDSO had come up with a different recommendation which represented a desire not to over extend ourselves in the Casamance. So that's what happened. Naturally, the Mission Director was not all that happy with that kind of result. He was somebody I knew quite well and had been on the REDSO staff before going to Senegal. Thus, you did have situations in which you had to be very, very careful not to usurp the authority of the Mission Director. We certainly were not prepared to do that.

One thing we wanted to start was a series of - I guess they are now called - "baseline studies," not directed at any particular project. We had in mind looking at river basins, livestock, some aspects of agriculture, public health, education etc. to provide the basic information and perhaps the concepts that would help people to decide what should go into the country programs. Ideally, country or regional programs would grow out of these baseline studies, instead of deciding what to do first and providing the justification later. That was the purpose, for example, of the "Red Meat Study" I've mentioned before, which was designed to help determine what if anything AID ought to do to support livestock development throughout West Africa. I don't know whether AID went ahead with the proposals on river basins and the other subjects or not. I had left Abidjan by that time. Might have been a very good idea. These studies could be updated so that at anytime you would have the database to provide the basic information needed to make project decisions. It does admittedly reflect a philosophy that it's the donor that does the conceptionalizing.

ARTHUR M. FELL
Deputy Director, USAID
Dakar, Senegal (1975)

Arthur M. Fell was born in Indiana in 1935. He received his BS from Indiana University in 1957 and his JD in 1966. He served in the US Army between college and law school. After passing the bar exam he worked for three years at an international law firm in New York. He then worked briefly for the Office of Economic Opportunity before joining USAID in 1969. His time at USAID focused primarily on West Africa and brought him to posts in Abidjan, Cameroon, Dakar and Nairobi. His career also included brief stints at the African Development Bank and OECD. He was interviewed by W. Haven North on February 15, 1997.

Q: *Do you remember the contexts of why these changes were coming up?*

FELL: The context mainly in West Africa was the Sahel drought. The 40 country limitation had less impact because we had pulled out of a lot of countries that had previously been emphasis countries around the world, and that didn't pose much of a problem anymore. We were beginning to return to bilateral programs in Africa. We set up offices in Mauritania and in Mali which had previously been a part of this regional development office jurisdiction. When I arrived there in Dakar in 1975, our office was only in charge of Gambia and Guinea. The other countries had their own offices and they reported directly to Washington, and were getting like we were , technical assistance from the REDSO in Abidjan. So if we needed a lawyer or engineer or economist any technical help in devising projects on a first basis we would get it from the regional office in Abidjan.

MICHAEL E. WYGANT
Chargé d'Affaires
Banjul (1975-1978)

Michael G. Wygant was born in Newburgh, New York in 1936 and was raised in Montclair, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College, where he passed the Foreign Service exam during his junior year. He served briefly in the U.S. Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1959. Mr. Wygant's career included positions in Zimbabwe, Togo, Vietnam, and Gambia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 14, 1990.

Q: *Why don't you give us a rundown of your various assignments and then we'll come back and return to them.*

WYGANT: In 1975 I went to Banjul, The Gambia, where I was chargé d'affaires of the embassy for three years. In those days, the ambassador to the Gambia was also ambassador to Senegal, and he resided in Dakar. So I was in charge of the embassy throughout most of the time, although occasionally the ambassador would come down from Dakar.

JAMES D. PHILLIPS
Chief of Mission
Banjul (1978-1980)

Ambassador Phillips was born in Illinois in 1933. He received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Wichita in 1957 and his Master's in 1958. After serving in the US Army from 1953 to 1955, he entered the Foreign Service in 1961. Postings throughout his career include Paris, Elizabethville, Luxembourg, The Gambia, Copenhagen and Casablanca. Mr. Phillips then became the ambassador to Burundi and Congo. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 5, 1998.

Q: I take it you were ready to go by 1978?

