Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR DAVID L. HOBBS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Hobbs.]

Q: Today is March 4, 1997. This is an interview with David L. Hobbs which is being done on the behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. David and I are old friends and colleagues.

David, could you tell me a bit about when, where you were born and something about your family?

HOBBS: I was born in Des Moines, Iowa, but actually grew up in California.

Q: *When were you born?*

HOBBS: 1940. The eldest of six children. My father was in a number of different businesses that tended to go belly up after a few years. We moved to California in the 1950s.

Q: *Where did you go in California?*

HOBBS: San Diego county, just east of San Diego, El Cajon. I grew up there and went to the University of California at Berkeley after I finished my first tour in the army in Germany.

Q: *You are moving too fast. You went to high school in El Cajon?*

HOBBS: Grossmont High School right next to El Cajon.

Q: *And went into the military right after high school?*

HOBBS: Actually I went to San Diego State University, or State College as they called it then, for a couple of years and then went into the military.

Q: *What were you taking at San Diego State?*

HOBBS: I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I thought I might want to take business administration courses. I took some. I took some accounting and some marketing and management courses. But I really didn't know what I wanted to do and decided to take a couple of years off to think about it more.

Q: *So, you joined the military when?*

HOBBS: In 1960.

Q: *You were in for how long?*

HOBBS: Three years.

Q: *What branch of the service and what were you doing?*

HOBBS: I was in the army. In those days the army was advertising that if you joined the army and volunteered for one of the combat arms you would then be guaranteed to go to either Europe or Asia, which ever you wanted. I decided I would go to Europe and got assigned to Germany and spent all the time in the 24th Infantry Division. But, being a clever person I volunteered quickly for an office job and didn't have to go out and do any soldiering. I enjoyed that quite a lot. In fact, just before I left San Diego I was dating this girl who was a member of the Pan American Union and I sometimes used to go to Pan American Union events. That is a group of diplomats, consular officers, from the various countries of the Western Hemisphere.

That got me thinking about how interesting it would be working in a job that let's me travel around the world and live in other cultures. So, I thought about that during my time in the army as something I would like to do when I got back and finished university.

Q: *Did you get the GI Bill?*

HOBBS: The Cold War GI Bill passed and became effective the month prior to my graduation from the university, so I got one month payment--$220, something like that.

Q: *You went to Berkeley?*

HOBBS: When I got out of the army I went back to Berkeley and did my last two years there. I got there in time for the free speech movement. It was quite an exciting two years. A lot of noise and not a lot of studying going on.

Q: *What sort of courses were you taking?*

HOBBS: By then I had gotten the idea that I wanted to go into the State Department so I took political science, East Asian area studies, thinking I wanted to specialize in East Asia. I took courses in Chinese, Japanese, Korean history, economic and politics.

Q: *Did you have any contact with people in the Foreign Service?*

HOBBS: Yes, I did. There was a man who was in one of my Chinese history classes, Robert Wringdon, who was well known because he did "The Life and Love In the Foreign Service" cartoon. He had done the cartoons for years. He had retired from the State Department and was pursuing a Ph.D. in Chinese Area Studies at Berkeley. I kind of kept track of him later and he finally moved to the University of Colorado and did get his Ph.D., but died shortly after that. He was one of my classmates and used to talk to me about the Foreign Service.

Then there were career days that they had each year and I would go by the State Department booth which usually had a State Department officer or two, who were getting university studies paid for my the State Department, run the booth and would talk to people. I met a couple of people there. One was Ed Cohen, who was an economic officer and another one was Felix Bloch, who later became well known.

Q: *He was a presumed Soviet spy, but that was never proven.*

HOBBS: Well, that is what they were investigating him for, but was never established. He invited me to his home with his wife and two daughters one night, along with another woman who was looking at the State Department. We had a nice evening.

I took the Foreign Service exam when I was a Junior, for practice, so I could figure it out better next year. I passed it and got offered a job even before I could take it because I hadn't graduated yet. So, I told them if they put it on ice for a year I would be happy to come in. The year passed quickly; I finished my degree and a month afterwards I went into the Foreign Service.

Q: So you went into the Foreign Service in 1966. Do you remember anything about the oral examination? What sort of questions were you asked, etc.?

HOBBS: Well, I do a little bit because I had a little bit of luck. I knew it was broad based and if you had read widely in the periodicals, newspapers and magazines, you probably would do pretty well in it. That was something that I had always done. I remember one of my earliest pictures in my family photo album was myself sitting on the floor at home

trying to read the newspaper. This was before I went to school.

I continued to read as much as possible. I remember feeling weak in art. I didn't really know much about art and went to the library looking up articles about art. I remember one in particular about Jackson Pollock exhibition in New York. I tucked all of this information into my head. When I got to the examination, one of the people on the three person panel, started to describe some kind of painting for me and wanted to know afterwards if I could tell him who painted it. I didn't have a clue and the only name I could think of was Jackson Pollock so I blurted out his name. He said, "Oh, that is very good young man, you seem to know art, let's move on to something else." So, I escaped having to answer any other art questions.

Another man, who was in cultural affairs, asked me who designed Mt. Rushmore. Because I had lived in South Dakota he thought this was something I should know. Fortunately I did.

They asked a lot of questions about economics, currency problems, etc. to see if I had some idea of economic and political events of the times and some smattering and information about arts and sciences. Obviously I must have fooled them, I got in.

Q: You started in 1966. Could you describe your basic officer course?

HOBBS: It was a large group. USIS was part of our A100 basic course at that time. There were around 60 of us. There were five women. One black woman, and four other women. I remember two very interesting things that you never would have thought would have happened at this time in history. One woman during the last week of the orientation program announced that she was going to get married. Of course, at that time married women did not serve as Foreign Service officers, so she had to resign. I remember she got castigated by someone in personnel for having wasted the government's money because she couldn't have possibly not known prior to her orientation that she had some idea about getting married. That seemed to me, at the time, to be somewhat heavy handed.

I was at a reception one night given by one of the other women in the group, who was one of us who was going to Europe. We were in European area studies by that time. We were in this woman's apartment in Rosslyn and I was standing talking to a senior Foreign Service officer who was invited and had spent a lot of time in Europe. This woman came up to see how we were doing and he lit into her telling her that she should consider getting out of the State Department because it was no job for a woman. Her face sort of dropped and she looked very, very crushed. I thought what a rude thing to do to a woman in her own apartment at her own party.

These are examples of how women were treated in those days and nobody thought too much about it. I think some of us younger people, having been through the civil rights movement and universities like Berkeley, were somewhat more conscious of inequities and injustices that were perpetrated in this world. But, I think to people of a little older generation this just never occurred to them. I'm sure the person didn't think he was doing

anything harmful to her, he was just trying to help her out. Giving good advice.

Q: *When you came out, what was your first assignment?*

HOBBS: My first assignment was to Hamburg, the consulate there, which was a very interesting place to be at that time.

Q: You were in Hamburg for how long?

HOBBS: I arrived in Hamburg in February 1967 and left in July, 1969.

Q: What was Germany like in that period of time from your respective?

HOBBS: Hamburg was a very developed, highly sophisticated city with very little evidence of any of the war damage that you still saw southern Germany. It was always raining, dreary and cold, although I recall every summer there were a couple of weeks when the sun shone everyday and you would see many Germans out walking in their shorts, sandals and red sox. This shows that the way people behave is affected a little bit by the weather. The northern Germans, who have such heavy gloomy weather much of the time, are not therefore prone to go frolic about in the meadows wearing shorts and sandals.

It was a very difficult city to crack in a way because Hamburg society is pretty set. The Germans in the north didn't have Americans there, they had the British, so we didn't have some of those ties. Although I found it was fairly easy after an initial effort to make some good contacts and good friends. I enjoyed it very much.

It was the time of the Vietnam war and I remember there were a lot of demonstrations against the United States. The consulate was only two blocks from the university and Amerika Haus, our USIS cultural center, was at the edge of the university. The Amerika Haus was regularly splattered with paint and had windows broken. In the end they just gave up and put split boards on the windows. The consulate got hit several times with paint and stones thrown through the windows.

The consul general, principal officer, at the time was Coburn Kidd. This was his last assignment before he retired and he was a very old school person. He handled the English language beautifully and told fantastic stories and was very effective in most of his career in Germany. He was very helpful to the three or four junior officers there, spending a lot of time coaxing us along and trying to make us diplomats. It was a great experience for me to work with somebody like that.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

HOBBS: In those days they still had central complement. The idea was that you were supposed to rotate among the four different types of work that the State Department is responsible for. However, I spent most of my time there in consular work, doing visas

first and then a little political work, but only for four or five months. I had a brief period in the economic office and then back to the consular section to work on the passport/citizenship side. I had never done this type of work before so some of the interesting cases that came up I have never forgotten.

Q: To get just a feel of the time, talk about some of the interesting cases.

HOBBS: There was a countess who worked as my foreign service national along with another lady who had worked together for 20 or 30 years and never had gotten beyond the formal addressing. One day she came running to my office and said, "Oh, Mr. Hobbs, you have got to come out and talk to this man out here who is getting a passport." I said, "What is the problem?" "No, problem, he is just interesting." I went out to talk to him. He was a man who was 98 years old and applying for his new passport and had a choice between a five and a ten year one. He wanted a ten year passport. I asked him what plans he had for the next ten years, and he said that he was beginning to do a technical dictionary, in some field he was expert in, and that it would take him about ten years to complete it. Therefore he needed a ten year passport so he could travel about. It never occurred to him that he might not be around in ten years. I was just amazed at him– tall, vigorous, alert, 98 years old and wanting a ten year passport, never doubting that he wouldn't be around to use it.

This was in contrast with another man, 50 something, who just two or three weeks before had come in dragging himself up to the counter and said that he was there for his last passport. It is interesting how people can be different.

There was a very interesting case of a person whose passport said he was a man but he claimed to be a woman. It took me a little time to figure out which passport to give him. You do meet some interesting people in the consular section.

There was a priest who came onboard a ship and had fallen just as the ship had come into the harbor. He was an American man who was born in Germany and was returning for the first time after many, many years. He got kind of excited, I guess, when the ship came into port and in running from one side to the other he fell down and broke his hip. He was taken to the hospital and I saw him several times and he seemed to be doing very well. However, he died on the operating table while they were trying to do something to his hip. You had cases like that.

I remember a very strange case. A man came to me one day and said that he needed to get a passport. He spoke broken English with a lot of German syntax. I asked for evidence that he was an American citizen, but he had nothing. However, he said he had a story to tell me. He said he had been in the US military and sometime in the early '50s he had gone AWOL and went across the East German border and had been living in East Germany for a long time. It sounded like a fascinating story but I didn't know if I believed him or not. After talking to him a lot I just couldn't believe he had forgotten so much of his English. He said that he never used it, etc. I decided that if he had been in the military and gone AWOL, there would probably be some finger prints on him

somewhere. So, I got him to give me his fingerprints and sent them off to the army. Sure enough he was exactly who he said he was and had done exactly what he said he had done. They weren't interested in him anymore because the statute of limitations had run out on going AWOL. Therefore, I issued him a passport and sent him off to the United States.

A few months later I was in Berlin on a personal visit to see some friends assigned to the mission there, and I was at a dinner party. One of the officers was telling me about someone having thrown a rock over the Berlin Wall with a note attached to it saying he was a former military man who had gone across the border years ago and he wanted to come back. They had been curious about that but couldn't make anything of it and finally dismissed it. I suspect it was the same person.

