

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

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INTERVIEW

Q: John, you told me your first Foreign Service boss was a Foreign Service Officer for thirty years and spent his entire career overseas. How did that happen?

HARTER: Well, Gordon Minnigerode was an eccentric, introverted, academic type person, and he was independently wealthy. His father had been a senior executive at Riggs Bank, apparently well acquainted with Presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, and in and out of the White House not infrequently. Gordon was an only child, and he inherited his father's money. His wife, Nancy, was a prima donna. They both loved overseas life. The State Department cut allowances sharply in the 1930s, and there were no funds for home leave. The Foreign Service was quite small, and it was smaller in 1939 than it was in 1932. The Department needed to keep most of its officers overseas. Gordon chose to stay overseas as much as he could.

Q: What were the consequences of that, as far as Minnigerode's attitudes and outlook were concerned?

HARTER: Frankly, Gordon had no idea what the State Department was all about, nor did he have a sense of what American society was like. He lived in a little cocoon typical of high society life all over the world at that time.

Q: What was your first post and when did you arrive there?

HARTER: Well, I passed the Foreign Service exams in 1952, and I expected to begin my Foreign Service career in early 1953, but Secretary of State Dulles put a freeze on all Foreign Service assignments in January, and no new Foreign Service Officers were brought in for the rest of that year. When the logjam broke, I reported to the State

Department on November 15, 1954. Three weeks later, on December 9th, I was on a plane to South Africa, assigned to a small consulate in Port Elizabeth.

Q: And Minnigerode was the consul there?

HARTER: Yes, and I was the vice consul. It was a two-person office. My predecessor had left a couple of weeks before I arrived, and the day I reported for duty, I was already booked to issue visas. It reminded me of the old New Yorker cartoon of someone going down a ski slope reading a book on how to ski. But it turned out to be a remarkably wonderful opportunity. Six months after I arrived, Gordon was due for home leave, and Chuck Higdon at the consulate general in Johannesburg was scheduled to be in charge, but Chuck was unexpectedly transferred to Vientiane, and I was left in charge as acting consul, even though that was my first assignment. Presumably it was just going to be for a couple or three weeks, while they figured out what they could do about it, but I ended up as acting consul for six months.

Q: Wasn't that a very small position for a man like Minnigerode who had been in the Foreign Service for 30 years?

HARTER: Well, it was considered a distinction to be in charge of an independent consulate at that time.

Q: What happened when Minnigerode returned from home leave?

HARTER: He returned after six months, but he was almost immediately transferred to Cape Town as consul general, and I was acting consul for another six months. Altogether, I was in charge of the post for approximately one year. It was a wonderful opportunity. I lived in a 35-room mansion by myself. That was my situation when I met my wife, who was then a South African newspaper reporter. She later claimed I lured her into the Foreign Service under false pretenses, because we never had comparable living quarters after we were married.

Q: Was Minnigerode's long experience overseas, without any Washington assignments, unique?

HARTER: No, because even as the Foreign Service shrank in size in the 1930s and 1940s, its functions and duties expanded. Increasingly, as the years went by, most career officers were kept in overseas assignments, and positions in the State Department were filled by Civil Service people. By the time World War Two came along, most of the career service was overseas, and most Department jobs were filled by Civil Service personnel. The war exacerbated the situation, as even more duties fell on the Foreign Service – for example, evacuating Americans from war zones and liaison with the Red Cross.

Q: Did the Foreign Service expand during World War Two?

HARTER: No, it continued to shrink, because there were many retirements and death during the war, and by 1945, the Foreign Service was even smaller than it had been in 1939. Job openings at the State Department were filled with Civil Service personnel who had little understanding of the world outside the United States.

Q: Did the situation improve after the war?

HARTER: No, it got worse! Numerous commissions, expert groups, and reports in the late 1940s concluded the personnel situation at the State Department was not good, because Foreign Service personnel were mostly overseas, and most positions in the Department were filled by Civil Service personnel who had not lived or worked overseas. The Hoover Commission was perhaps the most prominent group urgently recommending that the Foreign Service and Civil Service in the Department be amalgamated, but it all fell on deaf ears. Nothing happened.

Q: Do you think the separation between the Foreign Service operating outside the United States and the Civil Service in Washington affected foreign policy during the post-World War Two period?

