

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

**THOMAS DONOHUE**

*Interviewed By: Charles Stuart Kennedy*

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## INTERVIEW

[Note: this interview was not edited by Mr. Donohue.]

*Q: Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, 2008, and this is an interview with Thomas Donohue.*

*Tom, do you know what Donohue means and the derivation of Donohue?*

DONOHUE: I do not, no.

*Q: I am sure it has a derivation of some sort.*

DONOHUE: But I am so far removed from the old side. We are dog sitting for my daughter's dog, and the dog's name is Una, and "una" is the Irish word for lamb. She's a poodle, she's blonde, and she looks like a lamb. That's the extent of my Irish vocabulary.

*Q: When and where were you born?*

DONOHUE: Chicago, Illinois, 1924.

*Q: Let's start on your father's side. Where did he come from? Do you know the background?*

DONOHUE: Both my parents were from Columbus originally.

*Q: Ohio?*

DONOHUE: Ohio. My mother's parents moved to Chicago. My grandfather moved his business to Chicago, and then my father came to Chicago to visit my grandfather just before World War II. My father was going on his merry way back to New York where he lived, and he met their daughter. He never got back to New York.

*Q: Do you know anything about the family farther back? About your grandparents on your father's side?*

DONOHUE: No, I don't. That becomes a blank, and it's unfortunate because my father's mother died in childbirth and his father died when he was five. Therefore, he was the youngest of four. The older three were sisters, and they raised him, but then they went on—most of them were living in the East. He was a semi-pro baseball player as he was growing up in Ohio, and then ended up on the East Coast, and the family was the least of his thoughts.

*Q: Earlier generations, so few people were able to get a college education. Was your father, did he get through high school?*

DONOHUE: He got through high school and went to a business school in Columbus, which I guess in those days passed for some in a career, and that was the end of his education.

*Q: What sort of business was he in?*

DONOHUE: Well, he was a superintendent of a patent medicine company in Chicago, and I guess they had something like 300 or 400 employees. I can remember it very well, having visited it, and they almost made it through the depression. They got to '32 and it looked great. My folks were building a house in the suburbs of Chicago, and things looked like, my God—it looks like we are going to survive. The banks closed, the company closed, and that was that. So my father had the house that they were building in Glencoe, north of Chicago, and no job, a wife, two minor children, and my grandmother lived with us—what do you do?

*Q: So what did he do?*

DONOHUE: Well, this is really amazing. We had good friends who owned, I guess, one of the largest security firms, so he took a job as a night watchman working 12 hours from 7 o'clock in the evening until 7 o'clock in the morning or something like that. He did that for almost three years, which I still think, my God, because by this time he was in his 40s, and my mother and my father had always been active in Cook County politics, which is in the blood of everybody born in the shadow of the Tribune Tower. So he then got a political job. He was the head of the admittance and night activities of the psychiatric hospital of Cook County.

*Q: I was born in 1928 in Cook County, and I always feel my grandfather died the year I was born and he and I are still voting in Cook County elections.*

*Let's talk about on your mother's side. Do you know about it?*

DONOHUE: Yes, I know more about that. Her parents, my grandfather, owned a company in the polish business, which was handling all the saloons, hotels, bar polish, and brass and all that sort of thing. Then he decided that Chicago would be better, and he moved his company to Chicago. So that's how he got there not too long before the First World War.

Then the next generation back was, this goes back to the Ohio thing where my great great grandfather got out of Ireland early, in I think about 1832, as I recall, just ahead of the

*Q: Before the '48 exodus and all.*

DONOHUE: Yes.

*Q: The potato famine and that whole thing.*

DONOHUE: But he got to New York and he had some money, oddly enough, and he met an Irish girl there, and they married. Then they took an ox cart and went on to Athens, Ohio—that's where the university is now—but he bought a hundred acres for a hundred dollars in gold of pretty good farmland, and raised a whole bunch of children.

*Q: And were they into farming?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes.

*Q: What sort of education did your mother have?*

DONOHUE: My mother had a high school education, and you don't understand the difference in attitude, but my mother was a very smart woman. She wanted badly to go to college, and her father just didn't think women needed to be educated.

*Q: My mother went through the same thing. I mean all that talent being submerged.*

DONOHUE: Amazing. She had all the energy in the world, she was very outgoing, and she was active in politics. You could almost feel that she was really so damned mad that she had never been able to break that barrier.

*Q: And rightly so, I mean it is hard to go back to those eras. Often all those energies of very bright women stuck at home translated into a push on the part of the mother on the kids. How did that translate to you?*

DONOHUE: I just had the one sibling—my brother who was three years older and he was a very bright kid. We both went to parochial grade schools, and then he went to preparatory seminary in Chicago, Quigley [Archbishop Quigley Preparatory Seminary is an American seminary preparatory school administered by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago] and spent three years there.

*Q: This is preparatory to being a priest?*

DONOHUE: Yes, it was a dioceses minor league. My brother was 11 when he got out of grade school, and so he just went ahead to Quigley, which was a good foundation for Latin and Greek. It was a five year course and he decided in his fourth year he did not

want to become a priest for all sorts of reasons. So he transferred to St. Ignatius, which is a Jesuit school in Chicago. I just followed him. I went to St. Ignatius, and I was three or four years behind him, but that was the point that there was no way that education wasn't going to be followed. He was quite beyond me. He went on and did two or three years at Loyola University in Chicago, and he was still young enough to get an appointment to the Naval Academy. My mother went to see our congressman, who was a friend of my parents, about it, and he said, "Oh, no. I can't do that. They are all filled up." And she said, "For God's sake, why didn't you say so?" so he gave him an appointment to the Naval Academy and he went on to the

*Q: When did he graduate?*

DONOHUE: He was class of '45 that graduated in '44.

*Q: My brother was class of '40.*

*Let's talk a little bit about the family. In the first place I assume your family, how Irish was your family, would you say?*

DONOHUE: Not really. In looking at a genealogical chart I have nothing but Irish. There is not one interloper that you can find over the years which is sort of interesting. We lived on the North Side of Chicago, which had the big concentration of Irish. My father had that interesting attitude that Irish people do because other people make such a thing of it. The same was true with my mother. So the ethnic thing was not there, but it was always present; you know the concept.

*Q: But there wasn't a solid Irish community there. You were in Glencoe, was it?*

DONOHUE: No, we were in the city. The family never left Chicago. That all went with the Depression. So in fact we were in a German parish, where up until World War II, the sermons were still in German.

*Q: Well, my mother grew up in Chicago, in Winnetka, and they were German, and she spoke German at home.*

DONOHUE: Well, in the area in which we lived there was the Siemens Brewery, which was a dandy brewery, which unfortunately is gone, and the Chicago Theater so it was a strong. We had a permanent pastor in our parish, Monsignor Francis Murphy, and his family ran the iron works in Chicago.

*Q: How Catholic was your family?*

DONOHUE: Oh, very.

*Q: Did you go through the altar boy and all?*

DONOHUE: Oh, absolutely.

*Q: In a way, it was a German church.*

DONOHUE: Yes.

*Q: Well, in a way I've got Irish blood too as most Americans do, but I would think somewhat fortunate in that the Irish, correct me if I am misinterpreting it, the Irish priests in my mind seemed to come a little more from the sort of the old side. There was not that sort of almost intellectual interest with their parish, but the German Catholics came out of, you might say, more upper class drawer.*

DONOHUE: Sure. I am trying to think of all the parish priests we had, the Monsignor sort of had that Christopher Walken look about him. He lived the good life in the Depression. He drove a beautiful automobile. So he was different. And of course, George Mundelein was the cardinal in Chicago at that time, and a very strong German influence. But I can't think, really, of any Irish priests that we had in the parish. I just can't.

*Q: How was the neighborhood, I mean as a kid? What was it a fun neighborhood?*

DONOHUE: Oh, Lord, yes, yes. Lots of kids, and you know, during the Depression you certainly made your own fun. If you wanted to play baseball we chipped in and bought a softball and then played in the public school yard.

*Q: You played work up, probably.*

DONOHUE: Absolutely. Nobody would ever think about telling us what to do. Uniforms? No.

*Q: The lot was there and you ended up with a kid that spoke your own language. I get a little bit nostalgic about that. Far less organized but far more fun.*

DONOHUE: We had the advantage, there was a gent, George, who had been the headmaster of Culver Military Academy. He left and really wanted to work with city kids. I never know why he ever chose to live where we were because it was not a settlement house sort of neighborhood. But he rented a big apartment, and he had a backyard, and he erected a basketball court, so we all played basketball. And then he formed teams depending on age groups, and I was in one group, the young group, my brother was in another, and there was yet another one, a bunch of fellows who were eighteen, nineteen, that sort of thing. George was a good influence on so many of those kids. Most of those kids in those days went to a public high school, and they took a lot of shop and they were prepared to go to work in any of the small manufacturing, electrical, chemical, whatever, in Chicago. They got good steady jobs and were able to raise a family and just do very well, thank you.

*Q: What was the atmosphere at home?*

DONOHUE: Utter harmony. My mother and my father were devoted to each other. My father was one of the funniest men I have ever met. He was terribly, terribly well-read even though he never had college. He read two or three newspapers a day, was just a great influence, never raised his voice to either one of us, and it was really delightful despite all the deprivations.

*Q: Well, a lot of the privations when one thinks about it really were extraneous if you end up with enough food to eat and*

DONOHUE: Yes, and my grandmother was there with us, which is always a great arrangement. Someone who can run interference for you.

*Q: I assume as a Cook County Irish family that when we talk about politics we are talking about Democratic politics, aren't we?*

DONOHUE: Is there anything else?

*Q: Was this the era of Hinkey Dinky bathhouse?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes, down in the first ward, sure.

*Q: Did these, we are talking about the Chicago machine at the time.*

DONOHUE: Well, now remember, everyone seemed to think that God made Chicago a Democratic town. It was Republican all during the '20s. It wasn't until '32 or '33 when Mayor Ed Kelley was elected. He was the first and of course, not the last.

*Q: Was he the one who was going to bust King George?*

DONOHUE: No, that was Bill Thompson, and he was a Republican. After World War I Chicago was strictly a Republican town.

*Q: I know my grandfather was a Republican and a Civil War vet and he carried that with him.*

DONOHUE: Of course, yes. South Chicago was something else, and of course, my mother was a precinct captain forever, and so my father used to share it, so it was just mother's milk to me. I was always aware of the off-year elections, not just every four years; judicial elections, and on and on and on. I have always been interested. That was a primer for politics.

*Q: Did you get out and hand out leaflets?*

DONOHUE: Of course. We lived in a Republican precinct, the 44<sup>th</sup> ward, which is just off the lake, Lincoln Park, that area, and the way the politics worked, both of my parents

would canvas the precinct. Now it was a given that it was a Republican precinct, so you talked to everybody in that damned precinct before an election, and as long as you said, “This is the way it’s going to go: there will be x number of Republican votes, there will be x number of Democratic votes.” Now if that was accurate, you had no problem. That meant you knew everybody in that precinct, and in the Depression that was the last place people could turn, and whatever their problems were, you know, getting their the kid from one school district into another, somebody was on relief that needed a load of coal. I can remember they would get in touch with my mother and she would do it. The way the system worked, it was a simple system. On every Monday night in the 44<sup>th</sup> ward where we lived, Ray Moore, who was the alderman and a guy named Jerry Ryan, who was the secretary for the ward, would be in their office on Clark Street in Chicago. If the precinct captain had somebody who had a problem that needed fixing either in the city or in the county, you showed up with that individual and he or she pled the case, or my mother would plead the case and they’d say, “OK, here’s a note. See so-and-so in such-and-such a room number in the county building or city hall” and that took care of things. It was a full time job. Nobody, it was just you were always on call.

*Q: In many ways, when one talks about machines in certain disparaging terms but they really delivered. This was the Depression. There were various machines around. I mean they weren’t just*

DONOHUE: Jersey City. It went on and on, but it’s interesting that all these big cities were all run by Irish mayors after the Republicans were driven out of Chicago. This was one of the problems that made it so difficult for Roosevelt when he was facing the war, and the idea of sending all that good stuff to the Brits because the Irish were still sore as Hell—and continued to be—and this was a really tough problem in national politics in the urban centers, which were the population centers.

*Q: At home, were you much of a reader?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes.

*Q: Where did you get your books?*

DONOHUE: The public library.

*Q: Was this Carnegie Library?*

DONOHUE: No, no, the city library in Chicago. I can remember it was seven cents on the streetcar and three cents for me. My brother started taking me to the public library downtown when he was seven or eight, and we would go down. You’re first interested in the Civil War. He would get the books he wanted, and then he would tell me about them before I was really cognizant of what was going on. That was absolutely essential.

*Q: Do you recall some of the early books you read that sort of stuck with you?*



DONOHUE: I don't know if you remember them but they were an awfully lot of books written, very well written, about sports. There were all sorts of things about teams, and I was very active in Boy Scouts, and there were a lot of books about scouting, and these were things that—we read a great deal—and then of course, Midwest authors.

*Q: Oh, yes, Booth Tarkington. I love those books. I reread them recently. They read well.*

DONOHUE: Reading was just second nature that you had to do. I was taught to read before I went to grade school. I started grade school when I was five, but I could read by then.

*Q: You were going to a parish school. What was your elementary school like?*

DONOHUE: Well, the order of nuns was German and discipline was served up, not in a brutal way, but by God, you were there to learn.

*Q: When you say "German" and "nuns" that frequently goes "you will do this, you will do that."*

DONOHUE: Indeed, no question, and it was no frivolity. It was a good school, I guess. It's kind of hard to tell in retrospect. Certainly, there was never a disciplinary problem because they never allowed them to arise.

*Q: In your early years how did you find you were as a student? Were there any courses that particularly grabbed you?*

DONOHUE: It showed up quite early that I was interested in history. I was interested in reading. I was interested in writing, but I sure as Hell didn't know much about arithmetic. That stuck with me. I always consider that as something I'd just as soon not have some, thank you.

*Q: Did you get involved in extracurricular things in grammar school, elementary school or not?*

DONOHUE: Well in Boy Scouts I was very active, no question. The school provided a very nice scout hall which was part of the school building. So I was active. I was a patrol leader and then I was a junior assistant scoutmaster. We would supervise; my dearest and closest friend was also a junior assistant scoutmaster. We were chums from age eight on. He died a couple of years ago, but we would arrange whatever activities the Northwest Council of the Boy Scouts in Chicago would have, such as overnight hikes, or going out early to the campgrounds to set the camps up. Very active in scouting. I don't know really when I disassociated myself from scouting, which was always fun.