Q: Did you have any seamen or shipping problems?

HOBBS: Yes. There was one that was particularly interesting. There had been a storm at sea that had damaged a lot of cargo onboard a ship and there was some kind of insurance question and a court case going on in the States. I had to take a deposition from the captain of the ship which went on for two days with so many questions. I had to hire an interpreter and transcriber and sit there and ask these questions. It was the longest and most cumbersome deposition I have ever done and it was the first one I ever did.

Another thing I want to say about Hamburg, because of Vietnam we were being drafted to make speeches about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Bill Swing worked in the visa section when I was in the passport section and we went out quite often, most months two or three times, to make speeches to groups on U.S. Vietnam policy. Of course those who opposed the Vietnam war asked us to speak, those who were already on our side never invited us. So, we usually got verbally beat up quite a lot with many hostile questions. The only subjects I had a fairly easy time doing were those on civil rights and racial relations in the United States, the civil rights movement got a lot of attention in Europe, and the U.S. electoral process. Otherwise, I got pretty well chopped up every night. But, it was good training, according to my principal officer.

Q: Where were the German students coming from? Was this anti-Americanism or support for North Vietnam?

HOBBS: I think it was primarily the German students who were on the left of the political spectrum, who were inclined to be critical of us. You would meet other Germans, sometimes young Germans, too, who were more conservative and would be quite supportive of us. But, because we were fighting in Vietnam to prevent a communist takeover of the South you found the leftists in Europe were opposed to our efforts to do that. The university had a number of leftist organizations attached to it. The consulate was close by and a great target. This was not unusual. In the United States at the same time there was an uproar and the Europeans were sort of mimicking what was going on in the United States.

Q: Of course, in the United States it was more of a "I don't want to be drafted" attitude. The uproar seemed to dry up once the draft ended.

HOBBS: Yes. I knew an American businessman in Hamburg, who I used to see quite often at various events, who was a very strong, vocal supporter of the war effort in Vietnam, until one day his son got drafted and he became a pacifist over night. He completely changed literally from one day to the next.

Q: When you left Hamburg in 1969, where did you go?

HOBBS: I went back to Washington to do some training for almost a year. I got back on the *SS United States* on its third to last voyage, which was a great opportunity. I knew it was going to happen because I knew the head of the United States Line in Hamburg and he had told me the line was going to stop passenger service very soon. So, I got myself a reservation on that ship. This was the one time that I transferred by ship.

I went back to Washington and was assigned as the labor attaché to San Paolo, Brazil. To do that I had to go through a labor training course of ten months and then Portuguese language training, another four months.

Q: Tell me about the labor training? Was this a program that seemed to be very much a creature of the American unions? What were you getting?

HOBBS: I think the American labor movement did have a lot to say about that course, about its length and its content. I don't think they managed it in any direct way, but the labor movement in the United States was very anxious to have labor attachés abroad and paid a lot of attention to it and was very supportive of the officers. We spent about half of the ten months running around to labor organizations in the Washington area. We spent some time at the CIO and the UAW. I met Victor Reuther, who was in the UAW at the time. I went to New York and met some of the famous garment workers. Then we went to Harvard Business School which had a trade union program. It was an interesting program because you get to live on the campus of the Harvard Business School and attend classes there and at the Kennedy School of Government and at the Business Executive Training program that Harvard also ran.

There was a mock labor negotiation in which all of the labor leaders, who were in the labor program, took the role of business leaders and all the business people took the role of union leaders, which made for fascinating negotiations. Both sides played the other role very well. Initially there was a bit of tension when they first got together, a bit of suspicion, but that broke down within a day. It was a very interesting program.

Q: Did you get caught up in Vietnam problems while you were at Harvard?

HOBBS: No. Up at Harvard we were over in the Business School and the students were busy doing business and didn't worry too much about Vietnam.

Q: Did you feel at that time that you were getting somewhat removed from the mainline of the Foreign Service, being in this somewhat specialized course?

HOBBS: I never worried too much about it because I never intended to spend my career as a labor officer. I only wanted to do it as an experience. But, I did come to the conclusion, after having done this, that if you did spend your career as a labor officer you could find yourself too specialized and not broad enough and therefore it could be damaging to your career. It, of course, depends on what you want. If you really enjoy it, why not do it? But I don't see it as a key to high rank in the Foreign Service. Some people make good high rank in that job, but it is not the preferred path. However, I enjoyed the tour. It was fun.

Q: You went to Sao Paulo in 1970 and were there until when?

HOBBS: I was there from 1970 to 1972, two years.

Q: What was the consulate general like at that point?

HOBBS: Sao Paulo at the time produced about a third of the gross domestic product of Brazil, so it was really the most dynamic part of the country. The consulate had a very important role in covering the economic issues. There wasn't much in the way of politics because it was still under the control of the generals who had taken power in 1964. I was doing economic issues sort of from the working class view. I also had the responsibility of covering anything that had to do with Mato Grosso.

Q: Mato Grosso being...?

HOBBS: The big, sparsely populated interior state of Brazil, which is part of the Sao Paulo consular district to the west. I made some trips out there and that was fun.

I used to have contact with the metal workers union which was considered a very leftist union, and bankers didn't like that. I had some good contacts with the people who did labor statistics. After having been there for about a year I did an airgram which discussed how the revolution and the economic policies of the revolution--it really wasn't a revolution, it was a military coup that took over--and how it affected the working class of the southern part of the country. It was a long airgram and took me about a month and a half to research it. I found it interesting because a few years later when the military finally turned over power to the civilians again there were some articles in the *New York Times* about how the working class made it through those years. They had put a rather tight lid on labor and wages in order to generate more economic growth. Many of the things I had said in that airgram was in this article. In fact, some of them were almost word for word and it made you wonder where they got some of this information. It was kind of fun to have been involved in that and to have identified some of those issues earlier on.

Q: You had this military government and labor unions, unless they are manufactured

company unions, are usually anathema to a military government. How did you find the situation?

HOBBS: That is exactly right. The unions had no power. They couldn't do any actual wage negotiations, could never strike or do anything that unions do. So, they were shunted off into doing things like social programs. They would run vacation resorts where the workers could go and spend some time on the beach with their families. They would run health programs, education programs, etc. There were always social issues that the unions could spend their energy on but could not get involved with salary and conditions of work because that was all decided by the government. They were literally frustrated. Some of the unions that were more radical, like the metal workers and automobile workers, were constantly under the supervision of the military and occasionally arrested.

Q: Did you find that being the labor officer you were getting any instructions from Washington to do what one could to encourage the labor unions to get more power? Or were we being rather careful?

HOBBS: There was an AIFLD representative...

Q: AIFLD being...?

HOBBS: American Institute for Free Labor Development, an AFL-CIO funded organization which works in many countries in Latin America. There are other counterparts in Africa and other places. There was a representative there who was trying to build unions and make them into more powerful institutions that dealt more with more traditional activities. It was impossible to do this during the time of the military rule, but the idea was to lay the groundwork so that when they could, they would be ready to do those things.

So, since there wasn't much of a labor movement playing much of a role, I had a great job because I could do what I wanted. I did pollution control stuff. I remember I wrote some things on Brazil's major manufacturing center in Sao Paulo pumping a lot of garbage into the air and doing a lot of damage to the rivers. I did some studies of human rights, building of highways and generally kept myself pretty busy, but not much labor.

Q: Did the embassy give much direction?

HOBBS: In Brazil there were three labor officers. The attaché who was in Rio De Janeiro, not in Brasilia, because there really wasn't any labor movement in Brasilia. There was a labor officer in Brasilia, who worked for the labor attaché because the labor attaché was assigned to Brasilia but stationed in Rio. I didn't work for the labor attaché in Rio, I worked for the consul general. However, we met, talked, cooperated and had a good relationship. I didn't really get much attention on labor issues.

Q: Who was the consul general then?

HOBBS: When I first arrived it was Robert Corrigan and then Fred Chapin. Both of them were interesting to work with.

Q: How would you describe the view of the Brazilian towards America? Much interest?

HOBBS: Very positive I think. There was a lot of travel to the States. A lot of Brazilians who went abroad went to the States rather than to Europe. They knew a lot about us and I think we were very popular. It was not a hostile place to work. Americans liked Brazil and I think Brazilians realized we liked being there. I think it was a very good time for Americans then.

Q: Were their any security problems while you were there?

HOBBS: Some. The ambassador, who had not left Rio yet, had been kidnapped a few years before I arrived, Burke Elbrick. There was still the aftermath of that. Then there was the consul in Porto Alegre, Cutter was his name, who they apparently tried to kidnap and he ran over one of the kidnappers. I went down to Porto Alegre once to be acting principal officer when the principal officer wanted to go on vacation, because it was down to a one officer post by that time. I found out that the consul there spent all of his time under the heavy blanket of security with armed guards with him all the time. Whenever we traveled outside the city of Sao Paulo we had to notify the police wherever we went so that they would be aware of our comings and goings, sort of keep an eye on us. I traveled around with Fred Chapin making a number of trips into the interior to try to reach out and touch everyone. We had security everywhere we went then.

But, it wasn't as bad as I experienced later in Colombia. Only when you have security on you all the time, like I did in Porto Alegre, do you feel that you are in danger. When you don't have it, you don't feel in danger even though you may be in more danger.

Q: Were you married by this time?

HOBBS: Yes. My son was born in Germany and my daughter in Brazil. Neither one has been back to the country they were born in.

Q: You left in 1972. Where did you go?

HOBBS: I hadn't submitted any requests of where I wanted to go next, but I got a call from the personnel office in Washington asking me if I would mind if they put me in for London. I said I wouldn't mind. They said that the problem was that I would have to go on home leave for two months in order to line up with the assignment. I said that was okay too. Then I got a call before I left Brazil and they asked if I could take three months home leave so I could go to London. I said that was okay. I got on home leave and got another call and asking if I could stay one more month, arriving in London in April. I said okay. I was beginning to feel I would never get to London, but I did.

Q: Out of curiosity, what happens when they keep extending home leave? Does this count against anything?

HOBBS: Yes, I had a deficit for a while but I never took much home leave after that. That was the one time I ever had any home leave to speak of.

Q: Where did you go?

HOBBS: I went to California where my parents and family were living. I went to Japan to visit my wife's family for a little while and then back to California where I waited it out enjoying hanging around the beach and visiting people. It was fun but really too long. You get tired of being a guest of somebody. If I ever had to do it again I would rent a house or apartment somewhere and tell people where I was and hope they would come and see me.

Q: You were in London from...?

HOBBS: From 1973-76.

Q: What were you doing?

HOBBS: Actually I was assigned there to be one of the visa interviewing officers in the consular section. That was before they waved the visa requirement for the British and in those days issued and processed the most visas of any place in the world, I think. I only worked two weeks on the visa line, having sweet-talked my way into a job supervising the office which handed all the ineligible cases, the visa coordination unit. It coordinated the waivers for those who were ineligible for visas because of their criminal background or their political affiliations or medical reasons, etc. It turned out to be a fascinating job because there was a large number people who seemed to need the services of my office.

The Rolling Stones and the Beatles all had marijuana problems and had to have our help. A number of well known people had been part of the Oxford Group in the '30s and were of leftist, communist background and needed waivers. I helped Michael York once plan his vacation across the United States. He asked me what I thought he should be doing and I got to telling him. I gave Mohammed Ali his passport after we whisked him off the streets where he got mobbed because everybody recognized him. Tony Curtis came in once with arm loads of flowers for all the staff. It was kind of fun. You never knew who you would see next.