PHILLIPS: By 1978 I was ready to go. I had been out of the United State since 1971. I had worked for Dick Watson, Jack Irwin, Kenneth Rush, Ruth Louis Farkas and Rosemary Ginn, five political appointees in almost as many years. I did not want another job as DCM. I had a good shot at DCM in Dublin but I didn't pursue it. I would have been sure to get a political ambassador and I did not want to go through that again. I did not want to go back to Washington either because my son Michael was in college and daughters Madolyn and Catherine were in boarding school and I needed a few more years abroad to get my finances in order. The Department was understanding. They gave me credit for having worked with all those political ambassadors. But I was too junior for an embassy of my own. So I went back and forth with personnel. There was nothing open that really appealed to me in Europe. But there was one post

available that looked interesting. It carried the title of Chief of Mission but not Ambassador. It was in a small country in Africa called the Gambia and it was nothing more than a sliver of land in the middle of Senegal. It has a land surface about 20 miles wide on both sides of the Gambia river and its capital Banjul is a port on the Atlantic ocean. The chief of Mission in the Gambia at that time served under the nominal aegis of the U.S. Ambassador in Senegal but in fact operated more or less independently. It was also a 25 percent differential post.

Q: Which means you make 25 percent more of you salary.

PHILLIPS: Unless you bump into a salary cap. You can never make a higher salary than a congressman. But for various reasons and because a friend of mine named Hank Cohen was Ambassador in Senegal the Gambia looked like a fit. I had a two-year assignment in this beautiful little country. My residence overlooked the Atlantic ocean and I could walk down to a pure white sandy beach. The people were friendly and the climate was great. But talk about a bird in a gilded cage! It was an English speaking country and it had gotten some publicity because in Alex Haley's "Roots" he traced his ancestry back to the Gambia. Some black American tourists came ever year and the country was a favorite of the Congressional Black Caucus. Jimmy Carter's mother came out to visit and that was a major event. But there was very little substantive work to do. Luxembourg was a hub of bilateral activity compared to the Gambia. It was just off the face of the map. I did get the experience of managing a post with quite a few people. There was a large Peace Corps contingent and an AID mission with a budget of five or six million dollars a year. The President was named Dawda Jawara. He liked to play golf so I played golf with him once a week. He made a rule that we wouldn't speak about business on the course. But when I wanted to talk to him about business his aides would remind me I had just played golf with him and ask why I needed to see him again.

Q: From 1978 to 1980. What sort of government did Gambia have?

PHILLIPS: It was a functioning democracy that regularly held elections. But the difficulty is that Africans tend to vote their tribal affinity. Since the Mandinka tribe was 60 percent of the population the Mandinka candidate always won. So the dilemma was that democratic procedures produced a one-party state. Eventually there was a coup d'état and the police force took over, but that happened about 18 months after I left. The post was also upgraded to full embassy status after I left.

Q: Did you get involved in the UN vote? Going out and saying please vote this way.

PHILLIPS: Sure, if I got a telegram with instructions that is what it was about. I would meet with the foreign minister and we would go through a little bird dance. He would say he understood our point of view, but please tell Washington the Gambia has to vote with the UN African group. I would ask him to take a special look at this particular issue and he would promise to do so. I must have had that same conversation with him fifty times and of course the Gambia always voted with the African group.

Q: What about the Peace Corps?

PHILLIPS: It was a large group for a small country, about sixty volunteers. One Peace Corps volunteer got raped on the beach but there were no other unfortunate incidents. For the most part the volunteers did their job as agricultural experts or health assistants or small business advisors. From watching the Peace Corps in action it is my opinion that the volunteers are the real winners. They contribute to the economic and social development of a country in a marginal way, but the experience profoundly enriches their lives.

Q: What about AID?

PHILLIPS: There was an AID Mission with a director and a few people working for him. My handling of AID was based on the belief that the AID officers knew what they were doing and didn't need much supervision. They did a very routine job. There was an agricultural program and some road building and participation in a lengthy study of a dam that somehow never got built. It was useful but not terribly exciting.

PHILIP BIRNBAUM
Vice President, International Fund for Agricultural Development
Washington, DC (1978-1983)

Philip Birnbaum was born in Union City, New Jersey. In 1950, he graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in business administration and received a Fulbright scholarship while in graduate school at Columbia University. Mr. Birnbaum received an M.A. from both Columbia University and the University of Cambridge, and a Ph.D. in international economics and foreign trade from Harvard University. He then served in the U.S. Army for two years. In addition to Algeria, Mr. Birnbaum served with USAID in Tunisia and Morocco. He was interviewed by W. Haven North on February 22, 1996.