HARTER: Absolutely. My own view is that the early origins of the Cold War resulted in part from flawed analyses by individuals in the State Department and other agencies who had little understanding of the world outside the United States. Overall, Civil Service people were more bureaucratic and reactive – not boldly imaginative – and they lacked a good understanding of conditions and trends in other countries. In fact, I believe that immediately after World War II, the most important foreign affairs issues facing the United States involved the liquidation of the British, French, Dutch, and Belgian empires and the development of new global institutions. The old colonial world was clearly obsolete, and there was great restiveness against foreign occupation in Africa and Asia. I think if policy positions in the State Department had been held by more people with a broader global perspective, the United States would have reacted differently.

Q: In short, you believe decolonization posed more important challenges than the advance of communism?

HARTER: Yes. This is not the time and place to go into detail about the Cold War, but my Foreign Service experience – in South Africa, Chile, Thailand, Geneva, and the UN – persuaded me that Washington perspectives exaggerated the so-called communist threat. For example, in South Africa communism was outlawed, but there were clandestine groups calling themselves communist, who were not ideologues dedicated to Soviet expansion; they were principally more concerned with abolishing apartheid and reducing income inequality. The most prominent among them, Gus Spaeth, became Minister of Housing when Mandela became president of South Africa.

Q: If the personnel situation was so dysfunctional, why was nothing done about it?

HARTER: There was resistance on both sides. Civil Service personnel who worked in the Department did not want to go overseas, and many of the de facto expatriate Foreign Service Officers, like Gordon Minnigerode, did not want to work in Washington.

Q: I believe some Foreign Service Officers in Germany missed the rise of fascism, because they had German wives and were sending their children to German schools. They sometimes represented Germany to the United States, rather than vice versa

HARTER: Localitis did affect some FSOs. It's natural to adopt attitudes of people around you. Some of this is inevitable, and that's why it's not good to allow Foreign Service Officers to remain in any one country for too many years.

Q: You see this as background to Wristonization?

HARTER: Absolutely. John Foster Dulles was aware that there were problems, although, of course, he was never really interested in management issues; he was mainly interested in preaching the gospel of capitalism. Nevertheless, as soon as he became Secretary of State, he froze all Foreign Service assignments and set up the Wriston Commission to study the Department's personnel operations. He appointed Henry M. Wriston, who had been president of Brown University, to head it. The Wriston Commission recommended in more shrill terms than ever before that the status quo should not continue. The Department's Civil Service personnel should immediately be integrated into the Foreign Service, and this should be done quickly. It should not be phased. The Commission's recommendations were essentially implemented over the next few years.

Q: Just what did Wristonization actually involve?

HARTER: Well, the Foreign Service tripled in size overnight. All Foreign Service Officers were obligated to take jobs in Washington, and all Civil Service officers immediately became Foreign Service Officers who could expect to be assigned overseas. That created a lot of turmoil! A Civil Service officer in Washington who backstopped the issuance of visas could be integrated as an FSO-2 and suddenly assigned to head the visa office at a major foreign post, even if that individual was not psychologically equipped to go overseas suddenly and was insufficiently experienced in overseas operations.

Q: Were there any success stories in Wristonization?

HARTER: Oh, yes. Some former Civil Service officers became very distinguished career ambassadors and were quite effective. But such successes were hugely outnumbered by Wristonees who deeply resented their changed status.

Q: How was Loy Henderson involved and what was his attitude toward the entire effort?

HARTER: Well, Loy Henderson was the most conspicuous Foreign Service Officer who opposed Wristonization when the Wriston report came out. He thought it would ruin the Foreign Service, because he thought most Civil Service officers were not qualified to do

Foreign Service work. But, in my view, one of the most intelligent things Dulles did was to ask Henderson to implement Wristonization. I was on the board of the American Foreign Service Association while all this chaos was going on, and that is why I became aware of these developments. Wristonization was the pervasive issue that dominated the board's attention at that time. Although I was a very junior officer, I recommended to the board that we, as the full board, should meet with Henderson to discuss Wristonization. The board agreed and we did. In recent years, the AFSA president or vice-president has dealt with the Department's top management, ostensibly on behalf of the entire Foreign Service, but our idea at that time was that the board as a whole should be involved. From that experience, I developed tremendous respect and admiration for Henderson. I got to know him fairly well in later years.

Q: How did you become a member of the board?