Q: What was the attitude during this time re visas? Was it to try to be as helpful as possible?

HOBBS: It was a difficult time. We were far, far, far too busy. We did not have enough people to do the work. We didn't have a signature slug, every piece had to be signed individually. At the end of the day we would bring down officers from the commercial/economic and political sections to sign visas. Sometimes counselors of

embassy would be down there, not at all happy having to sign their name over and over again. It was mindless. When they got the signature slug to go into the visa stamp that ended that chore.

One of the problems with London was that it was a crossroad of the world, Heathrow airport. One year I counted we had done visas for 123 nationalities, which I think is almost all of them. I met my first Communist Chinese official, a Mongolian official. I did visas for Estonians and Latvians. We were so, so busy.

I went on, after doing the coordination job, to be chief of the visa unit, which was a tremendous job. There were 20-some vice consuls working there and they couldn't keep up with it.

Q: Did you find there was a problem, particularly in the visa unit, because of the people often assigned their as vice consuls? I recall in an earlier time when I was dealing with consular assignments there was a tendency, if we had a problem case

(an alcoholic or someone who wasn't doing well, or a medical problem), to send them to London because it is English-speaking and a big post so nobody will notice.

HOBBS: Alan Gise was my supervisor and I enjoyed working with him. He was fantastic to work for. I learned a lot from him because this was really my first consular job. I was a rotational officer in Hamburg and in Brazil I was a political/labor officer. So, London was my first major consular job and it was great to have a supervisor like that.

But personnel was a problem. I remember we had a woman who would put her hands on her hips and start out every interview by saying, " All right, what's your story?" That never got interviews off to a good start. We had to get the marines to rescue her from attackers more often than all the rest of the staff combined because of her attitude. It was awful.

Q: Could you do anything about it?

HOBBS: I was very much on her case. She was old enough to retire and she announced one day that she didn't have to take such stuff from me and was retiring. I suggested that might not be a bad idea since she didn't seem to be enjoying her tour very much.

And she did. And that was great. It gave us a chance to get somebody else. But, what we got was a woman who had never done consular work before, who had been working in Washington in the office which you called if you saw coffee spilled on a hallway floor and someone would come and clean it up. She was taking those calls and working in a sort of isolated office by herself. Sending her to London to try to deal with this mad horde of applicants was too much. She would break down regularly fleeing from the line crying. I would have to try to get her courage up to go back and try to do it some more. I would have liked to have fired her, but you can't.

I had another case of a woman who was terribly, terribly burned out, having been doing this for many years. This was in the years when staff officers could not go beyond was is now the FSSO-1 level now and most didn't make it to that rank. Many of them came from other types of foreign service work. I used to get the impression that they were fleeing that other work for some reason or another and they weren't so interested in consular work but just wanted to get away from something else.

Q: When I was in personnel often [as career consular counselors] we would get [to find an assignment having been transferred to the consular cone] former secretaries who ambassadors wanted to get rid of, or personnel officers who didn't like people, or something like that.

HOBBS: Yes, you found that. When I first came into the consular business I got the impression that one of the problems of consular work was that it had become a dumping ground for people who were not happy in some other job. So there were a lot of people who didn't really like consular work either, but it was where they had fled too. When the Department started recruiting people more specifically for consular work, I think they did a very good thing because they got some fine officers who really wanted to do the work, and did it very well.

Now, of course, there were exceptions among the other group. In the old days there were people who were fantastic too, but there were a number of people who just didn't want to be there. In London we would get junior officers who were planning to do something else in the world, but also wanted to do a good job while in consular work. And that was great. However, we also got a big chunk of people who just really didn't want to be there. We always knew that the Department felt London could always absorb one more, but if you keep absorbing just one more, after awhile you have so many wounded people on your staff that it becomes very hard to deal with.

I have always said that business talks about knowing how to manage because they are real managers, but actually try managing something where you have no control over the staff. You get either in numbers who you get, or the budget, which passes through so many levels, before it gets to the consular level. So, try managing under those conditions. It takes quite a bit of skill to weasel your way out of some of the messes you get into.

In London we had a tremendous challenge. Not enough people, not enough of the right people, and not enough money. The place had deteriorated physically into a dump.

Q: Did you have any feel for the interest of the "high command", the ambassador and his or her staff, towards consular business?

HOBBS: I was there three years and had three ambassadors. I was there for the last year of Annenberg. Then Elliot Richardson came in for a year and left. Then Ann Armstrong, a political appointee from Texas, arrived. Each of them were very different but good in their own way. None of them was particularly interested in consular affairs. However, the DCM was more interested and that made it easier for us. Ron Spiers was the DCM for my

last two years or so. He was fantastic. He came down very frequently to check it out and see what was going on and what he could do. He allowed us to get some money to refurbish the premises which helped morale a little bit. He made us feel that what we were doing was worthwhile.

Q: Why had the consular section gotten so run down?

HOBBS: The consular section had been for eight years under the same consul general. He was a man who had been an economic/commercial officer.

Q: What was his name?

HOBBS: Jack Herfurt. He was a nice man and we enjoyed him personally, but he did not have a clue about what was going on in the consular section or how to run it. He sat up in an office up next to the ambassador and his job was to take care of any problems that came to Annenberg's attention, that were consular in nature. He would occasionally come down as things got really bad that one summer when we were filmed on CBS or NBC news showing the piles of passports everywhere that we were trying to process. He would interview 10 or 12 people and then go away thinking he had done his part. I used to think it would be more helpful if he could get us some more people and resources as we could handle the small number of interviews he did. I think that is how it deteriorated over the years. Being in the hands of somebody who didn't really know much about the business and what to do and was more focused on keeping consular matters off the hands of the ambassador.

Q: I recall when I was consular officer in Athens his coming up to visit me one time and chatting with him and being sort of astounded that he was so removed from the consular section. There didn't seem to be much of a connect.

HOBBS: There wasn't. A few of us he would choose to be pleasant with, and I was one, but he ignored most of the staff. Alan Gise was doing as much as he could to make things work under very difficult circumstances. He was a tremendous motivator and got a lot out of what he had. Alan later went back as consul general, but I didn't work there then. John Diggins came in after that. He had been head of the visa office in Washington. We continued on under Diggins to do some of the renovations; we began a study. We tried a little trick. We knew what we needed but we couldn't get anybody to give us what we needed, so we had to hire an outside consultant, tell him what our problem was and he told us back what our problem was and then we could get the money to do what we wanted to do. Otherwise we couldn't get it. We spent $10,000 on a consultant who would tell us what we told him and then we would take it upstairs and get the money. That all went on through Diggins' time and then he left.

I remember once trying to talk him into doing some changes and he looked at me and said, "Look, I tell you what, you go ahead and do it. If it works, I will take the credit, if it doesn't work, I will get your ass." I thought that was fair enough, an interesting way to motivate people.

Q: Sounds like you didn't have much chance to make contact with the body politik at the time.

HOBBS: No. Personally I had time to go to the theater and all of that. I remember I actually sent a FLASH message out of London on a consular issue to Washington. It got their attention. There was a new member of the Wilson Cabinet, who came in to get his visa to go to the States and turned up to be someone who needed a waiver because of some of his affiliations that were leftist. I had to be the one to tell him that he had a problem with his visa. He was outraged and came down on me very, very hard demanding to know what was the problem. This was based on some information that I could not divulge, so I had to pussy foot around it a bit. I got him to understand that this was a political problem. He leaned over and stuck his nose practically in my nose and told me with a snarl that if I don't straighten this out by 5:00 today, Harold Wilson would be on the phone to the White House and that my ass was going to be in deep, deep trouble.

I huddled with Alan Gise and went to where this information was stored and discussed it with those who had evaluated it. We decided that we would send a FLASH message-–of course we called Washington to tell them it was coming-–in order to get that request there immediately. We didn't make it by 5:00, but by 5:15 we gave that guy a visa and I got off the hook.

The only other time I sent a FLASH message was from Brazil when there was an aircraft that had been hijacked landed at the airport in Sao Paulo. The message said the plane had landed and that the consul was on his way to protect the one American on board, who was Felix Grant, the guy who used to have a disk jockey program.

Q: You left London in 1976. Then what?

HOBBS: By that time I had learned how to play the game a little bit. I had worked in London with a person who had been a senior consular person, John Diggins, and had gotten to know some people who were in the senior ranks of the consular field, so I began to play these little games. I started lobbying back in Washington for a job. Lorey Lawrence was the deputy assistant secretary then and I was lobbying him to get into a job where I could use some innovated ideas in our approach to consular work. They created an office of planning for me. Larry Corbett and Sarah Horsey were the ones who were assigned to this thing to start off with. I learned one thing from that experience. I will never go again to an office of planning and thinking because the State Department is so focused on action that they don't want to talk to anybody who is planning and thinking. If you want to do any planning and thinking you have to be an action office and carve out some time on the side to do some planning and thinking and then be in a place to actually get something done.

Q: Yes. Like Policy Planning, which usually ends up doing anything but policy.

HOBBS: Well, I think that is another example. When that office was first started and George Kennan ran it for a very good reason at a very specific time in history and it had a role. But as time goes on, I think they drifted to what policy planning is, a little bit off main stream.

So, when I got back and realized what I had done, I spent much of my time getting out of there. I did some more lobbying and hustling and finally got myself assigned to Japanese language training in preparation for an assignment to Japan.

I didn't do much during my time in the planning office, except we did start this consular assistance team concept (CAT). I went to Trinidad and Caracas to run little CAT exercises. That was fun and it was a good idea the way it initially started but money became a problem. At that time Bob Gershenson was the executive director of ARA and John DeWitt was the DAS in Consular. He got a deal worked out with Gershenson that we would go to ARA posts and ARA would give the team a $2000 check that they could spend as they saw fit on the ground during the visit. That helps when you are on the ground and somebody tells you something can't be done because of lack of funds, you can just give them the money. When you see that happens you start getting their attention. This extends over to other parts of your message that they don't always want to hear about changes in processes, attitudes, etc.

I did that for a bit and then went on to Japanese language training. The concept carried on but I think we lost the money. They were going out to just give people advice.

We also had a positive concept that you never went anywhere where you weren't invited because if someone is not willing to invite you there to help them figure out how to deal with a problem, the chances are that if you go in there and tell them they have a problem and this is what you do about it, they are going to resist you and you might as not bother to go in the first place. But, if someone feels they have a problem and would like some help, you have a much better chance of getting some success.

Q: You wanted to add one story...

HOBBS: It had to do with that hijacking that I mentioned.

Q: Who was hijacking, and when did it take place?

HOBBS: It was a Brazilian leftist organization which hijacked an aircraft that was leaving from Guaratuba, one of the cities in the south. Felix Grant had been down in Brazil. He is a leading expert in Brazilian music, which I wasn't aware of before. He was giving lectures to Brazilians on their music and doing a good job.

He was on this airplane coming back from Guaratuba to Rio de Janeiro where he would get a plane to the States. The aircraft got hijacked and was flying around in the air looking for a place to land and finally, having a fuel problem, landed at Sao Paulo airport, the one that is nearest to the city. I knew he was on the aircraft because he had been in

San Paulo a few days before that and we knew his travel plans.