Q: How about its development? Was that different from others, or was there anything particularly unique about it?

BIRNBAUM: Well, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) did try to do something different. The objective was to work with small poor farmers and the rural poor. A cost benefit analysis on these projects often indicated a poor rate of return. For example, IFAD did a project in a remote part of Honduras where there's very few farm to market roads, a very difficult place to work. IFAD did buy into cofinancing some big irrigation projects in Pakistan or India. We were preaching this "religion" or new approach of first finding the target group, i.e. the poor farmers, then analyze their situation, and how IFAD could make an intervention that would improve their living standards. There were some good examples of that. In the Gambia, women are farmers, but often they get the worst land, marsh land that is under water most of the time. IFAD did a project for these women, which involved draining the land and putting in a very simple irrigation. It was a big success, and the next thing we heard was that the men came and kicked the women off the land, because now this was good land. So we had to go back and tell

the government that this was just not acceptable. There was a big discussion, but IFAD prevailed and the women remained on the land.

DAVID SHEAR
USAID Mission Director
Dakar, Senegal (1979-1984)

David Shear was born in the Bronx, New York in 1932. He graduated from New York University and Harvard. His career in the Foreign Service included posts in Nigeria, Tanzania, Ivory Coast and Senegal. He was interviewed by W. Haven North in 1998.

Q: Of course. You were discussing 1979 and your sabbatical year; any other highlights?

SHEAR: I undertook to put together a small publication for the Overseas Development Council called "New Directions in Development Cooperation." In it I compared the Sahel Development Program to the Southern African Development Cooperation Committee (SADCC), the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the Mekong Delta, which were all multinational long-term development efforts, regional programs and development efforts.

The conclusions I reached were not very surprising; by and large their success was dependent on the volition of the participating countries. I saw SADCC as having a substantial prospect for success, which seems to have been realized in terms of some of the trade agreements which have been reached. Caribbean Basin and Mekong - Mekong being in a much more politicized environment and the Caribbean Basin Initiative being much more difficult than any of them because of the small scale of the economies and the dependence on the United States in terms of the openness of our trade. With greater U.S. cooperation, it might have been much more successful.

So I guess there were no universal conclusions coming out of this, no general messages, but it certainly was an interesting piece of work to be involved in. Following that, of course, I went to Senegal.

Appointment as USAID Mission Director in Senegal: 1979

In September 1979 I became Mission Director for the bilateral program in Senegal. I oversaw our efforts in the Gambia as well; the AID representative in the Gambia was theoretically reporting to me. I was also responsible for a number of regional initiatives (i.e., the integrated pest management, the Senegal River Basin Commission, the Gambia River Basin Commission). We also provided, because we had a fairly good communications system, some legal and technical support of programs in the Cape Verde Islands and Guinea Bissau.

The program in Senegal had essentially gone through three phases. The first phase was from

1961 to 1972, when Senegal and most of the countries of ex-Francophone West Africa were really run out of the Senegal and West Africa Regional Office. It was administered from Washington, and there was minimal representation in the field. There were AID representatives in places like Niger, Bamako and Dakar, but only limited field staff, and the program was very modest in size. The operation was very inefficient to run out of Washington, and it showed, for example, the difficulty of writing implementation orders. AID uses PIO-Ts, PIO-Cs and PIOPs, which are Project Implementation Orders for Technical Services (that is, contracts), for Commodities and for Training. Prepared in Washington, these had to be sent to the field for review and negotiation and then sent back to Washington. All the financial controls were in Washington, and all project agreements had to be written there as well. It was an enormously cumbersome system, and as a result, not a lot happened. There was a high degree of dissatisfaction on the part of the recipients because implementation was so slow, and in many ways Washington was perceived as being non-responsive to their needs and their changing requirements. The period from 1973 to 1980 saw significant changes.

JAMES K. BISHOP
Deputy Assistant Secretary, African Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1987)

Ambassador James K. Bishop, Jr. was born in New York in 1938. He received his bachelor's degree from Holy Cross College in 1960. His career has included positions in Auckland, Beirut, Yaounde, and ambassadorships to Nigeria, Liberia, and Somalia. Ambassador Bishop was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November 1995.