*Q: During high school you went to St. Ignatius? Jesuit school. How did you find that?*

DONOHUE: Oh, I am a great believer in the Jesuit approach to education. Again, it was no nonsense. Nobody really, I suppose sometime in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century they discovered that little boys are like puppy dogs, and they are problems and bubble up a Hell of a lot so they worked out, you are familiar with the Jesuit system?

*Q: Well, I am more or less. I'm not a Catholic, but I certainly...*

DONOHUE: Well, it was very simple. I was twelve, I guess, when I was a freshman in high school, and all boys, of course. And then the system was the simplest in the world; you went, you did your homework, and you resisted all, all temptations to mouth off or to issue any [insult] toward the instructor because if you did, it was very simple. The guy would say, "Job tonight." So at 2:35, school got out, and at 2:45 you showed up at the jug hall and there was the priest who had the duty that night. You would sit there and he would walk in and say, "It is now 2:45. I will start hearing you at 3:15" and so he would give you an assignment to write up on the blackboard. He would say, "Twenty lines of poetry, memorization, and translation of Latin." And then, of course, he would say "Something to the X power." Jesus, I would be there forever. It was a system that worked that way. If you were foolish enough to be sassy to the schoolmaster, three days, automatic. If you missed class, then it was a week. If, for some reason, you just couldn't get your head right on this thing, it was indefinite [job] until the end of the semester. So at 2:45 you showed up and you began to memorize poetry, and my God, can I memorize poetry.

*Q: Did you find you were taught in the, what I understand, correct me if I am wrong, sort of the Jesuitical approach, you know, a way of approaching a problem?*

DONOHUE: Yes, oh, yes.

*Q: How did that work?*

DONOHUE: Well, basically we didn't have a great deal of what I have learned to call electives. In first year you had algebra, Latin for sure, ancient history, math, and religion. Religion was not taught every day, it was taught two days a week so that what they expected you to do was to read and understand, and so you had to write a lot of papers. On Friday afternoon, whoever your instructor was would write on the board a subject for a composition that had to be written, and there had to be X number of words. You turned that in on Monday morning, and you learned to write—whatever the subjects—and you would discuss with the instructor, and there had to be a lot of give and take. They were great questioners.

Q: Much of this is a questioning, and it made you think logically.

*You mentioned scouting. Were you involved in anything else?*

DONOHUE: Yes, I was a child actor. I guess about the time I was 10 or 11, I had a couple of twin cousins who were four years older, and they had gotten involved with a

theater group. They needed a child in a play that was being produced, so they produced me. I got involved, and this group did a couple of things that included a child, and I was the child. A guy from NBC (The National Broadcasting Corporation) who was in the audience, a local station in Chicago, WMAQ—and I guess my mother was there—he said, “Gee, this kid is good.” So he recommended somebody, a gal in Chicago, Marie Agnes Fully, and she ran a professional children’s theater. So we duly showed up. Basically she ran plays and things—mostly for wealthy kids from all over Chicago, and we paid a regular tuition fee—and the kids showed up and learned speech and body development. She was good. She had the Civic Theater in Chicago, and the Civic Opera and the Civic Theater are in the same building, and so she had a Saturday morning situation where you would have had, on a subscription basis, kids would sign up or their parents would sign up and then pay for whatever number of plays we did that season on Saturday morning in Chicago. So people would get there and see pretty good stuff. Most of the kids that showed that they had some acting ability didn’t pay anything, including me, because I was the National League baseball pitcher. It was a promotional deal for the National League. Shortly after I showed up there, having been sent there by Marie Agnes Folly, I had a casting call to go up that week. She said, “We’ll go up.” So then I went off on my own. I got the El (Chicago’s elevated mass transit train) up to Edmonston where there was a large studio that did a lot of commercial movies in and around Chicago. So I went up, and they were going to be doing filming, and I got a great part. I was the pitcher on the baseball team, and so I went back and they said, “Well, you’ve got to sign a contract to work with her.” She took a commission on my salary. I worked in commercial films and a whole host of things. Radio, again, kids’ things were all very popular in those days so it was a great arrangement.

I was as independent as can be. You know my age when I was leaving for school and say could you hang on? Sure. So then I’d have to go down and hop on a bus and go to wherever it was: ad agencies, studio, CBS, or NBC and do what had to be done.

*Q: How did you find the radio work?*

DONOHUE: Oh, I enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun. It was an interesting time because they paid me—not the scale they pay these days—but the AFRA (the American Federation of Radio Artists) had become an institution. I was under their aegis, and so they paid you what you need. There was a set fee. They later merged when television came along and it became AFTRA. I was able to pay my school tuition, but it did a lot of things. It gave me a Hell of a lot of ability to find my way around. I have always laughed when people say, “You can’t let a child take the bus.”

*Q: It was a whole different world.*

*Did you get, were you sort of a permanent person, any soap opera?*

DONOHUE: No, I never did. I would do a variety of things. They would have whatever the series was that had a dramatic story, a star athlete as a kid, that sort of thing. The inside story I used to work on and they would do things about how that individual

*Q: Were you sort of handed a script and here's the microphone or did you? I mean there wasn't much time to prepare.*

DONOHUE: Oh, you had to be a pretty quick study. That was expected of you that you were able to do it. I had good chums; the guy who did Joe Korncastle in Orphan Annie and the guy that did Skippy was a good buddy of mine. We were a coterie of kids and basically you could work. I did a lot of slide films that were very popular in those days. I got tied up with the Moorman Manufacturing (Feed) Company in Quincy, Illinois, and they worked out a series where I worked with the county agent on this continuous saga. I was then about 14, 15, something like 16 maybe. We would do a whole series of what to do with chickens, how to work with pigs, et cetera. I would have the county agent—who had taken a liking to me and his father had died on the farm, and so the mother was left alone—so then he would come out and teach me how to do all these things. I did a series of these.

As a matter of fact, the last one I did, I was already in college. I went to Marquette for a year before the war in Milwaukee. I'd been up there about a month and I get a frantic call from my agent to come back to Chicago. So I went back and they said, "Gee, you've got to do this. It will take two weeks." So my first thing was to go in and see the dean and try to explain to him, and of course, the closer was that it would pay my tuition so he said, "Go in peace, my son."

*Q: You graduated from high school when?*

DONOHUE: '41?

*Q: About '41.*

DONOHUE: As far as I was concerned the war was started. I finished, my last year the war was on, and I went to Marquette. It was just touch and go until the draft got me. So when I got to Marquette, I got involved in a radio workshop they had there, so I found myself with the greatest opportunity possible: they just handed me this deal. We had standard broadcast time on Saturday and the NBC regional station, the Milwaukee station, WTNJ. We had a brilliant gal who wrote the scripts, so I would get a new script each week. Then I would work it out and cast the thing, and we would do the show on Saturday morning. So that was great in itself, and as a result, Marquette, "Gee we would like to have you come back and we'll give you a full scholarship" and on and on and on and "we will help you with tuition" and on and on. I said, "Thanks a lot. I am being drafted."

*Q: While you were in high school, the war started in Europe. Prior to our entry into the war how much did European affairs and Japanese affairs intrude on your life?*

DONOHUE: I became very much interested, and I read a great deal about the war. I can remember my chum Bob from an immigrant Hungarian family that had a shortwave

radio. I can remember listening to the shortwave stuff that started coming in broadcasting what was going on in the war. I was very, very much interested, no question.

*Q: The Chicago Tribune, did you get involved with Colonel McCormick?*

DONOHUE: Oh, and how. He was the bête-noire (a person particularly disliked) of everybody. He was just outrageous. I did a picture for The Chicago Tribune, and one of the shots of me in the front of the Tribune Tower and then we went on and did all sorts of other things they were promoting, and all the time under my breath I was saying what I thought about it. We all had stories about Robert R. McCormack (Republican Chicago alderman and former owner and publisher of The Chicago Tribune newspaper). He was terrible, and a real figure because he covered the Midwest. The cartoon was on the front page. It wasn't stuck back in the body. Everybody was conscience, and of course, every new step that the Republicans took.

*Q: In your family was Roosevelt, what sort of figure was he?*

DONOHUE: A hero.

*Q: In my family too. This was FDR and God, in that order.*

DONOHUE: It was obvious and of course, we were obviously in the throes of America firsters, Wendell Willkie, Elizabeth...

*Q: Well, Wendell Willkie wasn't an America firster. In fact, he was the first one to use the term "One world", I think.*

DONOHUE: Oh, he caught on, but Wendell Willkie, when he was early on, was with America First. Alice Roosevelt Longworth was their patron. We had things like that going on, and of course we had the bombing.

*Q: My mother, speaking German came from a very conservative family horrified at Lindberg and talking to the German-American Bund, which was a very pro-Hitler group prior to our entry into World War II.*

DONOHUE: Well, of course they had a camp, a summer camp up near Lake Geneva in Wisconsin, and we had a little German kid in our neighborhood. Poor kid, the ribbing he got. He used to go off with a Bund uniform on and then on Sunday nights the Bund would have meetings up at the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association). They rented the hall and the neighborhood was terribly, terribly conscience of what was going on.

*Q: In your area as a kid and going to school, were there many blacks or was this*

DONOHUE: No.

*Q: How about Jews?*

DONOHUE: I lived in an area which was wealthy enough to have a lot of Jews. As I grew up a lot of my chums were Jewish.

*Q: This was not a problem?*

DONOHUE: Quite the opposite. We were all concerned about what was going on with Jews, but obviously the majority of people I knew went to either St. Ignatius, another Jesuit school on the North side, and De Paul Academy, which was also in the neighborhood. Neighborhood friends, Jews, were just absolutely accepted and were pals.

*Q: Why did you pick Marquette?*

DONOHUE: It is a Jesuit school. I knew my days were numbered, and so I figured well, Hell. It's close to Chicago, and I made the first two semesters, and then I went into the army in July, '43.

*Q: Where did you go? You came in July, '43. What did they do with you?*

DONOHUE: Well, they sent me over, oddly enough, they sent me to Battle Creek, Michigan. I was there, and of course, you filled out all your stuff. My background as having worked in radio and films, and so they grabbed me and wanted to know if I would like to stick around in special services. I was a month in that reception center. They had some comedians from Detroit who would come down and do shows, and I was sort of being a handyman, that was about all. I took and passed the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) exam. So (the army personnel) set up, when you get drafted, you go to the reception, give them this card, and they will straighten things out for you. They had language, they had psychological warfare, they had engineering. So the first guy I talked to was a major in personnel, and I was the first ASTPer he had seen. So he was just tickled pink with a change in the daily routine. He said, "Unfortunately, our quota for language and for psychological warfare are all full, but we have no problem getting you into engineering school in the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I said, "I hate to disappoint you, but why the Hell should I embarrass myself in the government? I'm never going to get through engineering school." You know, to go back to my grade school and my problem with arithmetic. Oh, he was crestfallen, he really was.

I said, "What have you got?" So I went down to be a radio operator. I went through six months in the winter in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and from there I went down to Yuma, Arizona, as a gunnery. So I got through.

*Q: You were in the Air Force, the Army Air Corps?*

DONOHUE: Yes, so I got down and I went through, and I didn't like Yuma at all. When I found out, I had been making plans to get back. It turns out they would take a class of four or five hundred, and they would take the top eight and hold them as instructors. I

was one of the eight, which was not at all what I was interested in, so they sent me off to Buckingham Field in Fort Myers, Florida, where they trained gunnery instructors. It was a six week course. Well, they thought I was a delight, and so they said, "What we would like to do is when you finish this we would like you to work, we would like to send you to Northwestern University."

And I said, "Well, isn't that interesting." They said, "We have a problem. We have a difficulty because when we take people like you whom we like and they don't go back then to the gunnery school. We are in a terrible pissing contest with the gunnery school because we take their best people, so you get yourself a release from Yuma." So here I am a corporal or sergeant or something. How am I going to do that?

OK, so I sent them a cable and if they answered they said, "Hell, no" and that was the end of that. It was too bad. So I went back and I taught at Yuma, which was fine. I enjoyed it. I liked Arizona in the desert. It was just a little operating base about 90 miles from Yuma, halfway between Yuma and Phoenix, stuck in the desert having fun. I enjoyed it.

*Q: What sort of gunnery were you teaching?*

DONOHUE: Caliber 15 machine guns for bombers. We were doing B-17s.

*Q: Did you work on, because there were turrets and then there were the open things. Did they teach you both?*

DONOHUE: Both. Basically, the caliber 50 was the workhorse for the 17s, 24s. All the basic handheld guns. This was the problem of trying to get people to learn how to shoot guns when they were going a hundred miles an hour or in a plane going three hundred miles an hour. It was fun with a (Sperry ball) turret because all you had to do was look in and point out there, but you know, you'd learn enough to depress the triggers. But the other was very tough.

*Q: This was an open bay and you were working this, you know, you were peering out and trying to shoot and not shoot the other planes in the formation.*

DONOHUE: You put your finger right on it. It was impossible. It was terrible because the basic concept was so difficult. We did everything we possibly could to try to teach people, you know, how you lead a target, but it was still with the inadequacy of the equipment.

*Q: Well, particularly after you got going, we were beginning to suffer quite heavy losses and all, particularly the Eighth Air Force and all.*

DONOHUE: Unbelievable. They still don't really let you know how, the losses were as much as sixty per cent of the crews.

*Q: One of the stories, you know when you look at it, and when you look at the results later on, one sort of adds up. I mean we probably tied down as many German troops as we tied down British and American in the air war.*

DONOHUE: A very significant difference. We decided we would do it by daylight. The Brits said "We do it at night, thank you."

*Q: Were they nibbling away at your cadre all the time by sending them off? Did you spend the war there or?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes. Gradually things became closed down on the base. So I was sent off, got sprung, to Lincoln, Nebraska, where they would form crews. Then as a crew you would go off to an operational base, so I ended up in Greenville, South Carolina, with B-25s with a crew. We had a pilot, a co-pilot, a navigator, an engineer, a tail gunner, and I was the radio operator. So we went through operational training, which was fun. About the time we were supposed to go to Japan, the war had ended.

*Q: So what happened then? When did you get your discharge?*

DONOHUE: February of '46.

*Q: Then what?*

DONOHUE: Well, I was most interested in going back to school, and so I spent the first couple of months doing absolutely nothing, which was very nice. Again, this same chap, Bob Crawley and I, got out about the same time. His family's apartment was right across from Lincoln Park Zoo, and so the high point in our day at three o'clock was to go off and watch the animals being fed at the Lincoln Park Zoo. We hit every museum in Chicago. You know that was our morning deal, and there are all sorts of little museums; medieval armor, the stuff that we found. We saw them all.