We raced out to the airport to try to protect this American. We went up to the tower and there was a general in charge of this problem. I said there was an American citizen on board and was there to look out for his interests. If he didn't mind I would like to hang around to see what was going on and be of assistance, if I could be. He looked at me like some crazy nut who claimed to be an American diplomat, but he let me stay around. I watched some of the activity going on and it looked sort of heavy handed to me. I asked the general what he was planning to do? He said, "Well, we are going to storm the aircraft and the guy is going to have to commit suicide." I said, "Oh, that is very interesting. How do you know he is going to commit suicide?" "Well," he said, "You will see."

They put some soldiers in uniforms of caterers and after the people got hungry enough they asked for food. The soldiers dressed as caterers went out to the aircraft in catering carts filled with weapons. When they got out to the aircraft they jumped the aircraft and went in through the cockpit shooting the pilot, not badly, and took over the aircraft very quickly. The single hijacker, according to the general, committed suicide. The next day the [local] newspaper, which was owned by a man who was very, very opposed to the military running the government and who would leave blanks where articles had been censored so people would know the censor had been at work again, ran an article saying the kidnaper at the airport was attacked by the police and committed suicide by shooting himself thirteen times. That was a sneaky way of getting out some of the news that was really going on.

It was kind of an interesting experience for me to see how this suicide was planned and carried out by the government. Felix got off the airplane and I asked him how it had been and he said, "You know, the worse thing about it was that damn MUZAK music they played the entire time we were on board. I hated every minute of that. Other than that, it wasn't so bad."

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Q: Today is March 7, 1997. David, did you volunteer for Japanese language training?

HOBBS: What happened was, when I came back from London I was actually brought back into this consular policy planning office, an idea of Lorey Lawrence, who then left for London. It didn't have too much clout with those who were there and it wasn't going too well. So, I started looking around for something else to do. I found out that there was a job opening in Japan in a year and all you had to do was learn Japanese. So, I talked to Diane Dillard, who was my personnel advisor at the time and she was very kind and helped me get into the Japanese language course.

So, I left the consular policy planning office. I learned from experience that I am a little more action oriented and am someone who likes to do things rather than think about them and probably wasn't well suited for that kind of work anyway.

I started Japanese language training and it was one of the toughest years I have ever had. I was already in my late 30s and had never studied Japanese. It is a very hard language. The chief instructor was someone who had been doing it for many, many years and she used to tell us that on certain days in the process of learning Japanese we would do this or that stupid linguistic thing. I used to try to avoid that but almost invariably on the day that she predicted when we got to a certain point in the class she would point out that we had just done that stupid thing that we were going to do. I spent much of the year with backaches because of the tension in class. I was trying to keep up with that language.

But, I went off to Japan and had an interesting time.

Q: You took Japanese training from?

HOBBS: From 1977-78 and then went to Japan from 1978-81.

Q: What was your job in Japan?

HOBBS: I was the chief of the consular section in Osaka-Kobe. It was a very small section but had the third highest volume of visas in the world, after Tokyo and London.

There is so much travel by the Japanese to the United States and we still had this requirement that they all have visas. We were just grinding out these visas by the hundreds of thousands.

Q: I assume they arrived with shopping baskets full of passports.

HOBBS: Right. We hardly saw any of the individual Japanese. The travel agents brought the passports over in bags and boxes.

I had one little interesting skirmish with the Japanese staff there. They were actually very good and worked very hard, but had their own little points of view. One of them was that Koreans were not worthy of having long term visas. They would decide pretty much whether or not the visa should be issued and for how long. We would only spot check and ask them to bring all the problem cases to us. During spot checks I began to notice that Koreans were getting three month one and three visas even though they were people born in Japan and lived there all their lives and had jobs in Japan. I called them together and thought it was not a good idea to do that. We kept giving these people visas over and over again. The staff resisted but I insisted and in the end they crumbled and did what I told them, although I'm sure on the day I left they went back doing what they always used to do.

But, I always remember this one woman to whom I said, "Look, somebody who was born here, lives here, wears the same clothes, speaks the same language, you can't really tell the difference, so why are you making a big fuss about this?" She said, "We can too." "How can you tell the difference?" She said, "Because Koreans are always standing in

front of pachinko parlors wearing white shoes and swinging a little chain." I said that I would not accept that and therefore do it our way.

Some months later I was walking towards a place where there was a little art show and I went in front of a pachinko [pinball] parlor. I suddenly noticed a man standing in front of the pachinko parlor with white shoes and swinging a little chain. I said to my wife, "Look, there is a Korean." She looked at me and said, "What do you mean?" I explained what this woman had told me. She said that was crazy. But it was amazing that the stereotype was so strong in Japan about the Koreans. As a matter of fact, he probably was a Korean, the owner perhaps.

There was another thing we had going on there that was very difficult. The Japanese had a great number of investments in the United States and there was a lot of effort by the Americans to attract more Japanese investments. We had dinner with the then Governor Clinton of Arkansas when he came over once to try to interest the Japanese in making investments in Arkansas. And they did make some. There were a lot of companies who would send a lot of Japanese to the United States to run their investments on treaty visas. But, we caught on that there was a enormous number going over and it looked like they were staffing these companies almost entirely with their own nationals, which was going quite a bit beyond what the treaty visas were intended to do, take care of the visas for the managers and technical experts. We did a lot of inquiring and asking around and found out that they were indeed staffing entire offices with their own nationals, down to the most menial tasks. So, we decided we would governor this a bit and put more attention to the issue and ask a lot more questions. Inadvertently we created quite an uproar in Japan. It was front page news. Why were we inquiring more thoroughly into these visa requests? We had a meeting once where several thousand Japanese business people showed up for a meeting on treaty visas where we tried to explain the qualifications. Got a lot of press.

I was on the train with my children, who were going to school, going to the consulate one morning and I said something to my daughter about leaving Japan. This man who was standing next to me hanging on to a strap got off the train with me and said, "When are you leaving?" I looked at him surprised, not knowing who he was. He said, "You are the American consul?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "When are you leaving?" I said that I didn't know when. Later I heard through the community that there was a buzz going on about the consul leaving and maybe there wouldn't be any trouble anymore about getting treaty visas.

When I got back to the States there was a conference on treaty visas which one of the immigration associations had arranged. Again it was held in a large room and it was filled with almost entirely Japanese business people who were very much concerned about the treaty visa and wanting it very badly. I remember asking one of them why it was so important to have a treaty visa when they could just go over on a regular visa and do a little business if they wanted to. His answer was that in case of another war they wanted to be covered by a treaty. I found this quite interesting that they would worry about the possibility of another war with the United States. In some ways it is a very difficult culture to figure out and quite, quite challenging. There was quite a bit of trickery going

on among the companies trying to get the visas.

Q: Were they also staffing their offices abroad with Japanese because they were easier to work with?

HOBBS: Yes, top to bottom, because it is easier to work with someone in your own culture and the communication is better with native speakers. But, they were comfortable not only with having Japanese native speaking managers but felt more comfortable, I guess, with having the entire staff of their own nationals and just manufacture as much as possible and sell it to the Americans. It was working quite well until we started to look into it a little more carefully.

Q: Did you have any problems with the embassy, because this was causing a stir within Japan?

HOBBS: Yes, it got front page news. It even made it into the *New York Times*, the fact that there was a bit of controversy in Japan over treaty visas and the embassy was uncomfortable with it. The DCM told me once that as long as you didn't get in the papers you were okay but once you did you were in trouble. He was quite uncomfortable with the situation.

Q: Who was the DCM?

HOBBS: Bill Clark. And, it was true of course, it is nice not to get into the newspaper. It was the one problem we really had and we still haven't sorted it out. The Japanese were working very hard to promote their own exports, which was fine, but their markets were quite closed then. From my personal experience I could see how difficult it was. For example, one man there who was a commercial officer who spent most of his career in Japan, made it his personal crusade to get Louisville slugger baseball bats approved for use in Japan. They didn't meet Japanese standards so couldn't be imported to Japan, yet they were shipping bats by the tons to the United States. This man spent five years of his career beating on this one issue until in fact we wore them down and Louisville bats were approved for sale in Japan, but no one bought them. The distributor would not order them. So, it is an example of it not always being the obvious trade barriers that make it difficult for us to sell in that market, but the sort of non-tariff barriers, the cultural proclivity to support one's own. I know Japanese businessmen who would tell me how embarrassed they were that there was an American computer in their office and not a Japanese one.

Our victory in the baseball bats was not much of a victory. There was a kind of little struggle we went through constantly.

There is a great reputation that the Japanese have for being above board and very honest in their dealings with people, and that is basically true. But, I remember once Mitsubishi Ship Yards was trying to sent an engineer of some sort over to Norfolk, Virginia to work on a broken down ship that they had built for an American company. The American

consul looked it up and told them if the person has special expertise that is not available in the United States then he comes in on a B1 visa instead of a temporary worker visa in this emergency situation. Mitsubishi was told to get a statement from the Norfolk ship yards that this is an emergency situation and there is no American technician to deal with this ship problem. The next morning we had a telegram that was supposedly from Norfolk but was obviously written by a Japanese. We were pretty sure it had come from the Mitsubishi Ship Yards in Kobe. I called over there and asked them point blank from which office the telegram had come. They finally connected me to the office realizing they had been caught red handed.

The Sony Corporation wanted to open a factory in Mexico on the border under that program we had for *Free zone.* Mkiadori business they call it. A tariff free zone. Things that are brought into Mexico to have value added to them can be shipped back to the United States without any tariff. So, Sony decided to open a factory in Mexico to make televisions for sale in the United States. They asked for treaty visas to live in the United States. I said, "Well, since your factory is in Mexico, you should be getting a visa from Mexico to live in Mexico to run your company. You don't have a business in the United States." They didn't want to accept that, so I told them I would send an advisory opinion to Washington to see if it was okay to run an office in Mexico but live in the United States. The answer came back after a month or two that if they ran an office in the United States they could have a treaty visa for the United States, but otherwise they had to get a visa from Mexico. So, I called the Sony people to come talk about it and they came with their attorney. I told them Washington's response and they conferred among themselves a bit and finally turned to me and said they wanted to see the cable that I had sent requesting an opinion. I showed it to them. They read it carefully. Then one said to another, "It looks like he is telling us the truth, so we will have to go along with the decision." They were very adversarial.

Another example of the cultural differences that made it so incredibly challenging. I got a call one day from Washington wanting to know what in the devil I was doing to make trouble for a tooth company that was trying to get some people in to open a factory in Arkansas. Senator Bumpers was very upset. I had never heard of this and said I would check into it. I called the company, which supposedly we were giving trouble to, to ask them if they had applied for visas and if so, when, who applied and what happened. They knew nothing about it but called me back a little later and said they actually hadn't applied yet. I asked them to explain why there was a problem in Washington. They said they would get back to me. They called me back in a day or so and said they had figured it out. What happened was they had a lobbyist in Washington, a Japanese citizen who had been living in the United States for many years, who had met Senator Bumpers and had talked about this great thing the company was planning to do and had made some comment about hoping there wouldn't be any problems with the visa. The Senator must have misunderstood and assumed that they said there was a problem and that was how it all got started. I told them to send over their applications and they would be taken care of. They came over, visas were issued and everyone went away happy.

When the company opened its operations in Arkansas a delegation came out from

Arkansas to thank them for the big investment and I was invited to the big party, which was held in a very nice estate outside of Kobe. It was amazing fun. As I walked in everybody I saw from that company was bowing as far as they could bow and apologizing to me for all the trouble they had caused the honorable consul. I caught on that somebody at the top had ordered that everybody should grovel to this consul because he had been hassled for no reason. At one point I was talking to the president and the vice president of the company and I told them it was okay, they didn't have to be so upset, I wasn't really upset about it. Mistakes happen. Then the vice president turned to me and said, "But, you know, you have to understand how this happened. The lobbyist in Washington has been in the United States too long and acts like an American." I said, "I think that was an apology, thank you very much." Japan was quite an interesting place to work.