BISHOP: Elsewhere in Africa, there were other dramatic events. About a month after I reported to my new assignment, I had a chance to participate in a crisis management operation, thanks again to Libya. This time it was an attempted coup in Gambia. Some insurgents, backed by the Libyans, attempted to overthrow the government. Most of our Embassy staff and many other Americans had to evacuate to the Embassy residence. A short stalemate developed which lasted long enough for the Senegalese to mount a nifty land, air and sea operation, during which they actually had forces landing on the beach and some coming in by helicopters. They established a defense perimeter which unfortunately fell short of the Embassy residence. So our Embassy families--wives and children--and some 20 Peace Corps volunteers were left on the wrong side of the line. We debated what we should do about that. Haig convened a meeting at which he decided that a Delta Force contingent would be sent to protect the Americans. My recommendation had been that we send in only a small force that could come from behind the Senegalese lines and move to the residence to provide adequate security to enable people there to evacuate. The Secretary--a former general--told me that as the Delta Force was just sitting around Fort Bragg doing nothing; he wanted a full battalion sent. The Pentagon pointed out that a force of that size would require considerable air transportation, particularly since Delta units had special weapons. The Vice President called a crisis meeting at the White House, indicating that he was taking charge of the operation. At that point Haig asked: "Whose idea was it to send a battalion in the first place?"; he had no interest in being subordinate to the Vice President in management of the operation. Ultimately, a half a dozen Delta Force members were sent, but

they didn't play any role in the relief operation. In fact, our staff and families at the residence were rescued by two British SAS specialists. They gave some quick training to a squad of Senegalese and them led them to our residence. Then they went beyond to the rebel redoubt which was their last hold-out. In about two hours, the British returned and told our people that they were free to go wherever they wished.

The rebels were Gambian dissidents. The leader had known Libyan connections. Some mercenaries fought with the rebels as well as some political opponents of the regime then in power. But as far as I can remember, Gambia had no army; it had a police force, which was not at all prepared for this coup attempt. Gambia is surrounded in three sides by Senegal; therefore the Senegalese intervened.

JAY P. MOFFAT
Chargé d'Affaires
Banjul (1982)

Ambassador Jay P. Moffat, a third generation Foreign Service Officer, joined the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Japan, France, Switzerland, Gambia, Trinidad, and Morocco, and an ambassadorship to Chad. Ambassador Moffat was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Did you go to Chad from Morocco?

MOFFAT: No, I went to the Senior Seminar then to Chad. But before Chad I filled in in The Gambia and Lesotho, where the ambassadors were on leave and had resigned, respectively. They needed somebody on the spot. There had just been a mini-revolution in The Gambia and things were tense in Lesotho and they sent me out from Washington.

Q: How did you do it, to land in situations like that?

MOFFAT: They were very different situations. The Gambia was still in a state of trauma. They had had an uprising by their military force, and a lot of people were killed for a very small country--the equivalent of millions of people dead in the U.S. It was just a case of being there. I had to write reports without files. There hadn't been any reporting for years.

FRANK D. CORRELL
USAID Special Assignment
Gambia (1983-1984)

Frank D. Correl was born in Germany in 1929. He received his BS from Rider College in 1950, and his MA from Columbia

University in 1955. He served in the US Army from 1953 to 1955. His postings include South Korea, Vietnam, Morocco, Sri Lanka, Lesotho, and Zambia. W. Haven North interviewed him on September 29, 1990.

Q: So, then after eight or nine months there, you went back overseas? What did you do?

CORREL: No, I was at loose ends for a while. Before I even left the job formally, I did a management survey in Gambia. I spent a couple of weeks in Gambia taking a look at mission operations and making some recommendations for streamlining them and perhaps making them more effective from the personnel point of view.

ROBERT T. HENNEMEYER
Ambassador
The Gambia (1984-1986)

Ambassador Robert T. Hennemeyer was born in Germany and spent part of his childhood in the United States. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II and receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1947, he joined the Foreign Service in 1942. He served in Tanganyika and was ambassador to the Gambia. Ambassador Hennemeyer was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *How did your ambassadorial appointment come about?*

HENNEMEYER: That came because of the next job. While I was Executive Director for Management, Bill De Pree was serving as Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary. That's always been a job that has a reputation of being a power locus. I remember Bill Galloway had that job, and Jules Bassin had it. Bill was going to leave to head MMO, management operations, and a new Under Secretary was coming in, Jerry Van Gorkom, a political appointee, an old friend of Secretary Shultz's, a businessman from Chicago. Bill wanted to make this move.