And then it was time to think about going back to school. About that time my mother had a company that she was running, an employment agency in the Loop. I had the first wrestle with my conscience that I had really ever had. I really wasn't interested in business. I was still interested that there was some possibility to do something back in the theatricals, one way or another. But at the same time, I wanted to finish my college education, so I took a deep breath and I said to my mother, "I will come in and help you get until you get this thing started." So that's what I did. Loathed it, but I felt, my God, the responsibility is such that . . . So I did that.

*Q: How long did you do that?*

DONOHUE: I suppose two years? And then I finally said, "Ma, I've had it." So then I went to Columbia.

*Q: In New York? The GI Bill, of course?*



DONOHUE: Yes, indeed. A magnificent piece of legislation.

*Q: I think all of us of that era. I got my masters' with the GI Bill. I was a Korean War vet though.*

DONOHUE: Yes, this was, well, we were the first ones in and it was just after this splendid thing. It was done so well, absolutely no problems whatsoever.

*Q: Why Columbia?*

DONOHUE: Well, two reasons; one it was, at that point they had probably the best English department in the United States. There were just unbelievable people there. It was really outstanding and secondly, if I was going to do anything in terms of the theater, New York was the place to be. So as far as I was concerned I was looking at it in terms of career.

While I was at Columbia I got married. The thought of working in the theater was, I had a couple of roommates who would get up religiously each morning and they would go off and make the rounds of producers, and absolutely zero, zero, zero. That convinced me that this is something, it's splendid if you are a single person and I was about to become married. I think I might as well just extinguish any theatrical dreams that I might have had, which I did.

*Q: Tell me a little about the woman you married, her background.*

DONOHUE: She was a gal who had been born and raised in Honolulu, and she had come into Chicago just about the time that I was leaving. She had joined the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), so she had known my brother in Honolulu. So they got in touch, then I met her, and we got to be chums and we dated. Then when I went off to Columbia we continued to write. I was going as fast as I could trying to accrue as many credits as I could, so I had about a year left before I got my (inaudible) so we got married at Christmas. She came back with me and we stayed there. We lived in the Village. We had a fun time, but then I wanted to get my master's, so I stayed on.

*Q: This is in English?*

DONOHUE: Yes.

*Q: Can you think of any of your professors at Columbia that particularly influenced you?*

DONOHUE: Oh, good God, yes. Hubert Hyatt, Mark Van Doren, Lionel Trilling, Moses X, Patrick Collum, Mary Collum. Patrick Collum was an Irish poet. There is no reason you should know him, but Mary had written a cultural column for Women's Wear Daily for twenty five years, and the two of them taught a course at Columbia. It was a two-hour course and Patrick would come in first and then the other would show up, and there

would be a little changing of the guard. Then he'd sit or she'd sit and comment on what the other was teaching. But Mark Van Doren was absolutely unbelievable. Gilbert Hyatt was an interesting professor; he had a two year course, which was absolutely stunning. I don't know whether you remember him or not.

*Q: English is a broad course. What particularly were you doing in English?*

DONOHUE: What does anyone do in it? I don't know.

*Q: Not what you are looking for, but what were you concentrating on; literature, or writing or what?*

DONOHUE: Both, but literature was the basic thing. I didn't want to write. I had a friend who was a teacher at Columbia College, and he said to me one day, "Tom, could you do me a favor?" I said, "Sure." He said, "I've got a course I'm teaching on Monday and I am not going to be able to make it. Would you fill in for me?" Well, God. I'd never taught anything on a college level, and I said, "Sure." So he said, "I've got another guy on the faculty, and I have a chance to paint a house in Long Island" and so this is what, and I began thinking, "Do I really think with a master's degree that I really want to do this so I can get a job as a painter?"

*Q: Yes. Well, Columbia College was mainly for, this was preparing people to be teachers.*

DONOHUE: No, no, no. Columbia College is an elite Ivy League school. 120<sup>th</sup> Street separates the rest of the university from the Teacher's College, and it is known as the widest street in the world. Everybody on this side looked down their nose at the concept of a teacher's college.

*Q: Actually, the teacher's college was preeminent, wasn't it, in teachers' education?*

DONOHUE: Actually, every place else except in the rest of the University. It was looked down on in all particulars. Oh, my God, yes.

I wasn't really interested in teaching, and I wasn't sure what the devil I was going to do. But I knew I had to get an education and then I would, but by this time the Central Intelligence Agency was flirting with me, and my same dear friend just kept insisting that I fill out this fourteen page application.

*Q: It's a huge application. You know, I filled one out. You know where you'd lived. I had an awful time.*

DONOHUE: Oh, my God, yes. It took forever.

*Q: Luckily, my mother was still alive. I couldn't have done it. You know, she had to fill it out for me because we moved about every two years.*

DONOHUE: So I went to work at Columbia College. It was the first time, would you believe, any serious fundraising? As long as Nickolas Murray Butler was alive—you remember him of course—Nickolas Murray Butler would go off and have tea with some ladies on Park Avenue and come back with a check for unbelievable amounts of money. That was the way they fundraised, I swear to God.

So I said, “Oh my, oh my. This is interesting.” So Joe Coffey, who was the head of the college fundraising, he hired me to go to work. So my job within this rudimentary idea of fundraising was to find some guy who had made a lot of money that had graduated from Columbia to see if there was some way that we could get to him. Alfred Knopf, the publisher, was (background noise). All the communications would be, and so we sent Alfred Knopf a letter, and he wrote back, “I haven’t heard from Columbia College since I graduated in 1928”, or whatever it was and he said, “They have never done anything for me, and I am sure in Hell not going to start doing anything for them now.” So much for that. These people knew that colleges depended on them—and they felt that there was some camaraderie and they should be part of it—but Columbia just ignored it.

So I had a lot of fun doing that. I found myself with the class of 1934. The head of it was the head of an advertising agency in New York. So I worked with him, and we would do cocktail parties for people to see if we could get them to come down to Columbia. Whatever we could do to think about squeezing money out of them, and we got to be friends. He liked me, and he went to my boss and said, “Would I be out of line if I offered Tom a job working for me?” And then Joe Coffey, who knew I was waiting for this after the fourteen pages went in—waiting for the Agency to decide I was an American citizen. He said, “Gee, he’s waiting for a State Department appointment.” And the guy backed away, very nice.

So then I didn’t hear from the Agency, a year went by, so I came home. I got a wife now. She had a job, but I didn’t have a job. So I said, “I think I best do something about this,” and I went to see Joe. Joe was later president of—I have forgotten the name of the college in New York, but—he’s a great guy. I said, “This is the problem. I think I am going to have to forget about saving the world for democracy and go to war.” So he said, “I think you are right, go ahead.” So I said, “I will call them on Monday.” So of course, Saturday morning in the mail was the CIA, and it said, “Won’t you come to see us?” That sealed my fate.

*Q: Now we are getting on to touchy ground. I don’t want to get into anything classified but anyway, let’s talk about this. This would be 1948 or so?*

DONOHUE: No, ’51 maybe?

*Q: In the first place before we get there, you are at Columbia, how did the outside world intrude on you or did it? You know, we are in the middle of the Korean War, the Cold War. Did this raise much interest on your part or not?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes, in funny ways. In December of '50 when the Mainland fell, I started noticing in all my classes the Chinese began to disappear. It was very interesting because they obviously had a lot of students who were Chinese.

My basic thought was that eventually I would. I felt that the war was such a reality, not just the Korean War but the Cold War, which was certainly almost upon us, was such a thing that I was foolish to think of anything other than a career. And we would all be doing this for some time to come, and it is written, there is was no other way that I can do it so it is just a question of that.

The summer of 1950 the Korean War started, right?

*Q: June 25, 1950.*

DONOHUE: That's right. Well, I showed up for summer school and there were all sorts of vacancies. People who would be coming to summer school in New York and that was a wonderful cultural (inaudible). Suddenly nobody was coming because it was a target. Manhattan was the place where they were going to drop the bomb—and they were all afraid the Yugoslavs might do it, at one point—so I was committed mentally to go to work for the Agency. I had a very good chum in New York who was teaching at NYU; a linguist, and he was committed too. We both agreed that there was no other place to go.

*Q: While you were at Columbia, New York has always been the a center of a very strong left wing movement, you know, the socialists, the communists and all that. Columbia, of course, is the seat of much of this agitation. I mean, it is the university there. Did you run across these movements at all or did they spare the English Department or not?*

DONOHUE: There really wasn't much agitation that came to my attention. The New York Post, you probably didn't know what it was like as a tabloid. It's an outrageous paper now, but it was a left-pointed paper. When I was at Columbia, Murray Kempton—he was a labor columnist—wrote and Dorothy Schiff was the editor, an old New York family. A great paper, it really was. There was no question in my mind as to what their politics were, but I suppose they were mine too in effect.

There really wasn't much of that, but of course we also had Eisenhower as the president of the university, and he was not the most popular president that Columbia University has had.

*Q: You know there was a story that when the trustees got together, somebody suggested Eisenhower, and the trustees all thought this was a great idea, but they were talking about the other Eisenhower, the educator.*

DONOHUE: Milton.

*Q: Milton. But things got underway where Milton was the real, he was eventually president of University of Pennsylvania or something like that.*

DONOHUE: Penn State.

*Q: Penn State. The only thing I have ever heard about Eisenhower was that he went around and he wanted to make everybody have venetian blinds at the same level in the buildings.*

DONOHUE: Well, he didn't make much of an impact. Columbia has a great deal of officialdom even at universities abroad coming to visit, and so they could always trot him out.

*Q: We will pick this up in 1952 when you came down for an interview in Washington with the Central Intelligence Agency.*

*Q: Have we talked about what attracted you towards the CIA?*

DONAHUE: I had a dear boyhood friend. We had been friends all our lives, and he had gone to work for the CIA. He used to insist about three times a month I would get a phone call from him, and he sent me that mammoth form that they had.

*Q: I recall it vividly.*

DONAHUE: And I kept saying, "Yeah, I'm getting around to it. Don't bother." So at that time the Agency had a guy, had a recruiter that was living on campus, a very nice little apartment on 120<sup>th</sup> Street or something. And my boss, I was then working with the fund raising for the college, and I think I mentioned this, they had never bothered with the

*Q: Butler, you know, he just sort of he said, "Give" and they gave.*

DONAHUE: And little old ladies would have him to tea, and he would leave with a check. And that was the way it was, really; we started from scratch. That was kind of interesting.

But I still wanted to go to work for the Agency. I was still in class. I was still working on my master's degree. So at any rate, I was finally invited down, and I had an interview with the folks down there. It was not exactly what I would consider a satisfactory interview. The interviewer was just so busy, a nice fellow, but he had not read the fourteen page document.

*Q: Yes and is this one person?*

DONAHUE: Well, no. They sent me around the campus to talk to various people but basically, it was just the

*Q: The campus was where? Was that on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street in those days?*

DONAHUE: No, well they had, that's where personnel was, that Navy complex up on 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Q: Yes, it had been a brewery or a dairy?*

DONAHUE: No, no. That was a variety of things; an ex-roller rink, which was on the river, and a brewery was there. There was also a stable that people had, and would keep their horses for riding along the river. Then the (inaudible) were built along the reflecting pool and I, J, K and L ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: Horrible, two-story buildings.*

DONAHUE: And dreadful condition. If the temperature got to a certain point on a summer day, everybody should go home. And the leaking from the winter snows, and it was endemic, but it was a fun place.

*Q: Did you feel that they were asking good questions or was it just?*

DONAHUE: For the most part, yes. But clearly the guy was so hurried, and I just felt that this was a problem. One guy asked me, "I see you were in the Air Force." He said, "Did you ever jump from an airplane?" And I said, "No, nor do I intend to." So that ended that interview. Oh, boy, very quickly. So I went back and I talked to the recruiter and I said, "Really, I felt the gent hadn't done his homework, and since I was paying my own way, I decided it was really kind of a washout." So he said, "Well, why don't you pass that along?" I said, "I would like to." So I wrote a little letter to the personnel people, and the next thing I know, the director of personnel was in New York and wanted to meet me. So we had a long conversation—and he was most apologetic—and he was trying to explain the problems these people were having. It was a very busy season, and so the upshot of it, he said, "How would you like to work in New York?" Well, you know I still had odds and sods and a thesis to write, so it wasn't a bad idea to stay in New York. So I said, "OK." I went to work in New York, and it was great fun. It was a lovely time to be there.

*Q: I am having to tread carefully. I don't want to get into things I shouldn't so I will leave it to you. If I ask the wrong question, let me know, but what sort of work were you doing?*

DONAHUE: Well, basically it was a very simple situation where there were so many people in a city like New York who had ties abroad of all sorts that were really worthy sources of intelligence information that was just unknown to the federal establishment at that point. The oil companies, the headquarters were all in New York. So you'd knock on any door, and you'd find people with very interesting relationships abroad, who traveled frequently, and were experts in their own field. It was not that there was any espionage involved; they were just noting what the situation was in their particular industry.

*Q: There was also a time when people were really very patriotic. I mean, you did it because you should.*

DONAHUE: Absolutely. Oh, listen, that was the case. I remember calling a man, a vice president of a major company, and I said that I was doing this and blah, blah, blah, and I would love to meet him. He said, "OK," so I went down to 40 Wall, or something like that. He had never heard of the Central Intelligence Agency. I thought, "Gee, that's a wonderful idea." You know, that you get all this information and it goes to a central point. So it was that sort of thing. Here's a man terribly well informed, but it was at a time when you just wouldn't expect somebody like that not to be aware of what was going on.

*Q: Well, did they talk to you when you were being recruited, saying OK, you'll be here in New York, but were they saying eventually you are going to be given your black parachute and dropped into the Soviet Union or something like that?*

DONAHUE: Well, what I had done in my interview when I was in Washington, I did talk to people who were interested in hiring me, and I made it clear to everybody I talked to that I was really interested in going overseas. So that was well established, and that was also understood in New York. There were people there, at least two or three, who had been in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The chief and his deputy both had been in Europe during the War.

*Q: OSS is Office of Strategic Services, which was our intelligence function dirty tricks outfit during World War II.*

DONAHUE: That's right. It was really ready to be cut off by Harry Truman, who just didn't believe in it, and it was a terribly difficult fight. General Donovan, who had been the director of OSS, was doing his best with all the possible leverage he had in Washington. There were a good number of civilians who felt the same way, but there were a couple of successor organizations; SSU (Strategic Services Unit) and a couple of other things sort of holding the franchise together, but not much more. Until finally, I guess it was, wisdom prevailed, and the Agency was given a new lease on life.