Q: During this 1978-81 period, did you get any feel for the politics of Japan, particularly in Japan-American relations?

HOBBS: The Japanese were beginning to feel that they had been a little too long under the tutelage of the Americans, I think, and were trying to be a little more on their own. They didn't like to have a very high profile on any political issues in the world, but they also seemed to resent more and more assumptions Americans would make about where they would stand on issues and what approaches they would take. I had one man who had been living there for about 40 years who was part Japanese and part American. He had a ship chandler's service in Kobe harbor for many years. He had been watching how Japan had been progressing for years. He spoke good Japanese. He said he saw definite generational change. Those who were born after the occupation and had become adults and had no recollection or remembrance of anything the Americans had done at that time to be of assistance to Japan in a very difficult time, had a very different attitude towards Americans. He called it an arrogance. Perhaps there was a little of that for a while, but it probably dissipated a lot after the late eighties when the economic bubble burst taking some wind out of their sails. I haven't been back to Japan since then, so I don't know.

One incident happened while I was there which was very unfortunate. The Americans were having some military exercises off Japan where submarines were trying to evade aircraft which were trying to spot submarines. In this little game they were playing, one of them surfaced and came right up underneath a Japanese fishing ship. The ship was badly damaged. The submarine waited a little bit above the water, appeared to be checking out what was going on with the ship as it was sinking, and then submerged and went away. Two people, the captain and one other person, died and many others were plucked out of the sea having been pretty well exposed to the cold water and pretty upset. I had to conduct the hearings in Japan to try to determine the reason for this action. There was a terrible uproar about this incident. A lot of anti-American sentiment being expressed for a few days, and then it all went away again. But, they were very upset that this American warship had killed somebody.

Q: Well, it really does sound like bad judgment on the part of a naval commander.

HOBBS: That was exactly what was determined in the end. I had to take the statements of the Japanese members for the navy. Then the navy took the statements and included them in a broader hearing that took place, I think, in Tokyo. In the end the captain was found not to have acted properly. Once it was obvious the ship was sinking, he should have abandoned the game and rescued them. That decision helped, but there was still the question of paying damages to the families of the dead captain and crew member. The head of the US navy in Japan personally went to the home of the captain's wife and apologized, as did Ambassador Mansfield. Those kind of things help a little bit.

Q: Did you get any feel for Ambassador Mansfield and how he worked in Japan?

HOBBS: I was there his first couple of years. He was very well received. He didn't speak Japanese, although had some history background in Asian affairs and knew something about Asia. He had been in the Senate all those years and obviously was a very prominent American, and that helps in Japan a lot. They like to have somebody who has a high profile in the United States assigned to Japan. It doesn't matter to them whether he is truly a diplomat or not. So, Mansfield had great entree, was highly revered and his words meant a great deal to the Japanese. They paid a lot of attention to him. So, I thought he was doing a very, very good job.

Q: David, you left in 1981. Whither?

HOBBS: During the time I was in Japan, Diego Asencio was appointed Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs. He sent out a cable worldwide to consular officers asking for ideas of how he could do things better. Any changes he might make or should make to make things better. I sent a cable which had three or four ideas that I had been kicking around for some years thinking they were things we should do. For some reason he paid a lot of attention to my cable and felt I was just the man he was looking for to be the new head of consular training and to help put into place the new mid level training course that was being given a lot of attention at that time. I got a call from his staff aide telling me that was what Asencio wanted. I said I would think about it and get back to him. I did and decided I really didn't want to do that. Then I got a call from Diego who said, "I think you do want to do this. This is just the right thing for you to do. I have thought about this and you are the right guy." So, I said, "Now that I have thought about it a little more, I do want to do it." So, I came back and did the consular training job, which turned out to be okay. It was very nice, I didn't think it would be.

Q: You did the consular training job from 1981 until when?

HOBBS: 1983.

Q: When you arrived will you explain how consular training was done and what were some of the ideas that were going to be put into the program?

HOBBS: Actually, my ideas didn't have anything to do with consular training, the ones I sent back in my cable. One of those was that instead of having all these advisory opinions

go into the Department and have the overworked staff in the visa office send back the same answers time after time, they ought to do what courts do. When courts give opinions on legal decisions, they are available to anyone. So, if the consuls had access to previous decisions or opinions on questions of visa law that was in some kind of library so you could look them up, many of us, clever folks that we are, would be able to figure out pretty much what the answers to many of our questions are and this would cut down immensely the number of inquiries we made. And, I still think that is a good idea.

Q: We used to have that when I came into the Foreign Service under the Refugee Relief Program. All the decisions were published and we would get new decisions on almost a daily basis. It worked out well.

HOBBS: So, there was nothing new about our idea. I had one person explain it to me once. The reason why they can't do that is you never know how people would interpret these things and you might get things messed up. But, my attitude is that the people working abroad are no more less capable than the ones working in the Department. It is just a matter of where you sit. As long as you have these precedents to go by, if you have further questions you can send in a very refined point and made it much easier. That was one of the ideas I had that never went anywhere.

Diego Asencio thought I would be the right type of guy for the training course, so we returned to Washington. We didn't change too much in the basic course. The basic Consulate General Rosslyn course was put together by John Conglan a few years before that. The idea was to get rid of the parade of senior consular officers who would come over from the relevant offices in the Department and talk for an hour or two on a subject. Some of them were very good at whatever they did for a living, but they weren't necessarily good lecturers. I can remember going through the consular course when I entered the Foreign Service and I can assure you that some of them weren't very good lecturers. This took away all that and made it all modules. For 21 days you go through the step-by-step, day-by-day program construction. I think it was quite flexible and useful and worked quite well.

I focused pretty much on creating this mid-level course, the consular part of it. The course went away soon after that because it took people out of action for about a year and the State Department just insisted on being in the action and unable to spend any time training. So, it was resisted across the cones.

But, in fact, what we put together in the consular area was quite highly regarded and I used to have political officers come in and sit in on some of our events because they felt it was more useful than anything they were getting in the other part of the course which was for the other cones.

This made me feel good, but unfortunately, when the course collapsed, everything collapsed, including the consular part.

The consular part was to give these mid level officers, who theoretically would be

managers at some level, a broader perspective of the issue of migration to the United States, and not just to wallow in Section 1, 2b, or this or that law. A little bit broader look, where does it all fit in. So, we had sections on the history of migration, historians of migration spoke to the class. We had talks on refugee affairs. Some people who had been refugees, people who had been through the experience, came over and talked to the class about what it was like to have been a refugee and come to the United States and what they thought about the process as a consumer.

We had the psychology of customer service and how the people look at you as a provider of service and how you can better meet their expectations. Not necessarily give them what they want, but how to deal with somebody when you have to say no. There were sections on management, how to motivate others. An immigration lawyer came over to talk about immigration law. We tried to mix things so that they could see things from other points of view and not be so sure that what we thought and how we did things was the only way. A lot of the consular officers liked it, finding it very stimulating. It is too bad because the mid level course as a whole collapsed and the consular section went with it.

Q: This was a mid level course for all the cones?

HOBBS: Yes. They had some parts that were common for all the officers and some that were specific to the cone that you were assigned to. I contributed to the common curriculum but also put a lot of the consular training together.

Doris Meissner [Commissioner of INS during the Clinton administration] was someone who had worked on the blue ribbon commission during the Ford administration on some migration issues that he got into a little bit, so she was kind of an expert on migration. I used to have her come over and speak to the group. She had a very interesting approach which at times was critical of the way the government goes about these things.

She told us that refugee programs get started for a reason and then go on when the reason has gone away. She would point out that at that time the Vietnam refugee program was bringing in people who weren't even born or were tiny children during the Vietnam war. So how could they be running from persecution when they weren't even there, really. It was basically economic migration but they had learned the lingo and were able to use the program to get in. An example of how programs sometimes get out of whack.

Antonia Hernandez, who was the head of the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund, a Mexican-American lobby group, came to talk to the group. I found it was very useful to have an Hispanic activist in this country talk about migration issues from her group's point of view. I remember once she was extremely opposed to the 1986 amnesty that was going through Congress at the time, and was passed. She was opposed to the employer's sanctions that were part of the amnesty. She was convinced that the employer's sanctions would be applied in a way that would be prejudicial to Hispanic looking people.

I listened to her talk that way a few times and finally took her aside after the course one

day and said, “Antonia, I think you are making far too much of this. You are assuming the Immigration Service is going to be incredibly capable of getting all the employers in the country to follow these rules to the letter. People are not going to understand what is going on here. I think it is going to be a big failure, the sanctions aren’t going to work. You are getting all these amnesties and the sanctions aren’t going to work. I don’t understand why you are not in favor of this.”

She said, “Well, I don’t trust anything the Immigration Service does.” I said, “Isn’t that a little heavy? I know some people in the Service and a lot of them are trying very hard.” She said, “You don’t understand.” I said, “What don’t I understand?” She said, “Well, I was born in Los Angeles as were all my brothers and sisters and my parents. But in 1952 we were rounded up in Operation Wetback and shipped to Mexico by the Immigration Service. It took us a long time to get back. So, don’t you tell me the Immigration Service is going to be okay.”I said, “Okay, I’m sorry, you got me there.”

The Operation Wetback was a very bad thing to have been done and not at all capable of doing what it was meant to do, which was to determine a difference between a person who has ancestors from Mexico and those who had just come over the border recently and not supposed to be here. It was a big failure and made her very bitter.

Q: There was one of our colleagues, of Greek ancestry, whose uncle was for many years sheriff of Los Angeles. He had dark hair and a deep tan from a summer at the beach and he got rounded up and had a hard time getting out.

HOBBS: I think in the end I was right as far as the immigration amnesty goes. I don’t think the employer’s sanctions that were part of the amnesty have worked and we are now in another controversy over immigration with so many immigrants coming in.

Q: What was your impression of the consular officers that you were seeing at the mid career level as contrasted, say, to the political officers? Was there a difference?

HOBBS: Not really. Some of the really sharp consular officers that were in the group were clearly as sharp, bright, articulate as any other officers in that group. In a group that large there was a large variation sometimes. Some people were extremely impressive, others were not so impressive, but that would be expected. But, you couldn’t tell what cone a person was by their contribution in the class. I remember some admin officers who were incredibly good. I remember some political officers who were doing extremely well in that course. A couple of the admin officers and political officers that were in that group are now deputy assistant secretaries in the Department. You can spot in each cone some very, very talented people who were clearly on their way to senior positions. I thought that was good. I think we were doing a very good job under the cone system at that time. Going out recruiting people who wanted to do the things that we needed to have done. We needed some consular officers, some admin officers, economic and political officers, and went out and found some of each. Among those me found, some were very, very good.

I personally believe it is a mistake to not have a cone system because now that we don't bring them in cone there is so much energy spent trying to get cones. I think we have a tendency to get a bunch of people in, the vast majority of which have one thing on their mind, which is basically political reporting according to the questionnaires filled out, and very few want to do particularly admin work or consular work. It is a shame because admin is a function which is vital to the success of the Service.