Van Gorkom asked me to take a trip with him right at the beginning of his tenure, to familiarize himself with the overseas operations, and we made a quick trip to Moscow, to Madrid, and to ____. Then Bill made his move over to MMO, and Gorkom asked me to replace Bill as executive assistant. I was still there in that job. Van Gorkom didn't last quite a year and left over an argument about space, and felt he was not supported by the Secretary, which he was not, after the Secretary had promised support. Ron Spiers came in to be Under Secretary, and I stayed on as Executive Assistant to Ron.

It was during that time that I told Ron that I felt I was getting near the end of my career, and I really would like to finish up with an embassy if that should be possible. Ron said he would see what he could do. The Gambia came up. He said, "You can take it. My advice would be to stay with me for a while and I'll get you something better."

I said, "No." In fact, I went home that night, talked to my eldest son, who now works in Morocco for Catholic Relief Services, and I said, "This is the offer. I can have Gambia or I can wait a while."

My son said, "Dad, take The Gambia. After you retire, six months later, nobody will remember where you were ambassador, they'll just remember you were an ambassador." And he was very right. He was absolutely right.

I took it. As it turned out, it was a thoroughly enjoyable assignment with some interesting things going on. My wife and I spent a very happy two years-plus there, so I was glad to have done that.

Q: *What were our concerns in The Gambia?*

HENNEMEYER: The U.S., of course, had no great interests in The Gambia at all, other than to do what we could, minimally, not to let that place become a source of instability in the area, because there were more important countries around there, of course. Its neighbors were Mali, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, of course, on three sides. In 1981, The Gambia had had a very bloody attempted coup, in which the hand of North Korea, Libya, and the Soviets were apparent.

Q: *It was a very odd situation, wasn't it?*

HENNEMEYER: It was very odd. Apparently Colonel Qadhafi saw that since The Gambia was 95% Moslem and very poor and relatively defenseless, he saw this as a possible springboard for creating his Islamic empire in West Africa. The Soviets, I think, were just making mischief. The North Koreans, even more so.

At any rate, there were apparently three separate groups centered around those three paymasters, and when the thing was kicked off by what we think was the Libyan movement, the other two joined. Basically it started, as it did in Dar es Salaam, as a mutiny. They had no Army; they had a police field force. By the time the thing was over at the end of about two weeks, when the Senegalese Army came in to put it down, over 1,000 people had been killed. So it was a very, very serious affair.

I think basically what we were trying to avoid was something like that happening again, and the logic of the situation meant that without making any big commitment there, we would try to do what we could to ensure stability.

Fortunately, The Gambia, since 1965, has had the same president, but unlike most of its neighbors on the continent, he held elections when he was supposed to, opposition parties could function and, indeed, were represented in the Parliament. There were no political prisoners. So economically the place was at bedrock, but politically one could almost say it was a very small showplace. The people were incredibly nice, a tradition of hospitality and friendliness, but the economic situation was going from bad to worse for the usual reasons--overblown bureaucracy, inefficient government, too many people stealing, unwise loans and projects pushed on them by

international lending agencies. It wound down to the point where they finally were literally bankrupt.

The exciting part of my time in The Gambia was working with my British colleague, a very, very able man, serving then as High Commissioner, he's now British consul general in Houston; a very able lady official at the World Bank, Barbara B_____; a sympathetic IMF official, Donald Donovan, an Irishman; and an able aid director on my staff. Together we got a rescue plan put together and, against all odds, sold it in London and in Washington. Everybody threw something in the post. The Gambia got even with IMF, which opened the door for some bridging loans for them. In exchange for that, they did some draconian things in reduction of the civil service, freeing of rice price levels, what have you, a lot of very painful things, which was only possible because [Dawda Kairaba] Jawara was willing to put his own prestige on the line. He went around the country explaining, "It's going to be awful, but we've got to do it." And he was so respected that with a minimum of disorder, little things, it was done. Today the place is never going to be prosperous, but it's no longer bankrupt.