*Q: You weren't at that point given any particular training?*

DONAHUE: No. The work that I was doing was just simply interviewing people, and I would have all sorts of guidelines on a variety of things.

*Q: Were you interviewing them for the information they had from their careers? Were you also making the equivalent of a file on them so that if we you wanted more information about oil fields in Romania we could go back to them or?*

DONAHUE: Oh, that was inherent, but there were so many people who had left China, had left the Middle East. There was so little known about so many people of prominence. For example, biologists, people capable of germ warfare, and all those bugaboos. You also had people who certainly knew all the people in the east and had gone to school with them and that sort of person.

*Q: Well, it was right after the War, and an awfully lot of people piled in, and New York has always been sort of central place for people to come.*

DONAHUE: Oh, it was tremendous.

*Q: I assume there were other people besides you covering this?*

DONAHUE: Oh, sure.

*Q: Can you recall any particular persons or information that you were getting in particular that stuck in your mind at that time?*

DONAHUE: Well, oil statistics, comes as no surprise, was the major companies, the New Jersey companies.

*Q: And ARAMCO had their headquarters there too.*

DONAHUE: That's right. The senior vice president at the Jersey Company was a Romanian whose family had been in the oil business in the oil fields in Romania, so he was a very, very willing and a very helpful fellow.

*Q: Did you have much to do with the Washington headquarters or was that far away and you were doing your thing?*

DONAHUE: No, we had communications with them, and you know, the wire service going back and forth with frequent business both ways. It was a pretty tight arrangement.

*Q: You were moving into the McCarthy period and did this have any impact on you?*

DONAHUE: Obliquely. There were all sorts of émigré groups headquartered in New York, and they were convinced that the government was riddled with Communists. The nut fringe was a problem because they always wanted to volunteer, but by God, they knew what was what. It was a tight minefield because they were sincere, I think many of them, but they certainly had been washed below the line by General McCarthy.

*Q: Of course, these were people who were out there, and also I am sure the émigré groups, they were out for specific things because they always are. They want the overthrow of Joe Schmoe because he was his brother-in-law and he didn't like him and he was a traitor.*

DONAHUE: Exactly; and then, of course, the splits between émigré groups. Oh, God. It was a terribly difficult thing.

*Q: I later got into that. I was in the refugee relief program in Frankfurt in my first assignment, and you know, you had these camps where people were being accused at the*



*same time, fellow inmates, of both being a member of the SS and the Communist party, whatever it takes to get rid of that guy.*

DONAHUE: And they are not easy to get rid of.

*Q: No, it was terrible because everybody was accusing everybody else of the worst.*

DONAHUE: Well, then you know exactly what it was like, and of course, you couldn't completely ignore them.

*Q: No. Well, how long did you do this?*

DONAHUE: Oh, not for long. I think a year and a half, and then I went to Washington.

*Q: So when you went to Washington, this would have been what, '53 or '54?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: So what did you do?*

DONAHUE: I went to work for a Far East—they used the term Far East—for a very interesting gent, an ethnic Chinese, who had been a newspaperman. He had been the correspondent in the Central News Agency, which was the prime news outfit for the Nationalists, and he was their chief correspondent in Washington and a very, very well connected guy. Of course, he covered the White House, and he knew everybody in Washington, and then he decided, he was born in New York. He had gone back to Yenching to university, and had gone to the University Of Missouri Journalism School, so he had a foot in both countries. He was just an absolutely brilliant guy. So I worked for him, and it was just a great experience in terms of his Chinese background.

*Q: Was there concern at the time, I mean among the analysts, I mean, you would call yourself an analyst, would you at point or not?*

DONAHUE: No.

*Q: What would you call yourself?*

DONAHUE: Case officer.

*Q: Was there concern about the China lobby, Taiwan? I mean, not that they might be tilting things that you weren't . . . It is always difficult as we were just talking about before about émigré groups or groups on the out because they are, we are using them, but they are using us, and in this case Senator Knowland and Madame Chennault and all that were using us probably more than we were using them.*

DONAHUE: Again you had a situation of so many scholars in the United States who were ethnic Chinese or who were native born Americans who had been great sources of information on China.

*Q: You had Yale in China.*

DONAHUE: Exactly.

*Q: And some of these had really very strong ties, missionary ties too.*

DONAHUE: Yes, the missionaries in particular. And they were contacts, and they there were talking to émigrés, so at that time we didn't have anything after '49. When I was at Columbia after December of '49, when the Mainland fell, we would go to a class and there would be empty seats of folks who had decided to go back. So that was basically, these were sources of knowledge and were good in the sense of unofficial analysts.

*Q: And again, going back to the times I think nobody was particularly suspicious of the CIA. I mean, you know, it has been turned into, in very liberal circles, as sort of a satanic organization or something but that wasn't the case then.*

DONAHUE: Oh, absolutely not.

*Q: What was your impression of what was going on in China that you were picking up at that time?*

DONAHUE: Well, there was no question that the iron fist was, what little that we did get out, what émigrés did get out, they were great sources. In part, we would be interested in whatever we could find on conditions on the Mainland, and reactions, and any indication of anybody who was taking action against the Chinese government at that time. It was very, very difficult because the door really had closed. The situation was terribly, terribly tight, so we used all sorts of possible ways to determine, you know, what the price of eggs were in Swatow. You know, consumer indications, uprisings, difficulties, anything.

*Q: Were you aware of some of the activities that probably took place before you got on board of CIA-run operations against the China coast? You know, of sort of pinpricks here and there? I talked for example to Bob Dillon, who was later ambassador in Lebanon, and he as a young CIA officer he did some of those.*

DONAHUE: Sure. The Agency has always been very, very well compartmented.

*Q: That's why I am asking. This wasn't although you were dealing with China, this wasn't sort of a source of particular information or anything like that?*

DONAHUE: No, obviously they were customers in the information that we were passing on, on conditions, on security, a whole host of things.

*Q: Who was reading the Chinese newspapers?*

DONAHUE: Oh, FPD (translation service) read all the Chinese newspapers, and FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) were listening to all the Swatow home news in Guangdong and all of those things were being picked up by the NSA (National Security Agency); a very good source of information.

*Q: I was going to say, you know, it's overlooked sometimes, but hearing about the pig prices in Swatow or something like that, you know, this could be pretty indicative of*

DONAHUE: Absolutely. And so that was always good, and it just went on seven days a week. They were reading whatever books. We had people that were picking up papers, magazines, books; anything that you could possibly find that would go into the FPD and all sorts of Chinese who were reading along.

*Q: I assume Hong Kong was a pretty good fount of everything, wasn't it?*

DONAHUE: Oh yes, sure, and particularly because of our relationship with the Brits.

*Q: Well, then how long did you do this?*

DONAHUE: It just seems like a long time, but it wasn't, because I was at the same time working my way to get out of Washington. So I finally worked out a transfer from where I was down to the Reflecting Pool and Southeast Asia, which was the area in which I was most interested. I found the people who were interested in me, and I was interested in them.

*Q: Southeast Asia was sort of "terra incognita" at the time? I recall about 1954 that I was scared as Hell because I was in Germany with the Air Force Security Service, and monitoring Russian transmissions, and they were talking about my God. We might get into to rescue the French, which we didn't do, but there was talk, and we thought, "Oh my God. They are going to keep us in the service."*

DONAHUE: Absolute, utter stupidity on the part of the United States government because here we had said to Winston Churchill, our dear friend, shed all those colonies. We said the same things to our dear friends the Dutch, "Get the Hell out of Indonesia." And we said this to the French, except they said, "No, we want your help. We want our colonies back." Of course, I always felt that the lever was, we'll screw you as far as NATO is concerned or the rebuilding of Europe if you don't play ball with us. And so the concept that here we were helping the French restore their order in Indochina was crazy.

*Q: You got involved there when? Was it about '54 or '55?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: Who were we looking at? What sort of areas were you covering? Was it the whole thing or Southeast Asia; Indonesia?*

DONAHUE: Yes, and then when I transferred, I was concentrating on Indonesia, Indonesia Malaya. But my intent was to go to Indonesia.

*Q: When you got there, this would have been in the mid-'50s in dealing with Indonesia, how did we feel about Sukarno at the time?*

DONAHUE: Hopeless. He didn't have an inbox. He had no idea what the Hell you were doing in running the country, but he sure liked to rent those Pan Am flights, complete with "stewardi:" one for himself and one for the loot that he was picking up around the world. You know, he gave a joint session of the Congress, had them all in tears about, you know, you had your Homestead Act and we are trying to emulate. We are trying to do the things that you did, which was nonsense.

*Q: I interviewed somebody who was in Protocol at one point and when Sukarno came, you had to supply young ladies, usually stewardesses. Apparently, there was at one point, the State Department wouldn't do that. There was a DC police officer who took care of that. You know, rather a despicable gentleman but*

DONAHUE: But very charming, good English, and just liked playing the emperor. He enjoyed it. Of course, the thing about American people (background noise) . . . rare all of whom turned to Sukarno because of that charm, that they thought that he could do the impossible. He shot down four hundred years of colonial power and somehow appealed to the world. Well, he did, but he pushed them all aside.

*Q: It is easy to forget the Dutch had been there four hundred years and really hadn't done much for it except to extract oil. I mean they were not a beloved, I mean their institutions, from what I have gathered, did not hold up very well.*

DONAHUE: Well, you know it's interesting. I guess in 1908, 1909 some professor did a book—and it was absolutely beautiful—about how all this is very nice, but it is a terrible drain on the homeland. It isn't worth a damn.

Dutch was really the language. Anybody who was an intellectual had to speak Dutch. Gradually they began, it was the early part of the, 1910, 1911 that they began to open up the educational opportunities for bright young people.

I had a good friend who had been a foreign minister, and I guess it was about 1911 he was, I think, the youngest in his family. He lived in Central Java and he was allowed, the first one, to go on for his baccalaureate, and he would get up and take a train every day to Yogyakarta. But the rest of his family never had the opportunity for an education. He went on to become the foreign minister when the War ended in 1948 or '50. He was the negotiator. But it was that sort of thing so it was, they oppressed them, but they were very bright people, and invited people to come to the town wherever you are, no matter how

tough it is. In four hundred years you actually permeate all of society. This is the fourth largest country in the world.

*Q: What were we concerned, I mean what was our attitude when you started having this as one of your tasks? How did we feel about Indonesia?*

DONAHUE: Well, basically the overall position we felt about Southeast Asia number one, Indonesia was the fourth largest country in the world, the largest Communist Party in the world, not much larger than in Moscow in Russia. They had a labor federation so secret which was the largest labor federation in the world. It was Communist Party run; they scared the Hell out of us.

*Q: Was Sukarno seen as the solution or the villain? I mean in this early time?*

DONAHUE: Basically, neither, because he got involved in the Bandung Conference. Well, the Bandung Conference we had Nehru, and you had all that. He ate this thing up, and he recognized that "this is the stage that I want to be on," so you tweak Uncle Sam a bit and you tell the Soviets, that you know, you don't like them either. And you can play that game, and you continue it, which is exactly what he did. It was fun.

*Q: One had the feeling that these people in a way were bigger than their countries. Maybe not Nehru, but basically, were really trotting out on the stage of representing at least in terms of power third or second rate countries, but they loomed large by being together, and the publicity, and all they generated.*

DONAHUE: And both the East and the West fed them. It was just exactly the thing for Sukarno to do.

*Q: What sort of information were you getting out of Indonesia? We had an embassy and I guess consulates there.*

DONAHUE: We had a consulate in Medan and one in Surabaya.

Medan was

*Q: It was oil, wasn't it?*

DONAHUE: Yes, Sumatra was the oil. Shell and the Brits, we were there, everybody. It was a very rich field, no question.

Well, we were interested in oil production, obviously. We were interested in what the Communist Party was doing with all their assets, which were considerable. I mean here you have people coming up out of abject subjugation, and somebody comes in and sells them a bill of goods. It's a great, great thing, and of course, there was no way anyone else could really handle it. I mean, Sukarno was the same way. I mean he had been under that kind of a thumb for all of those years and this was breaking out; it was just terrific.

Our interests were obviously, what were the Chinese doing there? Very strong influence from China. You know, it wasn't just, the Chinese were interested through their own overseas Chinese programs which were—every country in Southeast Asia had these burial societies, they had all the fraternal organizations, they had all of the control of the financial control. This was all Chinese.

*Q: Also a tremendous amount of resentment has built up the same way that Jews were felt in parts of Europe before World War II, because whoever controls the money, and particularly if it is an ethnic group, this immediately arouses all sorts of resentment.*

DONAHUE: You had this in cards and spades in the society of Indonesia, where all of the rural folks who are out there growing rice and whatever they are growing have one patron: the local merchant who really at the beginning of the growing season, they come, they get the seed, they get the fertilizer, they get the kerosene, they get all the things that they need, and it is all on the tick. And then when the crop comes out, turn it over, he takes it up to the comprador, who is the next level up, but everybody pays their bills. It was so close. This is where from all blessings flow was from the local Chinese, so it was really that close a situation and the Chinese controlled the economy.

*Q: You concentrated basically on Indonesia?*

DONAHUE: Well, eventually, I would end up being in Indonesia, being in Malaysia, being in Cambodia, being in Vietnam. I sort of did the hat trick.

*Q: When did you go on your first overseas post and where?*

DONAHUE: Jakarta.

*Q: And when was that?*

DONAHUE: I had made TDYs (temporary trips) out but I went there PCS (permanent change of station) in '58.

*Q: Now, here I get very foggy on dates. When did we try that coup I guess against Sukarno and the CIA had their plane shot down and all sorts of problems?*

DONAHUE: Sukarno, by lack of his aplomb and inability to run the country decided that you can have private snits, so he decided that the KPM, which was the shipping—KLM was the air—kept the whole 79,000 islands, or whatever they have, intact. So he said, "KPM ships can no longer do the coastal job in Indonesia. Well, that will fix them," he says, and so of course, comes the end of the crops, copra, or whatever the Hell the harvest is down to the whatever island you are on. It goes down to be picked up on a regular basis, as it has for four hundred years, and suddenly, the ship never came. All this stuff is rotting and people say, "Why?" And they didn't know where to go because there was no structure. So the only structure they could find was the guy in the uniform who was the

local representative of the Indonesian army. Up to that point, honest to God, the (inaudible) was the chief of staff—he absolutely didn't have a political bone in his body. The whole military structure was (inaudible). So what do you do? I mean people are knocking on his door, you know, this is the end of the world if you don't sell your crop. Nobody paid any attention. Entreaties that went to Jakarta were unanswered, and this had been the system, unfortunately. The tax money and money would go to Jakarta, and never dwindle back. So now they not only had that system, which they didn't like very much, they were also just watching their stuff rot.