HARTER: Well, there had been many complaints that the AFSA board over-represented senior Foreign Service members. In those days the board was chosen by an electoral college. AFSA members based in Washington received ballots that listed officers in Washington. It was a long list, from which AFSA members would check off 18 individuals they thought should comprise the electoral college. Inevitably, the result was an electoral college comprised of senior officers whose names were well known, and they were characteristically career ambassadors and assistant secretaries. That's why the AFSA board was top-heavy with senior officers. But, responding to complaints about that procedure, the electoral college decided in 1959 to name a board that included one officer from each class level. Livingston Merchant, then Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs – the Department's number three position – was the AFSA president, and he attended all of our meetings, usually without commenting on the issues. Bill Blue was the FSO-1 who chaired our meetings. The O-2 was Bill Boswell, director of the Office of Security; the O-3 was Martin Herz, later ambassador to Bulgaria; the O-4 was Joan Clark; and the O-5 was Sam Gammon. I was the O-6, and a fellow named Tom Greene was the O-7 – he retired soon after that. The O-8 was Melissa Foelsch. She later married Al Wells and became Melissa Wells. She was very shy in those days, but she blossomed as she went up the career ladder and ultimately became one of our better female ambassadors. It was a fantastic board!

Q: But how did you get elected to the AFSA board? Did you campaign for it?

HARTER: No, not at all. I was stunned when I unexpectedly received a letter from Bill Blue saying, "Congratulations, you've been elected to the board. Come to our first meeting next Tuesday," which I did. I hardly knew what AFSA was. I joined the organization the day I reported to the State Department, and I received the Foreign Service Journal, but I paid no attention to any of the material or issues until the day I received that letter from Bill Blue. The electoral college had no trouble naming the more senior officers, but when it came down to O-6's and lower, they didn't know that many. By a remarkable coincidence, I happened to know five of the members of the electoral college, and I guess that's why I ended on the board.

I showed the letter to my boss, Walter Kotschnig, director of the Office of International Economic and Social Affairs in the Department's U.N. bureau. Up to that point, he had paid little attention to me; but after I was elected to the board, he said he had been noticing my work and he wanted to give me new duties. I soon became more or less his right-hand man for U.N. technical assistance matters – and he gave me beautiful efficiency reports!

Q: How did AFSA respond to Wristonization?

HARTER: Problems related to Wristonization continued to dominate our agenda throughout our tenure. Before the board agreed to my recommendation that we should meet with Loy Henderson, most of the board members were quite hostile to Wristonization, but after our first session with him, we were persuaded that this was the way the Department should go. We had several sessions with Henderson, and he very eloquently explained that two very different personnel systems – systems with very different rules and regulations for recruitment, promotion, allowances, and retirement – were administered alongside each other, all kinds of crises, tensions, and resentments were bound to develop. That's why he was convinced that the disparate systems had to be amalgamated.

Q: Do you think the board's response mirrored the typical Foreign Service reaction?

HARTER: No. Those who were not privy to Henderson's analysis were mostly resentful that some Civil Service people at supergrade levels were integrated at the FSO-1 level and assigned to be deputy chiefs of mission – positions for which their experience did not adequately prepare them.

Q: How did the selection out principle work during Wristonization?

HARTER: Henderson fudged it a little. I was told that he held special briefings for the selection boards, pointing out that Civil Service personnel had been plunged into a new world they weren't expecting, and they should be given special consideration, especially since their performance records were inherently not comparable to those who had been in the Foreign Service for some years. In fact, Henderson had doubts about the entire promotion system, based on ranking officers from "the best" to "the worse." For those reasons, he refused to allow selection out during his tenure, except for cases involving clear incompetence or malfeasance. This is more or less my recollection of what he told me in later years. Henderson resisted pressures from some younger officers who wanted to get rid of the bald heads and gray heads who had become senior Foreign Service Officers through Wristonization. For that reason, those younger officers were very critical of his policies.

Q: Did AFSA have any interaction with Congress during this period?

HARTER: Henderson's presumption was that the Foreign Service was not inherently popular on Capitol Hill because it tended to be sympathetic to countries outside the

United States and didn't sufficiently represent superpatriots in America. He encouraged each and every Foreign Service Officer, while on home leave from his overseas post, to meet his senator and his congressman. The Department's congressional bureau helped arrange the appointments. Henderson did not expect the officers to report back to the Department; he thought that would inhibit them from saying frankly what they thought. My senator was Alan Cranston of California and my congressman was Pete McCloskey of California's 15th district. McCloskey said, "Come back to see me, whenever it's convenient," and I did.