Q: *You can in at a time when you felt you could really have some impact.*

HENNEMEYER: Exactly. Fortunately, in a place that nobody was really watching, so you had considerable freedom in putting something together.

Q: *How did you find your team there?*

HENNEMEYER: I was very fortunate. The State Department component was tiny. It must be one of the smallest embassies in the world. There was myself, my secretary, our communicator, an economic officer, a consular officer, an administrative officer, and a GSO. I was basically DCM and political officer, both. I had a very able aid director, who had a staff of about 20, and a very unusual, dynamic Peace Corps director, because we had from 50 to 70 Peace Corps volunteers in The Gambia. The public affairs officer was my wife. So it was a good team. We got a lot of good things done. My wife set a record in getting exchange visitors from The Gambia to Washington; we've never gotten so many before. She did her homework and chose good people.

We took advantage of the human rights legislation that provided funds for human rights-related training programs. We got funding for training of all local magistrates in the country, got a law library for the Minister of Justice. We got an IMET program to train Gambian military officers in the United States. We got some help from the Department of Defense to refurbish the Gambian Navy. This sounds like a joke, but they had two patrol craft, which usually were out of operation because they didn't have spare parts. But they had very rich fisheries offshore, which everybody was poaching--the Soviets, the East Germans, the Japanese, the Senegalese. Everybody was poaching, and the Gambians couldn't do anything about it because they couldn't get their patrol craft out there. We got those operating for them, and they began to make people get licenses and get some revenue from the fisheries.

These are all small things, but they were positive things and things that pleased us. We got some very good aid projects off the ground, and we got away from the kind of big high-tech project

that had persuaded the World Bank and others to steer clear of them, too. That was another thing I should mention. We had a very good, active aid donors' committee, which met at least once a month, sometimes more often, where we educated each other on the kinds of projects that worked and those that didn't. As a result, we got away from these things that had high-import components, like expensive pumps for irrigation projects and so on, and got things that the Gambians could maintain.

I left there with a very good feeling. To indicate that the Gambians seemed to feel that way, too, I was notified the other day that I'll be receiving a high Gambian decoration.

Q: *The Gambia had been a British colony, but it sounds like we were taking over, really replacing or supplanting the British.*

HENNEMEYER: No, no, not at all. The largest bilateral aid donor remained the British. They were trying to get out of it at the time that my British colleague and I first started working on the problem. The message in London--and I can confirm that, because I went to London and talked to the people involved--was, "Let Senegal take it over. Let's cut our losses and get out of here." The only hitch in the thing was that the Gambians didn't want to be taken over, and felt that they had as much right to be their own country. There are smaller countries. The Gambians have a population of about 900,000, but there are countries that are smaller. They felt they had a right to be their own country, and they felt that Britain had an obligation to help. My British colleague felt the same way, so we were not supplanting them. He and I worked as a team, but the largest contribution was made by the British.

HERBERT E. HOROWITZ
Ambassador
The Gambia (1986-1989)

Ambassador Herbert E. Horowitz was born in New York in 1930. He received his bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in 1952. He received a master's degree from Columbia University in 1964 and from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1965. He served in the US Army from 1953-1955. His overseas posts include Taipei, Hong Kong, Peking, and Sydney. He was ambassador to the Gambia from 1986 to 1989. Ambassador Horowitz was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 9, 1992

HOROWITZ: I went to West Africa and became Ambassador to The Gambia. I think this was all worked out because I was departing as DCM, and people in Washington were looking for a post for me and this came along. They called me while I was still in Peking and said, "Would you be interested?" I said yes.

Q: *At last you were getting to see something else.*

HOROWITZ: Yes, finally.

Q: *The place you saw as a War College student.*

HOROWITZ: That's right. Another great Foreign Service experience. The Gambians were extremely nice people, very soft-spoken, tolerant, open-minded. A strange country, a long and narrow country up and down the Gambian River. It was one of the earliest western colonies in Africa; it was a British colony. Later it was surrounded by what became French West Africa and now has Senegal to the north and parts of Senegal to the south. There is an interesting contrast in that the British did not put a huge amount of investment into The Gambia as they did places in east Africa. In fact there was one point about the eighteen seventies when the French and the British discussed the possibility of trading off colonies so that they could get all of their possessions contiguous. The Gambian atmosphere today is sort of a free trade, open port, kind of place; a lot of import and export and buy and sell, re-export to Senegal and other parts of Africa. Whereas Senegal, with the French influence is more controlled, with state investment, higher tariffs, more infrastructure; very different. Various tribal groups have families on both sides of the border. The Gambians sometimes joke about their relatives on the Senegal side. They say that one difference is that in Senegal all of their relatives come home from work and speak French at home, here we come home from work and we speak whatever our tribal language is. A delightful country; good members of the British Commonwealth; very, very poor. Not very efficient in its operation, but getting better.