So the colonels from various islands had had just about enough. What the Hell are we going to do about this? You know, people are in uprising, they are really unhappy, and that's when it became ripe for the generals, the colonels to get together. Just a brotherhood of people in the army. What are you doing about it? A couple of guys like (inaudible) who was in Medan and he said, "We've got to pay these people." So he went in and robbed the bank, Bank Negara, in South Sumatra, in Palembang, and places like that. They had the same problem, and they'd talk, and say, "Well, what are you doing?" So it was not a very well-considered revolt, but it sure in Hell was a revolt. They got no satisfaction whatsoever from Jakarta. So it clearly could turn into something very, very nasty.

It was symptomatic of the problem of Sukarno running a country that was potentially so terribly, terribly valuable with great resources, and he just paid no attention to what was required.

So these guys began to knock on doors, and obviously, they found an ex-navy pilot whom they hired. And it was a guy who scrambled around, got some planes, and Sumatra was probably the most important. These are very bright people. They are very, very interesting people, the Sumatran people. It is a great culture and they were

*Q: It's quite different than that of Java?*

DONAHUE: Oh, yes. The Minangkabau, which are the people in South Sumatra, their headquarters are in Palembang, which is over on the other coast. It is a longhouse culture, and it is a matriarchal society where the money and the property and all transfers through the females, which leaves the men with a lot of time on their hands. Honest to God, they would get together and they would say, "OK, on Monday we are going to have a discussion." They all became great speakers; they all became very interesting in ideas. Hatta, the vice president is a Minangkabau, the editor of the (inaudible), you can go through the whole list. These guys are bright as hell. It's in their families, and they had no (inaudible) responsibilities because the women were taking care of that. It is enlightening, I suppose, from the male point of view. So this was a crushing thing, and they didn't do it very well, but the fact that they did it at all was something.

*Q: The CIA and the United States has been accused of fomenting this thing.*

DONAHUE: No, no. It was so clear. These people were reacting to an economic thrust that existed all over the bloody country.

*Q: So what happened?*

DONAHUE: Well, they tugged at their sleeves and some people helped them as best they could. We weren't about to go to war.

*Q: Why do I think of this plane being shot down and a pilot being imprisoned and all that?*

DONAHUE: Yes, Allen Lawrence Pope. This is the guy they hired. They hired some planes from Taipei. It was in their interest, and he basically was a hotshot pilot, and he was up in Palembang. He had ships. He liked his handiwork. He had to take a couple of extra looks at it, and that is when he was shot down. So there he was—and that was a lovely thing because here was the United States and he was an American citizen—and he was a retired Navy pilot and he had his instrument card. So they ran an open trial; the Palace is on one end and the American Embassy is at the other, and the trial was on one corner, and of course, the loudspeakers were out and everybody could listen to it, and it was on the radio. It was a clear example of what the West is capable of doing. Nobody was really able to make the point that the government had fallen down in supporting.

*Q: Well, what happened? You mentioned (inaudible) and all. Later he was a colonel at the time.*

DONAHUE: General.

*Q: General. But I mean if these were the people who fomented this attempt at a coup*

DONAHUE: But they didn't really, this is too sophisticated. Really, they just wanted somebody to fix this system that had worked forever, and nobody was capable of doing it.

*Q: Did this get enough attention in Jakarta so that foodstuffs and crops started circulating again?*

DONAHUE: No, they lost that harvest. People were sore, and people were getting poorer, and it was followed not long after by another brilliant stroke on Sukarno's part. This same system—where you went to your local merchant, someplace in Central Java, and he gave you all that you needed to get through the growing season—and Sukarno decided let's get rid of the Chinese, so we had all these guys out of business. This is the most crowded island in the world, and so suddenly rather than being able to go to this guy and work on credit, you had to go to a state store. The state store had people who didn't know anything about the whole structure as a recurring system, and as a consequence, there was madness. The Chinese up and left and went back home, whether they had ever been in China or not. It didn't matter.



I was in Surabaya one time, I was coming up from Bali, and a boat had been hired, and it was full of, I think 600 or 700 Chinese boys and girls (ages 17, 16, 15) who had had it with the Indonesian government. They were going back to China to start a new life with the idea that this is the sort of incapability that just (inaudible), and of course, it scared the Hell out of everybody.

*Q: You worked at our embassy in Jakarta?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: How long were you there?*

DONAHUE: Just under three years.

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?*

DONAHUE: Hugh Coming was our first ambassador and then Howard P. Jones, but he had been the director of the United States Operations Mission (USOM) before he was named ambassador, which is an interesting thought. He had a tour and he knew a great many number people. A very, very nice guy.

*Q: He wasn't the man, his name escapes me, who became notorious for letting Sukarno castigate the United States and would just sit there and take it, you know.*

DONAHUE: Poor guy. Sukarno took all of the available diplomatic seniority off to a point in eastern Indonesia, and then he got them all lined up and he pointed to Urian Amarok, which is part of New Guinea. Then he said, "Repeat after me. Urian Amarok is ours." You know, say that three times and turn around. He kind of went along with the charade.

*Q: I am told the embassy had some very bright officers there who had to live under this guy, and I won't say there was a rebellion, but essentially, rather than sending out cables they were writing letters back. At a certain point, the ambassador was being completely discounted because his whole staff was saying Sukarno is hopeless and he's very dangerous.*

DONAHUE: Yes, I was in the Political Section, and we did have some very, very good people there.

*Q: Do you remember any of the people there?*

DONAHUE: The head of the Economic Section was a very, very bright guy. Henry Hayman was head of the Political Section.

*Q: You were there until when?*

DONAHUE: '61.

*Q: '61, so this was before Sukarno was eased out of office.*

*Were you seeing, did you see Sukarno as a left wing nationalist or as a dedicated Communist or what?*

DONAHUE: Oh, spare me. He was an opportunist; bright, and he just didn't have any political philosophy at all, except what's good for Sukarno. There's just no question. The aggrandizement was all. You know, he gave these long, long speeches that lasted forever. Bernie Kalb was The New York Times resident correspondent, and he'd say, "Bernie, you're saying the right man in the right job, and you should hear Bernie say, "That's right, Mr. President." He would just love to do that sort of thing, speaking in English to people who didn't speak any English at all. You know he just liked the way things

*Q: I assume in your work you were talking to all sorts of people within Indonesia.*

DONAHUE: Oh, of course.

*Q: What were you getting, say, from the business people?*

DONAHUE: Oh boy, very tough. The business atmosphere was so bad. You can't imagine how bad it was. You know, the old major firms in Jakarta that had been there for centuries just couldn't do business. General Motors had a truck assembly plant before the war, and I lived in one of their houses. They had three senior executive houses, which were very comfortable, very nicely built, the whole thing. I got to know a guy named Nick quite well who went on to represent Westinghouse. He had been there I guess about a year and a half, and they were competing on some big atomic stuff which would go on in South Java. He just said, "This is impossible." So for some reason I got a call from him, and he said he wanted to see me, so I went to his house. He was an older man. He had been with Westinghouse for many years, and he said, "I'm not well, and I can't get an exit visa out of here." And I said, "Do you know why?" And he said, "No, I have no idea." He just looked terrible, but he had given up on doing any business for all sorts of obvious reasons. So I went to the head of the Economic Section and said, "Poor Nick is captive." So he stomped out that moment, made representation, and Nick was able to get out.

I had a good friend who worked in Mont Negara. He was the only guy who knew how foreign exchange works, a young Dutchman, but bright as can be. He said, "I can't leave. I'm not allowed to leave because nobody else knows how foreign exchange works" so he was captive.

The guy that ran the Heineken Brewery that served the whole country was down in Surabaya, and he came up and went to at my house, and we were talking. He said, "I'm going on leave. I'm not coming back. They think I am."

*Q: What about Indonesians that you had contact with in the commercial sector or the political sector? Were they watching the country just go down, down?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: Were they aware of what was happening?*

DONAHUE: Yes, but there's people who believe in fate.

A very old family in Indonesia, Andrew Zekka, who lived in the same suburb I did. I had known his brother, and it was a very, very brilliant family. His father had been the Parker Pen distributor for all of Indonesia for many years; very wealthy. He had gone to school in the United States, but people like that would say there's nothing to be done because nobody dares to do anything because this is the way it is. Very sad.

*Q: Was the West Irian thing resolved when Ellsworth Bunker was the arbitrator, was that resolved while you were there?*

DONAHUE: I'm not sure. I was someplace else then, but what happened became a great smuggling point, West Irian did because it is on Borneo, and there was some bootlegging particularly (background noise) because lumber, wholesale. Deep cutting. It was a paternalistic society. Nobody, there was so little to be done. The company would pick you up at 7 o'clock in the morning in trucks, and they would take you to the plant. Then at 2 o'clock, they would release you. There was no public transportation to speak of. There were very, very few restaurants. People went home for their lunch and we used their hours. We went from 7 until 2.

*Q: Was there anything going on in Northern Sumatra, in Aceh? Was that sort of revolt going on?*

DONAHUE: Oh, it had been going on since around 1900. There was a big battle that never really stopped, and nobody really wanted to test that. So that battle is very deep seated. Interesting people.

*Q: When you left there in '61 did you feel that Indonesia was going to fall into the Communist camp because of the ineptitude of Sukarno?*

DONAHUE: Well, that was always the concern. You can't have that much communist apparatus; there's just no question. I mean, you look at Indonesia at that point, poor as church mice, no indication that things were going to get any better. You've got the apparatus, you've lost the Chinese, you've lost KPM and all these things, and it was going down. As a consequence, if anybody wanted to make a move, it was easy to do.

*Q: Were we keeping an eye on the Communist Party at that time?*

DONAHUE: Oh God, yes.

*Q: I have interviewed Bob Martens. Do you know Bob Martens? He was a political officer, I think he came a little bit later, and he had come out of our embassy in Moscow. He talks about using sort of the methodology that they had been using in Moscow where they read the papers, and they would note things and all. So he was doing the same thing when he got to Indonesia, and after the Suharto coup he had this list of names which the Suharto people asked for, and it has been claimed that he gave them essentially a death list. These were all from overt sources. As any good embassy does, we—but the Suharto government didn't have anything, and so they took this list and allegedly, I'm sure they had other sources, but when there was this great cleansing which meant a lot of people were killed too. I mean it was a pogrom and all that.*

DONAHUE: Well, it was worse than that. It was really unbelievable how bad it was, and an awfully lot of good people were killed. I knew an awfully lot of army people and the deputy chief of staff.

*Q: Well, Sukarno of course started it off by killing the top command, the generals.*

DONAHUE: Yes. I never really believed that

*Q: Why so because that's what I have heard.*

DONAHUE: Well, it well may be, but Sukarno was picking up a lot of the absolutely benign—the head of the Machumi Party. He took the head of the party and the secretary general of the party and stuck them under house arrest down in East Java, and they were there for a long time. He was doing that, picking up people, and theoretically, they were a big party. I don't think they had any designs or any assets but that was the sort of thing he was doing.

*Q: He wasn't killing particularly?*

DONAHUE: No, that's right. So I knew, we had a military attaché who was a big, genial Irishman from Pittsburgh who was terrific. He made such an impression on the Indonesians. His family had been in the motion pictures exhibitions, wherever they would be, so when he got out there he started importing through his channels all sorts of movies, current movies. Now in Indonesia the movies were all censored, so if you went to see the Brothers Karamazov forty minutes would be cut out because of who knows what. The censors weren't very discreet. The army under Disuvian had gone to almost all the U.S. schools that you could imagine; the long course at Leavenworth, the short course at, you know all the other specialized training that we have for foreign officers. So these guys came back and they all just formed a great friendship around this military attaché. We were friends, so I was invited to all his parties, and I got to know all sorts of military people.

The sort of relationship that he had, Yani, who was the number two in the military, his wife was expecting a child and this military attaché's wife was a nurse. So she delivered the baby. Now you can't get much closer than that. I mean, this was a great relationship.

I could accuse Sukarno of all sorts of things, but I never believed that; but I've heard it. I don't know.

*Q: Well, I mean something happened.*

DONAHUE: Oh, they weren't just murdered. They were emasculated; it was a vicious, vicious thing.

*Q: I don't know. Maybe it was a troublesome priest sort of thing. This is a problem of presidency, you say something and something happens, but that certainly kicked things off.*

DONAHUE: Oh boy did it ever. All through Java and nobody knows how many people were killed.

*Q: Would you, for the record, tell who our ambassador was, and we are talking about the one who sort of accepted everything that Sukarno said.*

DONAHUE: Yes, that was Howard Palfrey Jones. As I mentioned to you, I suppose he was viewed as a little bit of a maverick because he had been head of the USOM (United States Operations Mission). It was kind of unusual for a man to stay on in the same country and to be appointed the ambassador.

*Q: Well, he became quite a figure, mainly a figure of disdain but everybody was talking about he was a nice guy, apparently so nice that these insults, essentially to the United States would just flow over him and our people at the embassy would seethe. Anyway, he was followed by Marshall Green and I have interviewed Marshall Green and he talks about, he's a different man.*

*Anyway, you left Indonesia in '61. What was your feeling at that time? Whither Indonesia?*

DONAHUE: I think because of its size and because of the preeminence of the Communist Party and the Labor Confederation et al, it got tremendous residual feelings from people who didn't necessarily know a great deal about Indonesia. My feeling was then you take a look at Malaya. They went through the uprising by the Chinese. You take a look at the shaky feeling that most people had about Cambodia, the French in Indochina. It doesn't take long for the mindset that we collectively had that Vietnam was going to be the place where we really had to do something.

I was in Saigon, and Maxwell Taylor was the ambassador whom I liked very much. This was in December of '64, and it was the evening, and the cables being written that went

back and said in effect, “If the United States, the Vietnamese army is incapable of blah, blah, blah. If the United States doesn’t introduce troops by December we think that’s the end of Vietnam.” Honestly, I read it, the draft and the idea that we would put American troops into Vietnam I thought was madness. It was just beyond the pale. My feeling was the march from Southeast Asia into the situation was all very unsettled in Laos and Cambodia. And having served in Cambodia, I was really shocked. I normally wouldn’t shock about something, but the idea that we would get into that war.

*Q: In '61, moving back you went from Indonesia, where?*

DONAHUE: To Phnom Penh.