We were urged to be very frank in our private conversations with members of Congress and to tell them what we thought was right and wrong with U.S. foreign policy. Henderson thought that, on balance, Foreign Service knowledge of those matters was so superior to congressional knowledge of the world outside the United States that this would be advantageous to the United States. I think his approach was sound, especially as contrasted with the approach taken by Tex Harris when he was AFSA president some years later. Once, in a press conference, Harris stressed how annoying it was that congressmen traveling overseas would take the time of busy Foreign Service Officers who really didn't have time for that kind of nonsense. He was quite critical of congressmen out on "junkets." His comments received front-page headlines in the Washington Post, and I've heard members of Congress quoting those comments to illustrate the arrogance of the Foreign Service.

Q: Did Henderson himself convey Foreign Service concerns and interests to Congress? Did he go up to the Hill and brief?

HARTER: Of course he did. He testified at hearings, but, for the most part, he depended on his senior staff to provide details. He wanted everyone in the Foreign Service to interact with Congress to the extent possible. He really believed in a democratized Foreign Service as part of a decentralized democratic society.

Q: Do you think that approach worked?

HARTER: I do. I think the Foreign Service was a lot more popular with Congress in the 1950's and 1960's than we have been since the "Young Turks" took over. Too many lawmakers have contempt for the Foreign Service these days, a feeling that is reciprocated by some Foreign Service Officers toward Congress. Congress, in those days, respected Henderson's judgment, partly because Foreign Service Officers who met with their representatives tended to speak up in favor of his budgets, including the Department's requests for allowances.

Q: You said there was a lot of turbulence in Foreign Service personnel operations through the Eisenhower years, between 1952 and 1960. What did you mean?

HARTER: Well, many officers were unhappy with their jobs, they were unhappy with their supervisors, they thought they were pushed into situations they didn't like – on a

massive scale. There was a sense that the Foreign Service was in a state of transition, and that created a lot of frustration.

Q: The Eisenhower period included a surge in the Cold War – the Hungarian Revolution, the official end of the Korean War, and the debacle in Dien Bien Phu. Do you think all this was in any way related to the turbulence we have been discussing?

HARTER: Yes, I think so, because individuals holding some of the key jobs in the Department were not qualified to hold them, and, as a consequence, top-level policymakers didn't always receive good advice.

Q: Did this improve in the Kennedy administration, with the advent of the New Frontier?

HARTER: No, it did not. Kennedy and his team, of course, heard all of these complaints. Loy Henderson wanted to continue in his position as the Department's number five official, with overall responsibility for personnel, security, buildings, and everything administrative. He lobbied to retain that position – and he encouraged us on the board to do what we could to pass the word along that he should stay on for a transition period. Unfortunately, in my view, the Kennedy administration rejected that option out of hand.

I think it's fair to say Henderson was embittered; he knew the Department needed someone at that point who understood what was going on. He knew there was incredibly ill-informed opposition to Wristonization, and he knew many people thought the Department should be de-Wristonized. "We have to unscramble the eggs," the critics said. And that was the word that percolated through to Kennedy's principal cohorts.

Dean Rusk was, in many respects, an outstanding Secretary of State. He was brilliant and broad gauged, but hawkish, and he had no visible interest in administration and personnel matters. The Kennedy administration named Roger Jones to replace Henderson. Jones had headed the Civil Service Commission and was, in that capacity, in constant battle with Henderson over Wristonization. He was expected to de-Wristonize the Department, but, instead of doing that, he appointed a committee to study what should be done. That was the Herter Committee, chaired by Christian Herter, who had been Secretary of State during the last two years of the Eisenhower administration.

Q: What position did the Herter Committee take?

HARTER: It did not favor drastic action. Its vice chairman was Don K. Price, who was dean of the Littauer Center at Harvard, which is now the Kennedy School. I was one of five Foreign Service Officers assigned to the Littauer Center that year, and we became acquainted with him. We had lunch with him, during which he picked our brains about the Foreign Service. After hearing our views, he asked me to prepare a memorandum on why Wristonization was necessary, which I did – the committee's report quoted from my memorandum without accrediting it. The Herter Committee took a few months to complete its report, which essentially recommended maintaining the status quo.

Q: How did Dean Rusk and the State Department react to the Herter Committee's report and recommendations?

HARTER: It's probably not fair to say Rusk paid no heed, but basically he delegated responsibility for implementing those recommendations to the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. That was Roger Jones, who held the position from February 1961 until June 1962.

Q: And how did he react?