Morale of the Service depends so much on the admin function, and we should have people in it who want to be there and do it well. The admin function is one way to go to the most senior ranks of the Service. I, myself, sometimes think I would have been just as happy doing that. I think we are missing out on opportunities. For a while we were doing well by choosing people to work in the areas that we needed them. I hope we go back to that.

Q: When the mid-career program collapsed, what did you do?

HOBBS: Well, it didn't collapse until after I left. I did my two years.

Q: This would be 1981-83.

HOBBS: Yes. I wasn't interested in staying on for a longer time in the training course. Jim Ward was moving out of the emergency center, which I had founded. I started nosing around trying to get myself lined up for that. After a little false start where I almost didn't get it, I did get it. I was director of the emergency center for two years.

Q: From 1983-85.

HOBBS: Yes.

Q: Would you explain what the emergency center is?

HOBBS: A little group of people in the Bureau of Consular Affairs who deal with the dead, dying, destitute, arrested, lost, kidnapped, and all the bad things that can happen to someone abroad. The consuls have to deal with it abroad, but the State Department has this special little group of people who take care of things on this end: get in touch with relatives, arrange for bodies to be shipped home, etc. During kidnappings we would hold regular meetings with the relatives.

My first month KLM flight 007 was shot down over the Soviet Union and everybody on board was killed. There were a lot of Americans on board. We had to figure out who was an American, who isn't and who gets notified.

I was there when the TWA plane was hijacked in the Middle East. It went around from country to country until finally ending up in Lebanon. One of the people on board that flight was shot [U.S. seaman] and killed and others were finally brought back to Germany after several days. We arranged to get them back to the States.

The rescue of the medical students in Grenada took place during my watch.

There are a lot of interesting events going on in the world which are sometimes foreign policy events and the United States deals with some issue and then this fallout happens such as the kidnaping of Americans in Lebanon. Dealing with all that fallout is sometimes a challenge. So, I enjoyed it thoroughly. It was an absolutely fascinating job.

Q: I can't think of any worse job than on a daily basis calling up people and saying your child has been killed in an automobile accident, etc. How did you and your staff deal with that type of job?

HOBBS: Well, it is tough. You are right. In fact, when I went there the functions were all divided up. There was a repatriation officer, a money transfer officer, an arrest officer, a death officer, someone to deal with each of the functions. But, I saw that was deadly. When you tell someone they are to be the death officer for two years, you don't get many bidders on a job like that. So, I decided it would make more sense to carve it up the way consuls do abroad.

We gave people geographic responsibilities. They would take care of anything that happened in that particular geographic area. They got more variety. It wasn't quite so awful. Sometimes you would get tied up in one thing in an area, such as during the kidnappings in Lebanon. In the end we had to put someone on that one issue alone just to deal with the families. We recruited Jackie Ratner to come in and do that. She was doing some of the countries in the Middle East as an emergency services officer, but it had become so overwhelming we had to have her do that.

We did have to give people some training, background, on how to deal with people in crises, something which we didn't used to think was necessary. However, we realized that people who deal with people in crisis go through an awful lot of crisis of their own, stressed out. If you understand what people are going through who are yelling at you on the phone, understand the cycle of grief, what stage people are in at a particular time, you can recognize those signs and can be more in control and understand what is going on with the people you are trying to deal with. Therefore, you don't feel so stressed. So, we started training with that. We had some CIA psychiatrist who was very good at this stuff come over and talk to them. Later we did video tapes that we sent around the world to consular sections. You do need to have a little training before you do that kind of stuff all the time. I found it fascinating.

Q: Let's talk about a couple of these major things that happened, again from your perspective. The KLM shoot down. How did you hear about that?

HOBBS: It was just after dinner that I got a call from the Ops Center saying that this Korean airliner had disappeared off the screen and they think something might have happened and that I might want to come down to the Department. It was about 11:00 at night. I went down and we waited to hear what happened. Eventually we heard it had

been shot down. Then we had to call in a whole bunch of people to go to work up in the Ops Center to work on a task force. There was a large contingent of consular people dealing with all the people who called in with family members or friends on the airplane. They kept track of who was calling about whom, and the relationships, so that when we found out the plane had been shot down and all people were killed, we would know who was an American and who was the next of kin. You can't tell an American by his name, so you have to get the passport office busy as well. We worked for days on that one. The relatives eventually came in here and met with us in the Department. The questions was damages--what was the Soviet Union going to pay for this? That was the legal question that went on for years. That was the first crisis that I had. The first chance I had to oversee a task force in the Ops Center to deal with an event.

Q: *What about Grenada?*

HOBBS: That was going on at the same time as the Beirut bombing of the marine barracks so the news was filled with that event when we became aware of what was going on in Grenada. First they weren't telling the consular side what they were planning, but I could see what was going on. I talked to a colonel from the Ops Center and told him that it was clear to me that something was going on and that at some point whatever they were going to do would have some public repercussions. I had a group of people ready to deal with that, but we have to know at some point what is going on. We had to be clued in or it would be disastrous. He thought about that for a while and got back with me agreeing to let me know what was going on. So, I knew then the plan, a plan that had already been planned for a while.

The night it was supposed to happen I came in to the Ops Center around 1:00 in the morning and proceeded to wait so that when something did happen my people would be ready to go into action immediately. I had a full staff there. It was about five or ten minutes after the paratroopers began to jump that the press caught on. We were watching CNN all night. They were doing the Beirut bombing incident off and on all night. Then, about 7:10 in the morning they switched topic and said there was something going on; American paratroopers were jumping out of the sky. They had jumped about 7:00, I think. It was very interesting to see how quickly the press picked up on them.

Then we had 300 plus medical students who all had relatives, friends and congressmen. And, there were some tourists there. So, we got a tremendous onslaught of calls from people wanting to know how everybody was doing. It was very hard to get information because there was a mini war going on. I sent down two consular officers, Moira Harding and George Lannon, rounded up from the visa office, I believe. We flew them down to Grenada and told them their job was to go around and try to find as many people as they could and report back to us who they were and how they were, etc. So, they did that. I understand when they needed to they a took a car or jeep and just drove it and did what they had to do.

As they were flying them back to the States they would let us know who was on each flight so we know where they most likely would like to go. We had people down at

Charleston, S. C. coming in to meet them and move them on to whatever part of the United States they were from or wanted to go to. Help them get reservations on civilian aircraft and get them on their way. It was a very interesting travel log type of thing and worked pretty well. There was one East German who came back on one of our flights. One of our people got confused about the two Germanies and he was amazed when he found himself in the United States. He never thought in his whole life he would be in the United States. He went over to the PX down there to prove he had been there before we shipped him back.

Q: Had you been getting reports about Grenada? The situation was such that it didn't happen all at once.

HOBBS: It had been brewing for a while.

Q: And there had been turmoil on the island. With these Americans there had you been getting inquiries from parents?

HOBBS: Yes.

Q: We didn't have representation on the island. Were you getting good information or was this a problem?

HOBBS: It was a problem. We couldn't get information very well. There was a US office connected with the school in Grenada and we were in touch with that office trying to find out who was there and how everyone was doing. There was a lot of concern. I prided myself for having some foresight because I figured something was going to happen. This was not going to be a good thing. So, I hop footed it over to the map room of the State Department and asked for a map of Grenada and found out there was just one, and I got it. So, when the thing actually happened, I was able to present the only map the State Department had of Grenada, which was a pretty good bargaining chip with the people in the Ops Center.

When Bishop was killed and events began to unfold there, it became clear...

Q: Bishop was the leader of the new movement.

HOBBS: Right.

Q: He was sort of a crazy Jew.

HOBBS: Yes. It looked very much as if there was a Cuban inspired political event going on there. It was clear to me that we probably were not going to let this happen, something was going to change, and if necessary, by force. And sure enough, that is exactly what happened. We were a bit nervous the week or so before this happened because I didn't know how bad it would be. You could lose people. I didn't know how this was going to work out. It turned out to be fine. We didn't lose any of the students.

Q: If I recall, I interviewed somebody else who said that part of the problem was that the school had a New York office that was saying there was no problem down there. It sounded like they didn't want to lose their investment or something. And that we were making efforts to say that it was probably time to get those people out of there and couldn't arrange to get them out.

HOBBS: Yes, that is right. They were very reluctant to admit there was any kind of problem and didn't want any problem because of the cost involved. This was not a wealthy institution. It was running on whatever it could get in tuition fees semester by semester. Later I was asked to go up to New Jersey and speak to some people who had their sons and daughters in that place and it was clear there was some tension between them. Maybe there wasn't any in the beginning, but by the end there was a great deal of tension between the parents of some of those students and the institution.

We often have problems because people want them to be the way they want them to be, not the way they are. They don't want to recognize what is happening and therefore don't cooperate with us. More people are willing to ignore the government these days, so you don't have "I'm from the government, do as I say" and get "Yes, sir, right away." You get a lot of resistance sometimes. It is very challenging.

Q: Moving on to Lebanon during this 1983-85 period. This is at the height of the kidnaping, the hostage taking. Although this was a consular matter, it was one of the top priorities as far as the president was concerned, among other things. Would you describe a bit of what we are talking about and then what your role was?

HOBBS: Lebanon was going through a terrible civil war and a number of Americans were working in Lebanon in different positions. Some in the American University in Beirut which has been a famous institution for many years. There were journalists, missionaries, etc. They started to be targeted by the terrorists as hostages to have some effect on US policy there. They got one after the other. Right after the first group got kidnapped we put out a travel warning saying that no one is supposed to go to Lebanon, but people all felt they had a good reason to be there and stayed there anyway. Most of the kidnappings took place after Americans had been warned not to go there, or if there, to leave.

There was a little bit of a bureaucratic mess there because the Bureau of Consular Affairs is supposed to deal with the psychology of the event in regards to relatives, and congressional types who were inquiring on behalf of relatives. Whereas, S/CT, Counter Terrorism Office, would deal with the actual political significance of kidnaping for political reasons. So the problem was for us, the consular people, to keep aware of what's going on in order to give the relatives some information that they hadn't seen in the press so we could maintain credibility.

Once they realize we don't know anything in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, then they try to find out who does know something and figure out it is S/CT and go bug them. They

became very much wards of S/CT before this thing was over. They spent a lot of time speaking to the relatives, particularly the ones that were there the longest. A sister of one of the hostages was particularly persistent. She spent a lot of time talking with people in S/CT. I don't really know whether S/CT enjoyed talking to those people or whether they wished Consular had stayed with that job. But, in order for that to happen, the consular people have to be able to tell them something. Sometimes the Department has this problem with so many bureaus and everybody having their own little thing to do, we don't always coordinate with one another well enough to help each of us to do what each of us have to do and the focus shifts somewhere else.

Q: As this crisis grew, were we setting up operation procedures that would assuage the relatives by doing the right thing?

HOBBS: Well, we did that. We had learned that there were certain steps that you have to take. You have to tell them right away as much information as possible. You have to tell them more than what they hear in the press. You have to maintain your own credibility. You need to initiate contact with them, not just wait until they call you, to show that you are really interested in this individual. We would do all that, but the trouble is that if it goes on too long, it all wears out and you then become a loser.

Q: You are not producing a loved one.

HOBBS: You are not making progress. Initially I think they tend to welcome contact with the Department because they think you know something they don't know and want to hear about it and see you as possibly a solution to the problem of getting the person back. But, then as time goes on and that doesn't happen you become the problem and they often turn on you in quite a hostile relationship, but we can't be hostile to them. So, you take a lot of abuse sometimes. It is not easy at all. It is a terrible situation when those things go on for a long time and there is no way you can win. They turn on you. It was very difficult for us because people like Peggy Say were convinced that there was more that could be done.