*Q: What was the situation there? You were there from when to when?*

DONAHUE: It would have been '62. I was on home leave, so I was there from '62 to '64.

*Q: What was the situation in Cambodia when you got there?*

DONAHUE: Well, to start at the top it was a little bit like having Jackie Gleason as the head of state, honestly.

*Q: Jackie Gleason being a rather stout comic, a very, very fine comic. In this case the chief of state was?*

DONAHUE: Norodom Sihanouk, yes. It was a great place to be, it really was.

*Q: Who was our ambassador?*

DONAHUE: He was tall, distinguished looking, very formal. Old Virginia family.

Here you have Sihanouk, who was about 5’5” or 5’6” and outgoing and nervous, and you had this gentleman who stands back and he always referred to “our implacable enemy to the North.”

William Trimble. There was not any observed relationship between the two because Sihanouk would give these two or three hour speeches, and would say, “people say I’m lazy, but I was up until 3 o’clock this morning writing and doing this for everyone to hear.”

*Q: One does wonder, at these speeches. Castro gives the Communists, everywhere, I mean, it seems the more they talk, there seems to be something about them. Maybe it’s the different temperaments. Americans just don’t take that crap.*

DONAHUE: He was good for two to three hours. Just on and on and on. The situation was basically—the Cambodians are dear friends of mine, and in the Political Section we

referred to them, the 1918 U.S. Army basic intelligence test, because—on one side were beautiful, very, very handsome and energetic Thais, and on the other side they've got the Vietnamese. Both sides are prettier than any of the Cambodians. Cambodians tend to be a little darker, and they have this great inferiority complex toward both of these two adversaries.

They pray every year at this great temple which is,

*Q: Between the Thais and Cambodians.*

DONAHUE: Well it is, but the thing is they have been fighting over it for a long time. The temple is up on a cliff, and you've got this long stairway to get up, but clearly, God didn't mean it to be on the Cambodian side. And it really isn't a Buddhist temple anyway; it's a Hindu temple that's been converted.

I was the duty officer one night in Phnom Penh, and a cable came in about 10 o'clock, and the World Court had decided that by God, it was Cambodian. So the ambassador wasn't there, and with great glee, the chargé got energized by this. It was Christmas; they shut down for three days. Oh, it was a magnificent thing.

But basically, the Cambodians were a simple people. Norodom Sihanouk—I didn't mean disrespect with Jackie Gleason—but that's the way he acted, and he had a weight problem. Every year he would go to Gras in France and he'd take the waters and try to lose weight; everybody knew that.

But again, the finances were all in the hands of the Chinese, and the Chinese were very busy doing things like taking over the barrios society, taking over the hardware stores, and the outlets; very simple things. So if you wanted to make a case that the Chinese were going to take over Southeast Asia, this would be a good way to do it. If you are going to take that theory get to Vietnam, OK? Having been in all those places on that path that went to Vietnam, I just didn't think that was going to be the case.

*Q: Well, of course, too the merchant class is doing this and particularly at that time, the merchant class and the Communist Party in China had absolutely nothing in common.*

DONAHUE: That, of course, is true, but nobody would make that fine distinction. The opportunists in Beijing decided that this would be a good time to move. Everybody was afraid that the Chinese, this massive goliath thing and people all over, they controlled your economy and every step of the way they were taking over more and more of it; newspapers, they had Chinese newspapers. I think we felt about the Chinese, we as a people, the way we feel, I suppose, about people who appear to be or are Muslims.

*Q: In Cambodia at that time, was the Khmer Rouge out there? Were they doing anything or was there concern?*

DONAHUE: Absolutely not, no. Listen, this is a Buddhist country. The idea that one can become a Communist. It's OK for the Vietnamese, all the Communist activity was Vietnamese, but the idea would be an insult to the prince and his mother. When they finally discovered a cell of agrarian reformers, I guess up in Ratamakiri province or one of the really, really out, up on the Vietnamese border, they had this magazine that informed about all the Communist political party had done for the people. They had two pictures of these guys, barefoot farmers, dirt poor, and these were the guys who were really the Communist Party. You know, it was a joke.

The difficulty they had, really, was that every time they sent somebody to Paris for an education, they came back as Communists. All these people were all basically tapped when they got to Paris.

*Q: Yes, I am told that the Communist Party would assign a student to take care of them when they got there. It was quite an operation. I don't know whether central direction came, but anyway.*

DONAHUE: Just no question it was and so they'd come back wearing French suits, and boy, they were the bright ones.

*Q: Were you seeing this at the time?*

DONAHUE: It was so obvious because basically, these were guys who were bright as Hell, their French was impeccable, and they did very, very, well—they were the bright people around. They weren't seen other than the influence that the Vietnamese Communists would have on them. But no, it didn't seem this was a wave of the future.

*Q: It was sort of social communists or something like that? Kids go to universities and come out usually Communists for a little while, and then they get over it.*

DONAHUE: Yes, and of course they are really just left wing really.

*Q: How were events, you were there '60 to '64 which were rather important years in Vietnam. I mean this was the time of the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother and the beginning of the change and generals coming in and generals coming out. How did Vietnam play in Cambodia at that time?*

DONAHUE: Vietnam was always a dominant influence; all the artisans, all the electricians, all the skilled workers were Vietnamese. Cambodians didn't do stuff like that. The Cambodians hated—the Catholic church had been there forever and they had built this beautiful cathedral right smack dab in the middle of Phnom Penh, and you could get all the Cambodian Catholics into this room. They were all Vietnamese. So then the influence was very, very strong. There was just no question. They hated them.

*Q: What was our policy there? I mean you and the rest of the embassy. What were we trying to do there?*



DONAHUE: Temporize. Be nice, do what we could. We concentrated on trying to get young Cambodians to go for education in the United States. It didn't work very well. We had a party for all the returned students, and again, it was just a handful. We'd get people who had been in an army, you know, technical school. It was pathetic. We just could not suborn them by asking them to go to the United States.

*Q: Of course the lure of France, I mean but also did you find that the Cambodians, say unlike the quite aggressive Vietnamese or other countries, the Koreans certainly are, were the Cambodians hard workers or when they came to the United States were they really learning or was it just sort of a joyful time?*

DONAHUE: I say the latter, really. God knows, USIS tried as best they could to get them to go but basically, Cambodians are shy. They are a little self-conscious. That's a terrible sweeping thing to say, but I think that really is the case. They watch other people who know how to do things and they don't.

*Q: Yes, well that's been sort of, well, that whole area was a difficult place and particularly having the Thais and the Vietnamese on each side, and these are two quite aggressive states.*

DONAHUE: And pretty.

*Q: And pretty, yes. Beautiful women and the men too.*

DONAHUE: Yes, this is not lost, and so it was tough for them to have any dealings with either of their neighbors.

*Q: Well, in, how were you viewing events, and getting from your colleagues, and all events in Vietnam at that time? By '64 we had the assassination...*

DONAHUE: No, no, not yet. I had gone to Malaya to take care of a situation in Kuala Lumpur, so I was there, I guess a year, and then I was summoned to go to Saigon.

*Q: Before we get to Saigon we will talk about what you were doing in Malaya and events in Malaya.*

*Tom, you went to Malaysia in '64. What was the situation there? Again I don't want to get into something I shouldn't but can you talk about why you got called there?*

DONAHUE: No, but at the time I was there as luck would have it, the confrontations started between Indonesia and Malaya.

*Q: It was called Confrontasi or something?*

DONAHUE: Confrontasi.

*Q: Well, in the first place when you got there in '64 sort of the atmospherics before we get into this Indonesian thing. Who was the ambassador, and what was the situation in Malaysia? It was Malaysia at that time. Singapore was, was it part of it or not?*

DONAHUE: It was a terrible goat's nest because the concept of Malaysia was being formed. Of course Singapore was well established under Lee Kuan Yew, who was a dynamo if there ever was one. The folks in Malaya were basically always sort of country cousins. The (inaudible) was Singapore and every, the banking industry, everything took place there, and folks in Kuala Lumpur went hat in hand for assistance, so this was to be quite a situation.

The Malaysia concept was formed, and then the idea that they would have elections. Lee Kuan Yew was just thirsting to take over and he had (inaudible) who worked for him. He was a labor man, but he had been born in Kuala Lumpur. So he sent him up to run in the election—and it just scared the bejesus out of them—but this was the first step, and he was going to gobble them up. From that point it really got to be a problem. In the meantime, in a soap opera sort of thing, both the embassy in Kuala Lumpur and the embassy in Singapore,

*Q: They were separate countries?*

DONAHUE: Yes, and this caused internal problems, snarling, and little arguments and big arguments back and forth. Everybody had a view on how it was going to work and how much (inaudible) they would be able to maintain. It was really very funny.

*Q: How long had the two embassies been created? I mean, when was the split?*

DONAHUE: Well, Kuala Lumpur had not been independent. The Federation of Malaya had been a British Protectorate until 1958, when they got their independence, and it was a joyous feeling there. They were so happy.

*Q: Tunku Abdul Rahman (a former Malaysian Prime Minister) was quite a father figure and all that.*

DONAHUE: Absolutely and a very, very bright guy in his own right. The sort of man who would say, let's not rush in and start naming things after Malays; let's wait until they deserve to have a street or a boulevard named after them. The problem, of course, was that Indonesia was feeling its oats and the Malays were terribly concerned, inwardly, that Lee Kuan Yew was just too smart.

*Q: Had the sort of guerrilla war started there yet?*

DONAHUE: Oh, that had been going on for some time in Malaya. It was basically Chinese guerrilla war. Plantation workers, rural people and it was a tough, it was a nasty war.

*Q: Was that when you got there in '64?*

DONAHUE: That was over, oh yes. The Brits, everybody they could with experience in that sort of thing, and they did quite a fine job. But it was a tough, tough situation.

*Q: You were there for about a year, was that it?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

DONAHUE: Well, Charles Baldwin. He had been a Foreign Service officer. He had retired, I have forgotten now whether he had left in a huff or not, but he came in as a political appointee after the Kennedy election. So he came out. He was a charming, charming fellow. By this time Gulf had taken over Malaya. Any morning at the Royal Selangor Club, the tunku would tee off, and then Abdul Razak, who was the deputy prime minister, followed by Ghazali Shafie, who was the permanent secretary of foreign affairs, and on down the line. It was just absolutely wonderful. And to go out there, I used to play there in the mornings. I lived about five minutes from any golf course, but you would have this great feeling that you were being watched, and you were, because in the bushes and under the trees were guys with submachine guns, army types, protecting. It was a wonderful way to learn not to hurry your backswing. I learned more patience.

*Q: Were you able to do any business on the golf course?*

DONAHUE: Oh, I used to play golf a lot, sure.

*Q: I was just saying some places—I understand even in Burma, but particularly in Asia—that golf is a very important aspect of relations because this is where the guys talk business in the locker room or elsewhere.*

DONAHUE: When Ambassador Baldwin arrived he came into a country that was absolutely seized by golf, and he let it be known that he was not a golfer. In a sense I think he thought it was sort of a (inaudible), not realizing what he was walking into. Someone really had not briefed him in the Department, because he came out and he said, "I am not a golfer." So he had been there about two months and the tunku took all the ambassadors up to the Cameroon Highlands for a weekend, except one. And I think it was on that Monday morning he took his first golf lesson. You would see him out there during the day and I'd be, in the afternoon I'd be playing golf with somebody and he'd say, "Hi, John." Wave from another fairway but it was terribly important.

*Q: How did you find, during this time in '64, relations in Malaya between the Chinese and the Malay?*

DONAHUE: I think, effectively, they had a wonderful arrangement because you've got Indians, they've got Malays, and you've got the structure of the royal Malays.

*Q: Different states?*

DONAHUE: Different states. Each one has a ruler, and it's not a very effective system, but the system was such that the Chinese—being very wise—worked out an arrangement with the Malays and the Indians that they would handle all of the foreign exchange of all the business. There was the Chinese party (inaudible). There was a Malayan party and there was an Indian Party.

Now the Indian party was primarily concerned with the plantations, and this was the big export, so it was a terribly important thing not to have any labor problems or difficulties. The Indians ran the railways, and that was very important in terms of communication. This worked out beautifully because the balance was just perfect. Then the Malays were allowed, and everybody honored the system of all these various parties around the country. It was just a very happy situation, which later changed because of all sorts of problems; it is still a terrible problem today.

*Q: Were we concerned at that time about Malaysia being part of one of the dominoes? You know, this was the idea: we are fighting in Vietnam because when Vietnam and other states were beginning to fall. How did we feel?*

DONAHUE: It was an afterthought because, really, the successful uprising in Malaya was over. That had been a factor—you couldn't help but think about it, but it was not of any concern.

*Q: Was Thailand at all a problem?*

DONAHUE: No. The Thai situation had been pretty well solved because the royal family continued in and still continues. They have hot and cold prime ministers and coups, but all those things never get terribly serious.

*Q: Did anything spill over the border into Malaysia at all or not?*

DONAHUE: That was not the problem.

*Q: There has always been a small uprising sort of endemic in southern Thailand, hasn't there?*

DONAHUE: Yes.

*Q: Sort of like a low grade fever or something.*

DONAHUE: Well, the problem is that Malaya is a Buddhist state. I mean the Thais are Buddhist. And then you get the problem as you go south; the sort of problems you would

have then—they are much more serious now—that every six months the police would go out and shoot all the feral dogs that had come across the border because the Buddhists don't do bad things to animals, and rabies was a factor. But that's the sort of thing. It is bad now, and this is a resurgence of the concept of Islam in Southeast Asia.

*Q: Talk about the konfrontasi. You were an Indonesian hand. Had that been anything going on while you were in Indonesia?*

DONAHUE: It really hadn't been, but the question, the (tension) problem is in Borneo. The Indonesians were feeling their oats, and the Straits of Malacca were such that by gum, we'll show those little brothers what it is like and it did bother the U.S. an awful lot. Of course, Bobby Kennedy came out and what was his name? He'd been the DCM in Jakarta when I was there, and was a delightful guy who was later an ambassador. The American government didn't like that idea of the Straits of Malacca, which were terribly, terribly important. The concept of these two countries, who basically had no business fighting about something like this, were fighting about something like that, and so Bobby Kennedy came out and he was in; he did time in Singapore, in Malaya, in Jakarta, and they finally snuffed things out.

*Q: I can't think that Indonesia and Malaysia really had much of a naval force—as far as I can remember the Indonesians had a cruiser that never left port; a Russian cruiser that sort of sank in the harbor, didn't it?*

DONAHUE: Well, despite all that water around them they really don't like the ocean very much. It's too bad because it really, this was the time when the Malays were beginning to feel their oats as an independent country, and then having the problems with Singapore.