HARTER: From what I heard, he was torn when the Herter Committee report came out. He didn't know what to do. I heard he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. I don't know if that's true, but he apparently wanted out of there. The job was vacant for a few months until they named William H. Orrick to replace him. Orrick was a protégé of Bobby Kennedy – I think he was a senior administrative official at the Department of Justice at the beginning of the Kennedy period.

In any event, he had no qualifications to be Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. He had been a businessman in California, he had no government experience, and he was there only one year. During that year, there was apparently total paralysis and frustration over most management issues. Both Jones and Orrick depended heavily on Bill Crockett, the Assistant Secretary for Administration, who increasingly made most decisions on those issues. After a few months, Crockett was promoted to fill the position. Meanwhile, Wristonization was dying a slow death. It was just continuing chaos, although I think the worst problems had dissipated a bit, and the Department was beginning to accustom itself to Wristonization. Nevertheless, there was still a lot of frustration in the Foreign Service, masquerading as what were called "personality clashes." That was usually not a fair way of describing the situation: usually the problem was that either the supervisor or the supervised officer was assigned to a position he was not competent to fill.

Q: Was all this relevant to the rise of the Young Turks?

HARTER: Absolutely! Many younger officers were deeply disturbed that senior ranks of the Foreign Service were disproportionately filled by older Wristonees they considered incompetent. Lannon Walker, in particular, complained loudly about the situation. His followers considered him charismatic, while his critics considered him egocentric, reckless, and excessively loquacious. He couldn't stop talking – ever, about anything. His principal lieutenants included Bill Harrop, Charlie Bray, Dan Newberry, and Frank Weiss, but Lannon Walker was the honcho who really organized the takeover by the Young Turks. What they did was brilliant. They formed a slate of 18 mid-level officers who vigorously campaigned for election to the electoral college, and they received more votes than the ambassadors and assistant secretaries who had traditionally controlled the electoral college. Once that electoral college was chosen, it chose the new board, which then abolished the electoral college, claiming they replaced it with direct democracy. And they were pledged to get rid of Wristonization, assuming that would create opportunities for fast promotion for bright young officers like themselves. Incidentally, the mentor for

the Young Turks was Graham Martin, who was my ambassador in Bangkok in the mid-1960s.

Q: Did you learn anything about Graham Martin's views on the Foreign Service in Bangkok?

HARTER: Yes. Soon after he arrived in Bangkok, I was duty officer, and I was asked to take the weekend cable traffic to the ambassador's residence.

We ended up having a three-hour discussion about Loy Henderson, Wristonization, and the Foreign Service. We disagreed on everything! He favored intensified selection out; he thought we should recruit large numbers of junior Foreign Service Officers and, after the first couple of years, weed out those deemed less competitive; he thought ruthless selection-out should prevail all the way up and down the chain. Of course, that was a terrible idea! There's no way we could recruit promising Foreign Service Officers if they knew they stood a better than 50:50 chance of being eliminated after the first couple of years; and it's impossible to foresee the long-term performance of junior officers. But he favored harsh discipline and very hierarchical, top-down control: Senior officers would command and subordinate officers would merely follow orders.

He entered the Foreign Service at the top, as a Foreign Service Staff Officer, class one, in Paris, when Douglas Dillon was our ambassador there. Dillon recruited him, and he was Martin's mentor for years. Martin never would have survived the lower levels of the Foreign Service. He was brilliant, opinionated, and arrogant. Of course, the world got to know him when he was ambassador in Vietnam at the end of the war there.

In Bangkok and Saigon, he never attended the ambassador's staff meetings; he sent his DCM to those meetings, because they bored him. He was principally interested in the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) and CIA activities. He was a zealous supporter of the war in Vietnam, even in the early 1960s before the world had any idea of what was going on there.

By the way, when the Young Turks came to power, they put out a small volume – entitled Toward a Modern Diplomacy – with a red, white, and blue cover to describe their vision of the Foreign Service, with an introduction by Graham Martin. A hidden message was that there should be less quarreling between the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA.

Q: Was Crockett still the top administrative officer when the Young Turks came in?

HARTER: No. About the time they came in, Idar Rimestad replaced Bill Crockett in that job. He was the fourth to serve as the Department's senior management officer during the Kennedy-Johnson years, after Jones, Orrick, and Crockett. He was there only two years. Rimestad had been the administrative officer at our embassy in Moscow when Lyndon Johnson visited the Soviet Union, and he apparently impressed Johnson, who chose him for the Department post when he became president. I knew Rimestad later in Geneva

when he was named to replace Roger Tubby as ambassador to the UN agencies based there. I thought he was a pompous ass. He certainly wasn't qualified to hold that ambassadorship! As deputy under secretary for management, he was pretty much a rubber stamp for whatever the Young Turks wanted.