Q: Peggy Say was the sister of Terry Anderson, a UP correspondent who ended up the longest held hostage.

HOBBS: There was another journalist there named Levy who worked for CNN. He got loose and actually escaped. I flew to Atlanta once to talk to CNN about him because his family also was clearly distraught. When he got out, at first we couldn't believe he had actually escaped but had been let go or something. But, it turned out he did actually escape. It was kind of amazing and he was lucky to get away without being killed.

It is a very difficult event for those people around hostages, the family and relatives, when it goes on for so long.

Q: How did you feel about support within the Department for this?

HOBBS: I thought it was as much as you could get. We always kept in contact with the Lebanon desk and with NEA. You get some differences in personalities of different people, but in almost all cases, you would get a rapport going and they would understand our problem and role and would try to be as helpful as they could and give us as much information as they could. But, none of us were able to give as much information as would have been ideal. I always felt very good working with NEA. It's a bureau that has had so much difficult stuff going on that they were quite used to crises and quite easy to talk to. They were quite willing to understand the consular implications of these things in most every case. That is nice.

Q: Were there any other crises you went through?

HOBBS: Well, the TWA hijacking had a lot of attention for a while. In fact, everybody in Washington flew over to Frankfurt when the passengers were let loose. It was amazing how many people were over there.

When the aircraft was coming in from Lebanon to Frankfurt - they bring them to Frankfurt and offer them medical examinations, etc. - ...they had some people from the FBI go over because it is a violation of US law kidnaping an American citizen. The CIA was there and a whole lot of people. I went over there and Bob Oakley, head of S/CT, went over. Vice President Bush went over and Senator Kennedy. I was there talking to some of the hostages' relatives at this little waiting area, lounge, and trying to find things to say because they are all on edge. Finally I said to one of them, "Have you ever met the Vice President?" He said, "No, never." I said, "Well, come over here and I will introduce you." I took him over and introduced him as the brother of so-and-so and the Vice President was very, very good, absolutely marvelous.

Q: I've heard he was good at that sort of thing.

HOBBS: He did a fantastic job of making them feel he was very interested in their situation. He was very impressive and worked the room very nicely showing the government cared.

The ride back was amazing. TWA put on a special aircraft and treated everybody as first class passengers–good food, lots of flight attendants, etc. They were all in various ways traumatized by this thing. Some of them were very talkative, some were very withdrawn. It was kind of interesting to spend that many hours on an aircraft with people who had been through such a difficult situation. It was a terrible experience for them and to see them and get to know them better was a very special thing.

The welcome when they touched down at Andrews I thought was very touching. I thought it was an example of what Americans do sometimes in taking care of their own. I thought it was something that these people needed. A way of releasing the emotions they had. It was a nice ending, for most people, to a very traumatic event. I'm sure none would like to go through it again.

I felt it was the kind of job that gave you enough highs, these very special events, which more than compensated for all the trouble that went on.

Q: Did you have problems with your personnel? I would think some people would be almost genetically unsuited to deal with grief.

HOBBS: Yes, they are. We found that they sort of self-select. I remember I was getting ready to leave the emergency center and called one woman who I knew and thought was a fantastic consular officer and felt should bid on the job. She said that I must be absolutely crazy. The last thing she ever wanted to do was to work in such a stupid job as that. If she had anything to say about it she would be doing visas, not that. I said that if she felt that way about it, she was absolutely right. Usually there were people who sought that job. We would have quite a few bidders on each of the jobs and therefore would be somewhat selective. We didn't make very many mistakes. Most people were pretty good at it who were willing to put up with it. The more difficult part, I think, was the civil service employees who had been there a long time doing one narrow function and then we made it a broader function. Some liked it more than others. We had to do some training to make them understand.

Q: Did you get any heat from Congress?

HOBBS: No, we never really did. Once I remember then Congressman Panetta called me up because he wanted to talk about one case of some California citizen who had been in some kind of scrap abroad. He just wanted to make sure we were doing all we could. I spent about 20 minutes talking to him and he smiled satisfied. Once I had a hearing on the Lebanese kidnaping during which Ollie North and I sat in the back room. He didn't say much. Mostly we did a good job of working the congressional staff to let them know what we were doing so in most cases they were able to convince their member of congress that we were doing all we could.

I remember one case where a woman was arrested in Nigeria after a coup. She had been very close to the general who had been overthrown and was arrested and threatened with death. We put a lot of pressure on via the press and worked very closely with the Nigeria desk. They were very helpful. We pressed and pressed and pressed and in the end they let her go. But, her daughters were interviewed on the *Today Show* and I remember watching the interview. One of the two daughters was well known as Miss Black Camay, a model for Camay soap. Jane Pauley sticks a microphone in her mouth and says, "I suppose the State Department isn't doing anything for you." She said, "No, no, to the contrary. They have been very nice and call us all the time and keep us informed." I thought, "Thank God for that!" It was an example of the immediate reaction of the press that the government is not doing anything. In the end she was released and the daughters were quite pleased we were doing all we could. Maybe they wouldn't have stayed so supported if the situation had dragged on for six months or so, but it was nice to have that bit of confidence.

Mike Mahoney became director of emergency services after I left.

Q: After this, David, where did you move?

HOBBS: I got assigned to the Senior Seminar. I remember that was interesting because I was in my office one day when Vern Penner came to tell me that I was assigned to the Senior Seminar. I said okay that sounds all right. I realized later that the consular section in Mexico didn't have a consul general. One was leaving and they didn't have anyone in mind to take his place. I was having a lot of contact with the Mexican desk because there was always something going on along the border. George High was the head of Mexican affairs and I used to go over to see him a lot on one thing or another. He was kind of lamenting there was no consul general going to Mexico. I said I would love to go to Mexico as consul general but had been assigned to Senior Seminar. I said I would go see Joan Clark, Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs, and see if I can get her to agree that I can go to Mexico instead. I went to see her and told her I would be happy to go to Mexico and do anything that would be helpful to the consulate and the bureau. She said, "No, you are going to the Senior Seminar. It is good for you and you are going to go." I said, "Oh, okay."

I left and weeks went by and nobody appeared on the horizon. George and I were lamenting more and more. I told him I had done my part and it was up to him now. He went over to see her and started talking about how very concerned he was that nobody was going to Mexico to fill the most important consular job in the world. It was important even if someone had to be pulled out of training to fill the position. She said, "Hobbs is not going." So, I went to the Senior Seminar and had a good time.

Q: You were there from 1985-86. What do you feel you got out of the seminar?

HOBBS: I think what the Senior Seminar does in a way is allows usually very busy, hard working officers to sit back and look at things a little more leisurely. It wasn't very grueling. I met many influential people in different areas. People who otherwise would be difficult to see. It was primarily domestic oriented because we spent so much of our time thinking about what is going on overseas that we don't think much about what is going on in our own country and what makes it tick. So, I found the opportunity very useful. Not in a specific way because it didn't lead to a specific reward, but just in general it was very good.

I found in later years that it created a little network. People with whom you went to senior seminar you could always call. As I am leaving government I have contacted a number of them. They are busy doing something and know a lot of people and can tell you other people you should meet. Therefore it is an excellent networking tool, not necessarily immediately, but if you hang on to it very useful later.

Q: In 1986 you came out, and whither?

HOBBS: I went to Bogota to fight the drug war. *Was this a normal assignment? Did you go out and find it for yourself?*

HOBBS: I went out and found it for myself like I have for most of my assignments. I was finishing the Senior Seminar and playing around with the possibility of the DCM job here and there. But, getting DCM jobs is usually a fairly personal thing. You have to have a pretty good relationship with a particular person who is going to post and I just didn't have the right connection at that time. I was an also-ran several times and decided to grab something challenging in a consular job. Bogota had been on the list for some time and I had never been there so decided to bid on it. I was the only bidder of that grade, so it was easy to get the job. I went on down there in September, 1986, having finished the Senior Seminar in June.

I didn't have Spanish, although I had Portuguese which is close. While I was in the Senior Seminar I would go down to the language lab and work on Spanish on my own because I had spoken with Mike Skol, the DCM there at the time, and he wanted me to be there by September, so I knew I only had three months to learn Spanish. I did manage to get language qualified in three months and got down there in September.

Q: You served there as chief of the consular section from 1986 until 1989, three years.

HOBBS: Right.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

HOBBS: Tony Gillespie.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you went down, politically?

HOBBS: The post has a reputation of being a very, very dangerous post and I suppose it was in a way. The drug war had been going on for a while and we were trying to work with the Colombian government to put a little crimp in the narcotic traffic out of that country. First marijuana and later on cocaine became a major export item from that country. The famous Medellin and Cali cartels, criminal elements, were going full blast. A few months before I got there a bomb had gone off in front of the embassy and a woman who was waiting outside to get a visa was killed. There was a tremendous amount of tension. We had hundreds of jeeps, bodyguards, machine guns, etc. The place was an armed camp.

The president of Colombia, Barco at the time, did some very helpful and I suppose you would say brave things. He, for a while, opened up the window for extradition, although it was stopped after a few months by a parliamentary bill. We had a chance to extradite narcotic offenders to the United States. I got pretty much involved in that. We extradited quite a number. One of the first was Carlos Lader, who was the famous leader of the drug business of Colombia. He was prosecuted and is still serving time.

Q: What is the consular role in an extradition case?

HOBBS: It is basically just paper work. You sign the various papers and put on the blue ribbons and seals on it. It is not a major thing. We worked with the Colombian government and courts to make sure the papers met their standards of identification of offense and offender, etc. We had a little contact with them. There was a lot of work involved when the papers were received in Bogota from the States, after having passed through the Justice Department. We had to go over them pretty carefully to make sure there were no errors or omissions. In fact, we found quite often there were and would fix things up a bit before sending them over to the Colombian government, not wanting them to turn down the extradition on technical grounds. It was a rather tense time and very necessary to pay attention to a lot of detail. We didn't know how long this would go on or how the narcotic offenders would react to this. Whether or not they would decide to take revenge on some of us personally because we were involved in the process.

Q: Were you married when you were there?

HOBBS: Adult dependents were allowed at post but no minor dependents because there would be more people to protect and more vans going around with Americans in them. It just made it too costly. My spouse did not come with me the first year because we had a son finishing high school in Virginia. My daughter went to boarding school and it was important for her to have a full year there. So, I was alone the first year and later my wife joined me.

Q: What was your impression of how Tony Gillespie ran the embassy?

HOBBS: I think he was very good. I felt he was an excellent manager. He had a good DCM, too, in Mike Skol. Tony had a big picture and understood very well, I think, the environment in which we were working. He understood all the theory we were up to but also very practical in making decisions. I remember once I went to him when I got the idea that we should be refusing visas to Colombian congressional members who we had information making us aware of their involvement in the narcotic traffic. Why should they be exempt from paying the price? I knew it would be controversial if we took on congressional leaders. One was a presidential candidate, which would cause a bit of an uproar. I went to see Tony Gillespie about this idea. He listened to me, thought about it for a few minutes and said, "Go ahead. It makes sense." I was pleased to see a person in his position who could see all the pressure from the Colombian government to be nice to them. If he was uncomfortable with the idea he never showed it to us. He was quite willing to let us take the visas from the various congressmen.

Q: What happened when you started to do this? Did the papers attack you?