*Q: How about in Borneo? Was there a little war going on there? There were British troops in there, weren't there? Or had that already taken place?*

DONAHUE: That was pretty quiet. No. The only difficulty they had, and this continues, was smuggling from Indonesia. There are basically two states; the Brunei and that wonderful, wonderful little kingdom of the British raj, which is a beautiful place.

*Q: Were we concerned about that at the time?*

DONAHUE: Absolutely not. No, it was very peaceful, pleasant, and they behaved themselves. The only problem that they had was the head hunters, and they had all been quieted down, sea Dayaks.

*Q: Did this trouble between Malaysia and Indonesia, did it amount to anything? I mean, did anything happen or was this a war of words?*

DONAHUE: Oh, yes exactly. It went away, and that was that.

*Q: There had been a little war going on when the British were in Malaysia and Sukarno was in Borneo, wasn't there?*

DONAHUE: That was always a problem, just the same as it was always a problem just next door in the southern Philippines. Christianity and Islam didn't mix.

*Q: Well, then you went to Saigon when?*

DONAHUE: June of '64.

*Q: And you were there from '64 until when?*

DONAHUE: '66.

*Q: What were you doing, I mean, were you? What can you say?*

DONAHUE: Well, let me say this. Basically, the situation was deteriorating in Indochina generally, but in Vietnam particularly, and was such as it became more serious. The French had their military mission there, and they were in the process of retreating from or scaling it down. We had taken up the cause and we were training the South Vietnamese, and it was not going very well. Basically, the Vietcong were just getting so much stronger and so much more capable of really inflicting a lot of pain. As that situation developed the government did the only thing they could do: instead of having civilians in positions in the countryside, all the provincial chiefs became military, and the deputies and all. So it seemed like a very good idea, and why not?

But the only problem was that at a time when you have basically a political war smoldering all over the country, you send guys who don't have a political bone in their bodies. They were trained in the image of the French military, and as far as they were concerned, what people in their provinces really thought about anything other than the security, was just not a factor.

In the '54 accords the situation was the split at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel was effected, and an awful lot of people came south; Catholics and people who were definitely anti-Communist, a whole host of people. Prior to that, the Vietcong in Malaya had been working very, very hard on recruiting people that had lived in South Vietnam, and they developed a great deal of talent. They spoke the same (inaudible) who had cousins by the dozens all over the area, and they had gone north for training. So when this switch came, they were able to very easily—courtesy of the United States Navy, who moved thousands of people down—they came back and went home, and so villages had people who were not strangers, who were a very well trained cadre.

There were very few people in the government of Vietnam, or their advisors, that really felt that this was a problem that some way attacking what had to be on the horizon a very serious problem. The Agency was facing the problem of what the hell do you do about something like this because this is a political situation that really is not being considered

at all, and understandably. Military people did not really react to the problems local people were having, and this was the most exploitable thing in the world. I mean, any corruption under a province chief's level could be blown all out of proportion, and it really disrupted the basic structure, which was the village and the hamlet idea that had always existed in Vietnam.

Some of my predecessors had developed a very small program (really a pilot) to see how this would work; attacking a village. Taking 8, 10, 12 people, training them in dealing on political problems—and some were armed, some weren't—but try to get them back in the villages and really re-proselytize. Not an easy job because nobody was terribly interested in serving a government that really wasn't worth a hell of a lot.

Of course, after the long problem with the Nu family this became all the more difficult, plus the fact that we were supporting them. It became a situation where really it was just going downhill. You know, questions get a heck of a lot worse, so these people would go in—and they were bright young people, civilians, but they were people who had come out of the villages themselves, and knew the people, and were not strangers bringing the gospel at all. I thought when I got there it was an awfully good pilot program, so we started working on that and very, very quickly after the coup we had, I can never remember, 13 governments in 18 months.

*Q: The coup was October of '63?*

DONAHUE: That's right. So the government kept changing, and there was all of the fighting within the military, and there was absolutely no stability at all. So I got there, was declared to the government, and my opposite there was the ministry of interior. We had some sessions, and as soon as he recognized there didn't seem to be any way he could make any money out of our relationship, it cooled.

*Q: Yes, this was the corruption. This essentially destroyed the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government.*

DONAHUE: Absolutely and it wasn't just at the top. This was one of the problems out in the countryside. You had exactly the same sort of situation. So we started to build, we had a camp down at the Long Tau River—just beautiful, charming, big, with white sand beaches.

*Q: Oh, I have swum there.*

DONAHUE: Have you? Well, then you know it. There was a little camp there that had been started by an interesting guy who was a politician and who had created a situation where people could go to the beach and spend the weekend. He would have private army patrolling the road from Saigon to (inaudible). Then he fell afoul of the government and they threw him in the pokey.

But the camp was there, we took it over, and from that kernel we began to build a program. There was a young captain who had majored in history; he was charming, good English, smart as hell, politically savvy, and that was very, very effective. There was no way you could teach these people to spread the gospel that the government was really your friend. So he had gone and taken another, he took the sanctity of the Vietnamese people and he went back into history. The cynics used to call it the fairies and the dragons. He would talk about these things and developed a concept of pride that had nothing to do with the current political situation, which I thought was terrific.

At the same time there was a province chief in (inaudible) in the delta, and Chou was a very interesting guy. He came from the north, and he had gone to university up there. When the French began to make things unpleasant he joined the Viet Minh and was very successful fighting. So then in 1964 he came out of that and came south, went to the military academy, became an officer, and was stationed in Dalot. As a matter of fact, he was our neighbor, and was a very, very bright guy. So he was made a province chief in Kien Hua, and he began applying these sensible ideas: let's not be beastly to the peasants and let's start building up from the bottom; he was very, very successful. So I met him and we had several sessions together. He had great plans of expanding these things, and as far as I was concerned, the one thing we had was money. So we were able to support him in so many areas that we were able to use it as leverage. Various programs that came out of this province during that period were so good.

*Q: Did any of them have a title? Operation Diamond or something like that?*

DONAHUE: No, basically they were simply the, armed propaganda teams which then grew into the people's action teams. There was a program that came out of there that was magnificent. We took this program and a very capable guy took it over. We set up a school in (inaudible), took over an old Chinese resort, and the idea with the census grievance was to say, "OK, we will get some retired civil servants who lived in the area: guys who had worked for the post office, or whatever, who were all literate, smart, and capable and train them." That whole concept of census grievance was simply all governments since Bethlehem take the census, everybody knows that so (background noise) all the names and addresses, the whole thing, and set up drawings of the village, hamlet, whatever. The basic concept was once a month we had the province chief make—the head of the household had to check in with this man who was the census grievance chief, kind of a respected elder. He would go over, chat, and do these things, setting up the basic details of the family and then after that then he began to say, "Is there any problem that you would like to discuss? Is there anybody in the government giving you a hard time? What are the aspirations that would improve the wellbeing of this village?" If you had something, you know, a road repair, a bridge that would allow you to get your produce to market earlier. And you know the United States had all the money in the world to spend on stuff and why not spend it on something that might have some political value? More important was if you could actually follow through and have the province keep the money instead of spending the money over there, spend it on something people actually want, which is basically what I learned in Cook County as a child. It was a tremendous program. If the guy is cooperating with you, if he has told you



the thing that we really need in this village, and by God, somebody comes along and puts it into action, the next question is, is there any corruption that is causing you problems? Any members of the village hierarchy or anybody from the military structure? And the second thing beyond that is what can you tell me about any Communist activity in the neighborhood? Do you have any agitators living in the neighborhood? So it was a great intelligence source, and also at the same time it was doing some good. The only political action that had been done in years.

*Q: I would think that this would run completely counter to your province chiefs and all those who are, you know raking in money.*

DONAHUE: Well, that's true. Basically before this program, by this time, we had built up these little 40-man teams and we would go in and see a province chief and explain. It was a franchise. It had nothing to do with anybody except the province chief and me. We would be very happy to work out a program on a hand shake basis with him. Basically, we would ask him to recruit people; young men in the province whose families he knew or felt they were trustworthy. We would take them off and fly them down to the Long Tau and they would be down there for eight weeks. For eight weeks they were trained in military activity, the fairies and the dragons, the history, the pride of the Vietnamese people. We fed them better than the OCS (Officer Candidate School) people did. We dewormed them as soon as they got there, which is always a problem in Asia. As a consequence, we developed some guys who had never been in an airplane or out of their village and suddenly, by God, that's the ocean.

And then it went back to him. We had to get an officer from his staff who would be the focus. By this time we were bringing out people—almost a whole class of our training program. It was building week by week and we would say, “OK, two Americans in your capital city in the province, and they will be responsible. We will pay these people, we will arm them, we will pay for their uniforms and everything else, all the traditional black pajamas as long as they are used as we think is necessary and you agree is necessary. But if you are looking for a palace guard, or we find that you are misusing them, or that you are shaking them down (the payroll is done through an American's hands), give us a month's notice. And if you don't like what we are doing, we will leave, pick up our guns, and go home. Or if we don't like it, we will do that too. We will cut our relationship with you with no hard feelings.”

So it was a thing that most of those guys couldn't refuse. They saw the value in it, and having some trained people, some armed people, and something they didn't have. Because at harvest time the Viet Cong would come in and pick up (inaudible) after it had all been brought in. It was a pretty nasty neighborhood in most of those villages as a result of the fact that you had guys who were trained agitators who were tough and mean. The villages had no way of doing a damned thing about it, and there was no protection. As a consequence, this—the fact that you put in two teams, three teams in a province—was a great safety factor as far as the province chief was concerned, and he couldn't make any money out of it because we kept all of the control over the weapons and control

of what money was involved. So it was to his advantage to play ball with us. It was really a very successful program.

*Q: You were doing this how long?*

DONAHUE: Well, pretty much all the time I was there.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

DONAHUE: Well, '64 to '66. I had about 80 American case officers who were there, and that generation, none of those guys had ever had any military training. You know, the draft avoided all those people, so they would come out and it was, "We want you to go out and live in this God forsaken village, find yourself a house, we will get you some guards, have fun."

*Q: Did the mainline armies of both sides intrude? Or was the fighting usually off somewhere else?*

DONAHUE: Well, let's say yes. Say in the same province capital there would be a MAG (military and government) guy there, which was possible for security. Sometimes we had no problems with them at all. The only problems we had of course, were at the Saigon level. William C. Westmoreland was not the swiftest, and as a consequence we had problems because they thought if you had guns, you belonged to the army. It was an interesting, ongoing battle.

At Vung Tau, I had gotten a quick claim on all that area down there—I have forgotten how many hectares—and that's where we built our camp. While that was being built, there was a Canadian Vincentian order that had a minor seminary in a nearby town, so the Vietnamese government was bidding on the camp because the Vincentians had decided that it would be too hot for them and they were going back to Canada. We were able to beat them because we were going to pay in dollars, so we bought the camp and it gave us a real leg up to be able to move teams around immediately because it had been set up as a boarding school for the bishops, so we took that over while we were building the camp. It didn't take long, really. By the time I left we had 20,000 of these cadres all over the country.

*Q: Did the Viet Cong single out, I mean were there, there had to be fighting between your camp and the others all the time.*

DONAHUE: Oh yes, yes.

*Q: Because you were a direct challenge to their operations.*

DONAHUE: That's right.

*Q: How was this working out while you were there?*

DONAHUE: Actually, it worked out very well. In addition to having all these young American case officers that I had, the Australians had a, Ted Surok was my counterpart. So I guess I had about 20 Australian officers to be a team, a captain and a warrant officer. Ted and I worked out the deal that they answered to me as far as what was done and anything that belonged to the Australian government was his responsibility. It worked out as an absolutely seamless arrangement. These guys were good. They were parachute trained; they were absolutely all this stuff. They were so bright and so good, and these are the guys I stuck in the really tough provinces. Of course, with that much military background, they were invaluable.

*Q: How would the fighting go? What sort of fighting would go on between the Viet Cong cadre and yours?*

DONAHUE: There was never any really set pieces that went on, but basically what there would be was the difficulty of did they want to come into a village or the cadre within that village want to rear their heads? It changed the neighborhood. You know, you have 80 armed guys that have some spark of a vision of what the place should be like. They were interested in disruption, they were interested in causing problems, and where they came into contact with the U.S. Army this might just as well have been Waterloo, for God's sake. You know, the army would go out and fight for four weeks, five weeks over a piece of mountain territory, and at the end of that, nobody had changed their hands or minds and they all turned around and went someplace else. Madness.

*Q: By the time you left, how did you feel things were going in Vietnam?*

DONAHUE: Oh, terrible. I felt it was a war that had no reason for being as far as the United States was concerned. I am not a pacifist; I'm a realist. In December of '64 Maxwell Taylor was the ambassador, and there was a big powwow in the embassy and George Allen, who was an Agency guy, so bright, he had been working on Vietnam. He started in Dien Bien Phu and had worked on that ever since; absolutely magnificent. But there was a cable being written saying that the situation as far as the government is concerned, the inability of the other coups, the coups, the inability of ARVA (aircraft repair ship) to stand, and of course it was right because ARVA would have to be armed and ready every day and night. The Viet Cong only had to pick one night for a frontal assault and kick the bejesus out of them and then go off and wait another month before they had to do anything. It was that kind of a war. Morale, of course, just plummeted, and understandably so. It was because it was a war that the army was talking set pieces and let's all; and the Marine Corps, the same way.

This night the cable was written. If the situation had gotten so bad that we, the prediction of the embassy was that by summer, certainly by August, no I guess July, was the date

*Q: Of what year?*

DONAHUE: That would be '65, if U.S. troops weren't introduced, it was all going down the tubes. I must say, I was shocked at the idea that we would put U.S. troops in. I am no military strategist, but having been there long enough and having taken the temperature of how fixed the Vietnamese government was in terms of forging ahead to victory.

I didn't change my mind. I went back to Washington at that point, and Dick Helms was the director, and he had a small staff in Vietnamese affairs. (Inaudible) spoke with one voice throughout the government, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the Department. Bill Sullivan had a small group of—he was Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia and he had a weekly meeting for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the White House and—we would sit in this meeting, which was just an open forum that had been going on for some time. It was just such a tough, tough problem.

*Q: How long did you stay involved with Vietnam?*

DONOHUE: I was stuck there, and of course, that meant you know the Washington things. I had an awfully lot of contacts at that point. Phil Habib had been the chief of the Political Section and I sat in the Political Section in Vietnam and before that. I guess Mel (inaudible), a great guy, but it went on, and finally I was able to escape. I went to the Philippines in '71.