Q: Just how did Rimestad respond to the Young Turks' ideas?

HARTER: Whatever they proposed, he approved. They put a high priority on tightening selection out. Under Rimestad's tenure, any officer who had not been promoted during the preceding two or three years was a good candidate for selection out. They thought that getting rid of Wristonees would create opportunities for the best and brightest officers – like them – to move up the promotion ladder rapidly. And, if you had not been promoted for four or five years, you had to prove you could walk on water to get promoted. Technically, they made a distinction between forced retirement for time-in-class as opposed to selection out for low ranking. To me, that's a distinction without a difference. In either case it's being involuntarily forced to retire. The consequence was that there was very heavy selection out in 1970, 1971, and 1972.

Q: Did the situation improve under the Nixon Administration?

HARTER: No, it didn't! One of the smartest things Nixon did as president was to name Clark Mollenhoff as ombudsman. Mollenhoff had been a Pulitzer-Prize-winning reporter for the Des Moines Register. The dumbest thing Nixon ever did was not to listen to his ombudsman. I became fairly well acquainted with Mollenhoff during that period. He resigned from the ombudsman position in 1972 or 1973 because Nixon paid no heed to him, especially regarding his concerns about State Department personnel matters.

I was among the many officers at the old O-4 level earmarked for selection out in 1971, but I fought it like no one else ever did. I received a letter from Howard Mace, Director of Personnel, on February 8, 1971, saying "We regret to inform you," etc. I immediately replied in a letter suggesting that a serious mistake had been made. Howard Mace was the twin brother of Charlie Mace, and they looked exactly alike; Charlie was the DCM in Geneva under Roger Tubby when I was there in the late 1960s. They were both Wristonees, originally Civil Service officers, and by that time they were both FSO-1's.

Q: William Macomber succeeded Rimestad under Nixon. Did he have an appropriate background?

HARTER: No. He had been an assistant administrator for the Middle East for the Agency for International Development, and, from that job, he was named ambassador to Jordan, where he was declared persona non grata. He had no real administrative background. He was famous for his temper. He would flare up at the slightest provocation. But he tried to be bold and decisive. Of course he had to support Howard Mace, his chief of personnel, at a time when the whole system was geared to force large numbers of officers into premature retirement.

Q: I remember the Macomber Report, which was circulated around the world for comment. I believe there was a very labyrinthine review process, in which I became involved during my first assignment in Paris.

HARTER: Let's talk about how it was produced. Macomber was aware at the outset of his tenure that all kinds of personnel problems existed at the State Department. Macomber could never do anything quietly; he did everything with trumpets blasting. He said, "We will have major reforms." Actually, I had spoken with Senator William Fulbright about these matters in 1965. I told Fulbright we needed a fresh look at the whole range of how the U.S. government formulates and implements foreign policy. I contended that the National Security Act of 1947, by creating the National Security Council, the CIA, and an enlarged Pentagon, irreparably and inherently damaged the State Department. Fulbright asked me to give him a memo about that, which I did. Whether or not it was a coincidence, he later recommended to Nixon that we should have a broad commission to study how we deal with foreign affairs, and Nixon named Robert Murphy, who wrote Diplomat Among Warriors about his experience as a senior diplomat during World War II, to head the commission. The Murphy Commission, after two years or so, produced several volumes that Senator Mike Mansfield described as "thin porridge in a thick bowl." In the end, the Murphy Commission report and recommendations had no real impact.

After Nixon's reelection, as I understood it, Fulbright told Macomber that he saw no reform. Macomber then assured him that the Department would review its operations from top to bottom. Macomber established a series of task forces, each chaired by a senior officer responsible for dealing with relevant issues. The resulting report concluded with dozens of recommendations, but they were mostly trivial and peripheral to the big picture.

Q: Macomber maintained that he introduced a large number of reforms. Was that true?

HARTER: Well, nobody today remembers what they were. Whatever they were, they were mostly trivial. I think there were minor changes in home leave and allowances which were, of course, important, but they didn't begin to deal with the Department's huge personnel problems!

Q: How did selection out operate during the tenures of Rimestad and Macomber?

HARTER: Ruthlessly, in a word. Howard Mace was basically passive in implementing it. I think he never dreamed he would have such responsibilities. After he left that job, he was named ambassador to Senegal, but he never got through the congressional hearings. I think he blamed me for raising a stir about his proposed ambassadorship.