Q: *What were the American interests in The Gambia?*

HOROWITZ: Not many. Very little American trade. We certainly had an humanitarian concern for the poverty there, as elsewhere. There was a sizable Peace Corps group that was active there. I would say that most important for us is the fact that The Gambia has a moderate voice in Africa and among Moslem countries, and has a vote in the U.N. They often, very often, will support positions that we are interested in and they are not afraid to stick their necks out on certain things. The President of The Gambia is active in the OAS, in the Islamic Conference, and a variety of other organizations. He has often been appointed as a mediator; he is a moderate voice in the councils of Africa and the Islamic countries.

Q: *Did you find yourself explaining how we felt about things and hope for their support.*

HOROWITZ: Yes, and I would always get a good hearing from the President or the Foreign Minister. When they could, they would respond and be helpful. There were some times when we really wanted their vote on one issue or another and we didn't have trouble getting it. I can think of some examples. A Gambian Minister that I know was appointed to be on the first committee of the Islamic Conference to draw up confidence building measures, human rights kinds of issues, but they didn't know where to go. So he came to me for information; I called Washington and they sent me packets of materials on human rights, on confidence building measures. I was passing all of this to him who was using it in his committee. It is an example of a small way in which we might be able to have some influence. The Gambians were also very, very concerned about Libya; there was a dissident Gambian group that had been there and

trained there. There was no trouble getting the Gambians on our side if we needed their help and support.

Q: *How did you view the Libyans at that time; why were they messing around in The Gambia?*

HOROWITZ: I have no idea except that a Gambian group that had tried a coup d'etat at one time in The Gambia and had escaped to Libya. There was a group of dissident Gambians there in Libya getting training. I can't say why The Gambia would be of principal concern to Qadhafi. In any event it is a nice country and we are concerned about their poverty and they have been helpful to us. They are good members of the British Commonwealth.

Q: *Were the British the main aid givers?*

HOROWITZ: They still had a principal role and were concerned; they felt responsibility there. All the international organizations were active; the World Bank was very active and was handling a lot of projects. The British and Americans were providing key support in certain areas. There were a lot of donors; it was one of these countries where there are a lot of donor organizations, governments and private voluntary organizations.

Q: *Were there any security concerns there as to what Senegal or one of its neighbors might do? Or were the boundaries pretty well fixed?*

HOROWITZ: Well they did have this agreement with Senegal, a sort of confederate idea, but it broke up while I was there. There were some misunderstandings, but President Diouf of Senegal seems to be a pretty sensible person. Perhaps he assumes that some day in the distant future The Gambia and Senegal will become one, but even though there were frictions between the two there was no apparent danger that it would break out into any serious problem.

Q: *Did you get any feel for the AF Bureau as far as its direction and all that? After all it was a new bureau for you.*

HOROWITZ: I was favorably impressed. There were a lot of people who knew a lot about Africa. I remember when the Africa Bureau was born, there was hardly anyone... I had one friend when I was going to undergraduate school who was thinking of doing graduate study in African studies, this was back in the 1950's. At that point there was no university in the United States that had an Africa program. You could get a course in anthropology or something like that, but no program.

Q: *You had to go to London.*

HOROWITZ: Or Paris. So I was impressed by the number of people we now have who have focused on Africa, know a lot about Africa, speak some African languages. They are very realistic, conscious of the fact that Africa was not the center of our national attention. Some of those people have come via the Peace Corps route. You know even in a small post like The Gambia I had one officer who had a Ph.D. in African studies, another who had a Master's Degree in African studies and had spent a lot of time in different African countries. I was impressed by

the support of the Bureau. I had no trouble getting the ear of the AF front office if something would come up.

End of reader