*Q: How did the TET Offensive in '68 affect you? How did we see it at the time from your perspective?*

DONOHUE: Phil Habib was having lunch with Dick Helms at the Agency that day so we had a very intricate briefing room with all the bells and whistles. So Phil came out and we ran him through that and had a long conversation. We had lunch, and we came back down to our suite, and we had an army major who was kind of in charge of all the maps and stuff. And he said, "We just got word that the TET Offensive had started." Phil Habib, who was never a man who was lost for words, was just stunned. We all were because it certainly seemed so much worse than it really was, and nobody could predict what the outcome was because, in many respects, it was a blessing because they lost such valuable cadre.

*Q: It essentially almost destroyed the Viet Cong but it also destroyed the political will of the United States.*

DONOHUE: Absolutely. At the same time nobody was paying much attention. There were still two full divisions up north that had never been committed, so it was

*Q: Had you gone, were you continuing as you looked at this during this time, was there any encouragement or discouragement in the situation there, both political and militarily as you watched it?*

DONOHUE: Oh, yes. I took a cruise ship from Singapore to Saigon. We got there at night and my family was with me. My son, who was seven or eight at the time, said,

“Would you please wake me when we get to Vietnam?” And I said, “Sure.” We had a balcony on the suite that we had, so I got him up and (inaudible) what they called a night harassment and interdiction fire, which took place every night, and they had a whole bunch of 75s and B-4s all night long and this indiscriminate firing. This is not exactly the way to get to the hearts and minds. All I am saying is that was my first impression.

*Q: When was that?*

DONOHUE: That was June of '64. The whole point was that it was so tough, it really was. You cannot have that kind of a failing government repeating itself by failing every month and expect to get any cohesion out of it. It was really so bad.

I went out for the elections. I spent a couple of months out there seeing how the elections were going but (inaudible) had not spoken since December. I was out there in the summer.

*Q: Who didn't speak?*

DONOHUE: (Inaudible), absolutely point.

George Carver and I went down to the White House to talk about this to try to plead somebody to intercede, so they said, “Oh, yes. That's being done. Will you see Westmoreland was going to do it, and of course, he didn't understand, and they didn't understand what he was saying and they still didn't speak.

*Q: You went to the Philippines in '71?*

DONOHUE: '71.

*Q: How long were you there?*

DONOHUE: Five years.

*Q: What was the situation when you got there in '71?*

DONOHUE: The Wild West. I was there a year until martial law was declared and the gambling joints were open. It was really absolutely the Barbary Coast, whatever you call it. It was unbelievable. It was, everybody carried a gun. You would pull up to a stoplight and there would be all the guys on motorbikes and in the back pocket would be a gun sticking out. It was crazy.

Martial law was declared, and everybody said, “Yes, Sir.” It got rid of the guns.

*Q: Were we concerned with this Wild West that the Communists might use this to take over?*

DONOHUE: Our only concerns were two things; Clark Field and Subic Bay.

*Q: Yes, but that given, if there is a significant Communist insurgency*

DONOHUE: But there wasn't then.

*Q: That was gone?*

DONOHUE: It was gone in the worst possible way. The Hugba were all, these Christians in Luzon, so we said, "OK, forty acres and a mule." We sent them all down and we said, "OK, this is your plot of land," and that sort of thing, but of course we plopped them right down in the middle of the (inaudible) where you don't sell and transfer property. It was in Muslim territory, and just a matter of time until they were at each other's throats.

*Q: What can you say about the work you were doing?*

DONOHUE: Our big concern was the Communist party in the Philippines. So that was the, the young people, the student groups had been very, very active, and they continued to be active after martial law was declared. This was pretty much what Ferdinand Marcos had in mind when he declared martial law at that point.

The problem was trying to get to the student groups in a variety of ways because they were dedicated; there was just no question.

*Q: How could you get to the student groups?*

DONOHUE: Well, there are things that you sort of have to do: the technique of getting to students or getting a student who can worm his way into a leadership position. We had non-official young people who were able to do that.

*Q: What was your impression of Marcos at the time?*

DONOHUE: He was probably about as corrupt as you could be, there's just no question. But he had a persona that when he declared martial law in '72, if he had turned the spotlight on himself, he would have been canonized. The worst Marcos haters that I knew after martial law was declared would say, "It's a shame that Marcos was the one but somebody had to do it." All sorts of respectable people just said, "My God, this is horrible. We can't go on like this." But he continued, and that was the problem. He paid no attention to whatever amends that he could possibly make.

*Q: How did you find the embassy and all there? Were they sort of taken in by the Marcos crowd or not, or what was your impression?*

DONOHUE: I don't think so. I don't think there was any naiveté. Henry Byroade was the ambassador, but he was a real realist.

*Q: Oh, yes, he had been around for a long time.*

DONOHUE: Well, he came into the Foreign Service as an ambassador, and he was the youngest brigadier general in the military. He just was something; tough, good, so he had no illusions, but he was very, very effective in his dealings with Marcos and generally with the people who really made the country run.

*Q: Did you have any dealings with Imelda Marcos? She was quite a figure at one point.*

DONOHUE: Oh indeed she was. She was tough, brilliant, and was as corrupt as he was. You know, they owned 40 Wall at one point, Wall Street. They owned a townhouse and other properties in London; they had a pre-war apartment building, the old style on Fifth Avenue in New York. They owned their apartment and the commissioner of immigration had another floor. It was a layer cake of

*Q: Did you find, I mean you are looking at this society, you mentioned the Oligarchs and all that, who I gather this is where the ruling parties come from. I believe the president of the Philippines is of the, she comes from this.*

DONOHUE: Absolutely, absolutely and the corruption goes on and on and on.

*Q: Why hasn't the Philippines sort of blown up? From your observations at that time because corruption has gone on. I mean there have been various changes in government and all that, but basically it's still the same people seem to be running the thing and why?*

DONOHUE: It is the saddest story of all because here, everybody speaks English. The big thing we did was we sent out the initial group, the SS Thomas went out with, full of teachers.

*Q: This was during the turn of the century when we took over the Philippines and we sent all these women teachers out and did a wonderful job.*

DONOHUE: Yes, and I would talk to guys that I knew and high ranking people and they would say, "Oh, yes. My teacher," down in the boondocks someplace "is Ms. So and So from Topeka, Kansas." But it was such a façade, and it really never got, and in the final analysis, the Chinese control the economy, of course, and the Oligarchs' control their side of the economy and the big things, you know, Del Monte and people like that are huge plantations, and it just goes on and on because nobody wants to upset the apple cart.

*Q: What about the Philippine military? What was your, again I want you to talk about the time of '71 to '76. What was your impression of the Philippine military?*

DONOHUE: Basically, I think they were good, but corrupt. The military districts were set up and you'd have a brigadier general or whatever in charge. These guys had houses and bank accounts in the United States, and these were guys you'd get to know and they'd make no bones about it.

Eddie Ramos, who went to West Point; bright as hell, graduated, came back, was a good force for the army, and was finally selected as president, after my time. He was unique. Really. The present president is the daughter of a former president, Macapagal, and she's married to a guy who is the "raker-in" of the money. There is a case going on right now. He arranged a deal in Hong Kong with a Chinese group there, I guess there was an awfully lot of money involved. I have a good friend—and we have been friends since we were in the Philippines—who was then speaker of the house until six months ago, one of the smartest guys I have ever met. He was in the embassy in Saigon when he was 21, and his job for Marcos was to go and get for every soldier, aid worker, farm advisor who went to Saigon, you know, two miles of road paving or something. It was the quid pro quo for everything that they did. He was absolutely magnificent. He ran for congress when he was in the embassy in Manila and lost. It was stolen from him, and he said, "By God", so the next election he won. He was in congress until he decided that he wanted to get out of there and make some money; and he did.

*Q: How did you find working in that atmosphere?*

DONOHUE: The funniest people in the world; that's the trouble. A good friend who has now gone to his great reward, he had been a banker and then ran for congress. He was the lone congressman from Bataan, and he and Marcos were close, but he referred to corruption as foolishness, you know, they were involved in foolishness, or there was foolishness, or they weren't able to. It was just, this is a very bright guy who had been a successful banker.

*Q: It was just part of the game.*

DONOHUE: That's exactly the problem, and there is no way you can really do anything about it as long as that is understood.

*Q: How did the fall of Vietnam in '75 affect you?*

DONOHUE: Henry Byroade said, "I had a conversation with Marcos yesterday, and he's concerned about what is going on in the Philippines. How about me dragging you over to brief him?" So I found myself being snuck into Malacañan Palace, and I'd bring them a map and crayons and I turned on the cables from Saigon so I knew what was going on. I briefed him, and as an ex-soldier, by God, he was interested and he just ate it up. I'd sneak in. There was a private stairway that went up to his office and he was very, very good at it, and good as a politician. I did that I guess until the fall of Saigon.

Once a year we would have a big Memorial Day service at the beautiful cemetery, the American cemetery in Manila, and we would get somebody who was going to be in the Far East from Washington to be the featured speaker. And then one year it was Marcos. This was probably a good year later after, and he came down the center aisle after giving his speech and the ceremonies were over. He came where I was sitting with my wife and he leaned over and he said, "Tom, how are you?" Now that's a politician.



*Q: Did you sense sort of any unease on the part of the people you were dealing with after Saigon fell? You know, what was going to happen there?*

DONOHUE: I was really out of it. The only people I did know who had problems were a lot of companies who had people working there on contract but basically, no. I think that they just let it all go by.

*Q: So in '76 you left. Where did you go?*

DONOHUE: I went out to Los Angeles. I was still under State cover, and I was seconded to the Department of Commerce Region Office in Los Angeles.

*Q: OK. A good insurgency expert, I shudder to ask, what were you doing in the Department of Commerce in Los Angeles?*

DONOHUE: Well, I didn't do a hell of a lot for them but they were very gracious taking me in.

Well, the big concern at that point and still is the Iranians had a student organization of 26,000 Iranians. And then you go through the Africans, you go through the other Middle Eastern countries. It was unbelievable.

*Q: And the Iranian students raised holy hell at the time of Khomeini and the takeover of our embassy. They did not endear themselves to the United States. I was a consular officer, and I was consul general in Naples, and they said, "Would you like to be the place that would process Iranian students for non X in the country?" I said, "Screw it." I had seen these Iranian students. They were just young people practicing their political muscle. Let's say there was no love lost there.*

*How long were you in Los Angeles?*

DONOHUE: I guess three years.

*Q: Three years. So that brought you right up to the, were you there during the takeover of our embassy in Iran?*

DONOHUE: No.

*Q: Because that's when all of a sudden this Iranian group really got going.*

DONOHUE: This friend of mine, who became the speaker of the house for years was in congress and resigned from congress, and he called me up.

*Q: This was in the Philippines?*

DONOHUE: Yes, he called me up in Los Angeles and said, "I'm serious. I understand your career and all that sort of thing, but basically I would like very much to have you come out to the Philippines and discuss a job possibility. I'll send you a ticket."

So I went out. He was bidding, or there was the beginning of a package, which would include E-Systems, Westinghouse was a possibility, Fokker, and his company. By this time his company had thousands of Filipinos in the Middle East, so I went out. The Saudis were terribly frightened that they would be infiltrated from Yemen through the Empty Quarter (Rub' al-Khalil). So the package he was interested in me doing because of my experience was (inaudible) would provide the airplanes, E-Systems would provide all other electronic hardware, and the Philippines would supply jeeps and the regular stuff on the ground as a reaction force for whatever was coming through that area. So I thought it was a great idea, why not? So we worked on that. I had no idea how business worked, but good God, I learned, we must have worked on that almost two years.

*Q: We are talking about Yemen. Was Yemen split into two at that point?*

DONOHUE: No.

*Q: This is all the Democratic Republic of Yemen.*

DONOHUE: Yes. I'd be in Dallas meeting with people and then I'd be (inaudible) had an office in London, so I would be in London, and I'd be in Holland, meeting with (inaudible) people, and then go into Saudi Arabia. The former chief of the intelligence service, a sheik was the focal point for Saudi Arabia, so it just went on and on and on.

*Q: Did you fly over the Empty Quarter?*

DONOHUE: Yes, just unbelievable.

The company had big offices in Jeddah for seven years. There were thousands of Filipinos.

*Q: How did this work? I can't imagine there was any great threat, was there? Who was coming across?*

DONOHUE: At that point I think they were terribly frightened that Islamic types would be coming in and that was one of the problems why they liked Filipinos because they were all Roman Catholic. But if you get those guys from Bangladesh, you get all kinds of odd places; they don't want to go ever go home. The Saudis don't work or do that sort of thing, so as a consequence, to run the country they had to bring people and there were a couple hundred thousand Filipinos, not just our company. This was a little bit later but basically, they were terribly afraid that Wahabis would be

*Q: Well, of course they were Wahabis but they didn't want to have fanatics from other areas coming in.*

*How did this work?*

DONOHUE: It didn't work. I spent almost two years. I was being paid, and I was staying at the Ritz in London and the Pierre, and it was just sort of fun. We had some very interesting people that you know

*Q: Why didn't it work? Somebody else get the bid?*

DONOHUE: No, it ran out of steam. It is strange the way their minds work. Somebody who would have thought that this was a real fight or somebody with wiser views.

*Q: From what little I know, I was in Dhahran way back in the '50s, but rural Saudi isn't a great place to infiltrate people, and besides, even if you bring in Islamics who were not Saudis, they stand out. I mean that is not a society where you can, you sort of have to train Saudis to do the dirty work.*

DONOHUE: I know, I know. For me it was interesting. I had never been in the Middle East. I was having fun and flying first class.

*Q: So what did you do after that or what have you done?*

DONOHUE: Nothing.

*Q: So that's it?*

DONOHUE: That's it. Well, I shouldn't say that's the case because I then stayed in the U.S., and was vice president of the company at least that's what the cards said that they had printed "Vice President for the United States."

*Q: What sort of company was this?*

DONOHUE: Oh, it was oil. He had oil interest in the Philippines, where there is no oil; he had some stuff in Africa, stuff going on.

*Q: I'm surprised they haven't found oil.*

DONOHUE: Oh, boy and how.

*Q: There must be oil there somewhere.*

DONOHUE: Remember what Golda Maier said. It stopped right there. He had a joint venture with City Service, and they fooled around for years, and it wasn't to be had. They thought Palau Island was a possibility. They had some very interesting people who were good, but there was no oil to be found.

*Q: OK, well, Thomas that's probably a good place to stop.*

DONOHUE: I would say so.

*Q: I thank you very much.*

*End of interview*