Q: Did you, in fact, do that?

HARTER: I wouldn't put it that way, but I did testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at just about the time of Mace's confirmation hearing, on the need for

improved grievance procedures in the Department. The Washington Post confused the two sets of hearings in an article suggesting that Mace was sabotaging the existing grievance requirements, and that was a factor in his failure to be confirmed.

Q: I have heard that 1971 was a critical year for the Foreign Service. Would you agree?

HARTER: It was the year of peak selection out, and it was the year that Charles Thomas, one of the victims of selection out, committed suicide. When I received my selection out letter on February 8 of that year, I immediately filed a grievance, pursuant to the existing regulations, but it was not until December that a hearing took place on the grievance. The grievance committee report on the hearing confirmed that my complaint was legitimate, and it recommended unequivocally that I should immediately be promoted and given a senior officer assignment. In the end, my name was added to the annual promotion list for 1972 that had already been prepared.

Q: What was AFSA's reaction to your grievance?

HARTER: Well, Tex Harris at that point was not on the board, but he was administrative assistant to Bill Harrop, the president of AFSA.

AFSA had a grievance committee headed by an officer named Norman Barth. The committee strongly supported me. But Bill Harrop, who had replaced Lannon Walker as AFSA president, wanted an independent evaluation of what this was all about, and he asked Tex Harris to talk with me about it. Tex at that time worked for Ed Lyerly, who was Assistant Legal Advisor for Management and a ferocious champion of selection out. Before that, I had a long talk with Lyerly, and he made his view clear that the Department should never authorize a hearing on my grievance. "If these cases ever get into the court system," he said, "the floodgates will be open." I later learned that Lyerly was the principal opponent of a hearing on my grievance; Howard Mace was just a figurehead. Anyway, I spoke with Tex for about an hour in the summer of 1971, but I don't think he heard a word I said.

Incidentally, years later, when Tex was AFSA president, and I was AFSA's conference affairs officer, I found it impossible to talk with him. I don't think he hears very well; he always talks in monologues, just as Lannon Walker did. In any case, Tex clearly gave Bill Harrop a very negative picture of my grievance, despite the very positive position taken by the AFSA grievance committee chaired by Norm Barth. Norm actually attended my hearing and, after that, he sent a detailed written report on it to Harrop. It accurately reflected the positive thrust of the hearing.

Although the grievance committee report that came out in December 1971 enthusiastically exonerated me, Tex strongly opposed my promotion. He wrote an editorial for the Foreign Service Journal that came out in the summer of 1972 entitled "Hard Cases Make Bad Law." It didn't mention me by name, but it insisted that it was intolerable for any name to be added to the promotion list that had not been placed there by the selection boards.

My lawyers, Murray Belman and Dick Frank, spent more time pressing the Department and its legal advisor, John Stevenson, to implement the recommendations of the grievance committee than they did in preparing for the hearing. I still have documents chronicling what happened during the ten months preceding the hearing, during which I waged a ceaseless campaign to force the Department to authorize the hearing required by the Department's Foreign Affairs Manual. My supporters included my congressman, Pete McCloskey, and Senator Alan Cranston, as well as any number of people in the Department.

Q: How did all this affect AFSA in the 1970's?

HARTER: Well, in 1971, in the middle of all this, I decided to run as an independent candidate for the AFSA board, because I was infuriated at the board's position on personnel issues, not only because of its failure to support my request for a hearing, but more broadly because I considered that symptomatic of the board's failure to represent the interests of AFSA members. I thought the board was totally corrupting the standards of the AFSA board on which I had served a few years earlier.

The board authorized just one campaign meeting, in the Dean Acheson auditorium, at which all the candidates could present their positions. As an independent candidate, I had precisely one minute to say why I was running. Each candidate also had a fraction of one page in the Foreign Service Journal to explain his platform. Nevertheless, I think the board was surprised at how many votes I received. Having been in South Africa, Chile, Thailand, Geneva, and Harvard – and having attracted some attention because of my grievance – I knew more AFSA members than most mid-career officers, and that's why I received a significant number of votes.

Q: Did that embolden you to run again?

HARTER: Yes, it did. In 1973, I approached John Hemenway and suggested that we should both run as independents, he for president of the board and I for vice-president. Based on my 1971 experience, I told him, we didn't stand a chance of winning, but we could accumulate evidence that the board would not permit a fair election, and we could consider our options after the election. He agreed to my plan, and he ran a very effective campaign. We both received a respectable number of votes. We lost, but we had evidence that opposition candidates faced insuperable obstacles, and we used that evidence to support a claim after the election that the 1973 AFSA election was corrupt.

Q: Had you known Hemenway before that?

HARTER: I had heard of him while I was striving for a hearing in 1971. Norm Barth and others told me of his experience in invoking the Department's previously unused grievance procedures in 1970, which I cited as a precedent for my own. Hemenway was my age, and we both entered the Foreign Service in late 1954. He had a meteoric career at the beginning. He learned fluent German and Russian in his early assignments, and he

had been a Rhodes Scholar and an Annapolis graduate before that. He was an impressive individual. However, his hearing did not go so well.

Q: How did the Labor Department respond to your complaint?

HARTER: They spent more than a year investigating our claim, mainly by interviewing dozens of participants in the election. AFSA members had no way of knowing about all that, either then or later. We tried to get the Foreign Service Journal to report something about it, but the editors refused. Nobody ever knew anything about it except Hemenway and I and a few friends.

However, the Labor Department quietly decided to supervise the 1975 election. Hemenway again ran for president, and I ran again for vice president. He narrowly won, and I narrowly lost. It was a three-way election: The establishment candidate for president was Rick Williamson, who had succeeded Tex Harris as executive secretary to the AFSA president. He was a talented guy and most people who followed the campaign expected him to win. Soon after his defeat he resigned from the Foreign Service. A retired ambassador also ran for president. The bottom line was that Hemenway came in with a board comprised of protégés of the Young Turks who strongly opposed him and any suggestion that the Foreign Service needed any kind of reform. From the very first meeting, Hemenway faced a hostile board. He struggled to get order, but the board wouldn't support him on anything.

Q: Did Hemenway have any success as AFSA president?

HARTER: None! And he grew more frustrated by the day – and more bitter. Everything was stalemated. The other board members eventually organized what they called an impeachment proceeding. It really boiled down to one big meeting in the Dean Acheson auditorium. I had planned to give a statement at the meeting, commenting on the impropriety of the proceeding. I wrote it out, and my wife read it at the meeting. I was later told that my wife's reading of that statement was the only calm period during the entire proceeding. Hemenway subsequently complained, correctly, that he was illegally forced out. I think he tried to take AFSA to court on the issue, but without success.

Q: What happened to Hemenway after that?

HARTER: He went to law school at Howard and received a law degree. He was quite sharp and a very good speaker. But I don't think he prospered as a lawyer. He was an independent attorney, and I don't think he ever attracted many clients. I occasionally had lunch with him over the years, and I always found his company stimulating. I have recently thought that irregularities regarding the 2009 AFSA election might result in renewed interest in the 1970s issues we have been discussing.

Q: Do you believe this AFSA history has affected the ability of the State Department to do its job?

HARTER: Oh, absolutely! FSO promotions, assignments, and retirements are neither efficient nor equitable. They bear too little relationship to abilities and achievements. Drastic personnel reform would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the State Department. This should include major improvements in the grievance procedures that Tex Harris helped to write in the early 1970s. Under those procedures, an officer claiming a serious grievance is often ground to sausage before he ever gets a hearing. He is required to spell out his grievance in detail before the hearing, and those investigating it tend to intimidate his superiors and others into denying or weakening his claim. AFSA supports a few grievants, but the rest are left twisting in the wind. That's not right: AFSA should defend the absolute right of anyone claiming a grievance to have a hearing. And I don't think it's a good idea for AFSA lawyers to represent grievants. For one thing, they're not really top-flight lawyers. And it's incredible, by the way, that Tex Harris has continued to be a dominant force in AFSA ever since the 1970s. In any event, the personnel situation at the State Department has remained unsatisfactory over the decades.

Q: Do you have any overall comments before we conclude?

HARTER: Yes. I think some people in the military and intelligence communities – and their supporters in Congress and elsewhere – don't really want a strong State Department. They don't want Foreign Service Officers who will fight for their opinions.

What we have is a Department of State that fronts for the national security establishment, mainly providing good public relations and a shell of administrative support. But if we're ever going to have a rational foreign policy – one that would put much greater emphasis on international economic issues such as financial flows, trade policy, economic development and climate change, for example – we need to revamp our entire foreign affairs community. In my view, that would start with Congressional hearings on the need to rewrite the National Security Act of 1947.

End of interview