HOBBS: Yes, there was a bit of an uproar. At first the congressmen would come in and want to know why this was being done. You can't tell them precisely why because you can't reveal intelligence sources and methods, but you would give them enough information to let them know it had to do with narcotics. At one time I had a congressman crying in my office over losing his visa. It was probably the worse punishment he ever had, I suppose, to lose his visa.

Eventually it got to be a matter of debate in the congress and they had this famous debate where I was denounced personally by one of the north coast politicians for my role in this. I stayed on in Colombia for three more years and for awhile. The foreign minister, whenever he saw me, even after I had left the consular section, would refer to me as señor consul to let me know that he remembered my role in the visa thing, I guess. However, it was something we needed to do, did it and got away with it. I think it sent a message that the United States government was serious about the drug war and you didn't have any position whatever that made you exempt from the rules that everybody else played by. Later, after I left Colombia, we took the visa from the president, Samper.

Q: Where were you getting your information from?

HOBBS: Intelligence sources.

Q: How about the support you got back in Washington?

HOBBS: I think it was very good in general, but I had one little campaign I had to wage. The immigration law was changed to allow one to take the visa from those who only aided and abetted. You didn't have to actually engage in drug trafficking. That is what we were using in most cases to take the congressional visas. Initially it wasn't easy. I would send an advisory opinion to Washington on a case and then go on R&R and fly to Washington and work the case there with the visa office to try to convince them that the amount of information we sent up was sufficient, did fall under the law and was the right thing to do. I would talk them into doing the answer that we wanted and then fly back down to Colombia to carry out the decision. It took a little bit of that for awhile until they got used to the idea. There seemed to be a little reluctance at first to use that section of the law.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were looking at this as a very practical political message that we were doing but when it got to the visa office it was in the hands of attorneys who were looking at it without thinking about the foreign policy implications?

HOBBS: A little bit, but in a way it was kind of odd. Usually it would be the legal person who wanted to do what was right by the law regardless of political implications. But in this case we were the ones who wanted to have it done because of the political implications and the advisors were reluctant to do it. I was quite surprised at first. I adjusted to that and tried to use my influence to get it to work. We did get a number refused.

It was just the opposite case in Bolivia following Gilbert's time there. Dick Bowers was there as ambassador. There the embassy was trying not to have the visa from one of the prominent Bolivian politicians taken away, but the Department in that case took the visa. That is more typical.

Q: I would think so. Normally the embassy tries to go along with the government because

there is always something bigger that you have to deal with.

HOBBS: It is very important for them too to be able to have their visa to go to Miami or somewhere. Everybody goes up there and it is kind of a social stigma not to be able to go. So, it is an excellent weapon for us and we started using it. I was the person who told them they couldn't have a visa. I would do it in my office with the door closed to indicate how seriously we took the situation. I would have closed door sessions amassing all the information to see if we had enough to justify taking a visa. We got 20 some visas during my time there.

Q: Were there any American congressional queries about this?

HOBBS: Not about our taking visas from the Colombians; no. Not one single American inquired. I don't know if any Colombian congressman ever got in touch with an American congressman and complained about it, but if they did they probably assumed we had the information we needed and nobody ever raised it.

Q: With the tremendous drug trafficking going on there, there must have been Americans involved. Did that arise?

HOBBS: A little of that but much less than I expected. By the time I got there the narcotic trafficking had progressed way beyond the simple little mule carrying a little bit of cocaine on their person. They were shipping it in ships and aircraft, using commercial shipping and aircraft that belonged to them. There was one case that lingered on, having taken place before I got there, where a person claimed that he had been unjustly arrested and that the DEA had engaged in framing him and participated in some interrogation of him. But the guy had left by then. So, that case wasn't a problem.

At time we tried to look into these allegations but they were very fuzzy and you couldn't put much credence in them. We had only about six or eight prisoners which is a very small number for a country that size.

Q: That is amazing.

HOBBS: Yes, but there were no more tourists coming in so that cut down the usual tourist getting into trouble. The mule business had pretty much stopped. There wasn't much going on.

Q: You might explain what a mule is.

HOBBS: An individual who carries narcotics for the traffickers on their body. There was very little of that. Once in a while you would get somebody who was carrying small amounts but they usually got caught at the other end, States side.

One case that was difficult. When I was still in Washington in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, I participated in an effort to get a judge in New England to extradite to Colombia

an American who had been charged with marijuana trafficking and had gotten away and was in the States. We were working very hard to get the Colombians extradited to the United States and this was the one case where the Colombians tried to extradite an American. We were quite interested in that case to see if it justified extradition. In the end they get the man extradited to Colombia.

This was before I even thought about being in Colombia. When I got down to Colombia I thought about that case and wondered how it turned out. I checked up and found out that the man had still not gone to trial. He had been waiting three years for trial. I decided that wasn't good enough and went to see the judge in charge of the case to try to explain that a little bit quicker justice would be appropriate. She told me all the sad stories about how much work she had and how difficult it was. I remember I came back to the embassy and talked with our legal advisor, who was a Colombian attorney who had been on our staff for many years. I told her I wanted to go see the minister of justice to complain about this. She said I couldn't do that, the policy people don't do cases. Then I requested to see the person who runs the court...

I did go see that person and the case got resolved very quickly. The man was released on bail. But then he did a dumb thing. He tried to escape across the border to Ecuador with some emeralds in his pocket to finance his trip. He got arrested again for that. Within a few months he was let out on bail again and it was clear that everybody just turned a blind eye and let him leave the country. My feeling was that in a way he didn't get the justice he deserved, on the other hand he got what he didn't deserve which was many years of waiting in jail without the court determining he was guilty.

Q: David, what about the other side of citizenship and welfare work, like with missionaries. You had a guerilla war going on and you had Americans out there. Was this a problem for you at the time?

HOBBS: Yes, it was. Colombia has a lot of kidnappings, over 15,000 in one year. A few of those are Americans. You are right, the people who get caught are usually those Americans who are out in the interior, the oil business or missionaries. I think we had around 15 Americans kidnapped during my time in Colombia. They were difficult cases because they would hold them a long time.

It was usually guerilla, not narcotic kidnappings. When the guerilla movement of Colombia lost their financial support they used to get from Cuba, they needed to find an alternative source of income and turned to bank robberies, kidnappings and criminal activities like that. They became basically bands of criminals more than they were ideologues trying to change the world. I think they forgot they were supposed to be some kind of crusaders for a new world order. So, we had a number of Americans kidnapped.

I remember one case where two young men 21 years old disappeared. Their parents said they were on a voyage by small boats all through Colombia and down through South America. The idea was to travel through South America from river to river. They got kidnapped and held for months. We heard nothing and assumed they were dead. About

the tenth month into the kidnapping a letter came to the embassy one day addressed to Bogota. The letter was supposedly written by these two young men with a note attached to it from the guerillas, said they were fine, doing well and moving around with the guerillas. The note from the guerillas said we should put an ad in the newspaper using a specific series of words and then we would hear further. So, we did. A few weeks later we got a contact. But, then we couldn't get any actual contact.

I then got in contact with a bishop who was said to be a leftist bishop and somebody who probably had contact with the guerillas. He said he thought he could be helpful. In the meantime the family had hired one of those companies that takes care of these sort of things, does the negotiating and such in kidnaping cases. A few weeks later the bishop arranged for a delivery of the boys. They showed up at a house where we had arranged to meet with them. We talked with them for a long time.

I talked to the bishop later and he described how the actual turnover took place. He took his jeep, along with a card table, table cloth and a bottle of wine, and drove to a clearing in the jungle. He made a little noise to make sure they knew he was there and after a while he heard some rustling in the bushes and somebody sticks his head out and comes over and talks to him to make sure he is the right guy. Then the boys walk out of the bushes. Somebody else brings a chicken, which they kill, cook and eat with the wine. The bishop drives off with the boys and the guerillas take off with his card table and table cloth. It was kind of an interesting story.

Q: Presumably somebody paid money.

HOBBS: Well, the funny thing is in this case they didn't. The company that had been hired to deal with this said initially the guerillas had been convinced that they were CIA agents, these two young men. They thought they had some real prizes there and were going to make a lot of money off of them. But, eventually the bishop convinced them they were just kids on a lark. I was told later by the man from the company that they didn't pay anything. It was the only case he ever had where they didn't pay anything.

Q: Could you talk a bit about these companies?

HOBBS: There are a number of them and more are being formed all the time as the kidnaping and terrorism business expands around the world. Often they are people who have former intelligence or law enforcement background.

Q: These are Americans?

HOBBS: Well, Americans, and there are some British companies that I am aware of, too.

Q: But these are not Colombian groups?

HOBBS: No. American groups that we were dealing with there. Usually the relatives of the Americans kidnapped would contact these companies, or they contact the relatives to

let them know they deal in this world and have contacts. The US government is not allowed to negotiate for the release of prisoners by offering money. We might negotiate in the sense that we will discuss with them what they want, but we don't give in to their demands. It is a good policy because it is pretty well known now that you don't talk with the American government and get political concessions or money, or whatever you want when you kidnap an American. But, these companies do negotiate ransoms.

My policy was that I really didn't want to know what was going on. I knew what they were up to but didn't want them to tell me because I didn't want to be involved in any way. I would be concerned about the welfare of those kidnapped, try to make contact to find out how they were doing, insist that they let them go, but never really wanted to know what they were offering. But, you generally did know, and the price went up quite a bit. It used to be about $200,000 and during my time it went over a million. The Japanese had an executive kidnapped and he was out very quickly. I know they paid the million. I went to see the Japanese ambassador once and was nice to him but let him know that we were disappointed that they had paid so much so quickly because now his citizens were the best prize in town. It also raised the price for foreigners in general. I told him we had this policy of never paying, etc. But, the Japanese usually paid.

Q: Were we taking active steps to keep Americans out of the country?

HOBBS: We tried. We put out a travel warning against coming to Colombia. The Colombians didn't like that very much because they felt it would ruin tourism, which was partly true. But, my experience in these countries where we put out travel warnings, I think what ruins travel to these countries is not the warning so much as just the reputation the country has in general. I don't think our warnings have that much effect.

The way Americans find out about travel warnings is through airline reservation systems which pick up on that. The travel agencies want to know because they feel there is a liability that they might suffer if they send clients to countries which the State Department has warned people not to go to and their client hasn't been informed. So, we give our warnings to the travel agency associations who would disseminate it in various ways. Newspapers pick up on warnings and you see notices printed in travel sections. But, of course, we can't stop anybody from traveling to those places, we just tell them they shouldn't. Tourism was almost nonexistent in Colombia.

Q: When there was a kidnaping of an American, what would be the role of the embassy and the consular section?

HOBBS: We had a pretty good drill down because we were so used to it. It started with Tony Gillespie and continued with all the other ambassadors during my time. I was there with three ambassadors. We had a kidnap committee, which included the DCM, the consul general, who always dealt with the families; the legal attaché, because they had good contacts with the police in Colombia; the military attaché because they had contacts with the military; and the intelligence person, who picked up stuff here and there. We met all the time and discussed what we knew and any new information that came up.

Q: How did you deal with the families?

HOBBS: If the families were in the United States they dealt mostly with the State Department. We would then deal with the families through the emergency center in the State Department. If the family was in the country, then we had direct contact with them. It was a difficult situation because if you are picking up some intelligence you can't tell them how you got something or everything we knew. You could say we have received some indication that we think is credible that your relative is alive and well in good health, or maybe not in good health. I remember one person who had terrible foot problems. The guerillas moved around constantly so there was a lot of walking. So, it goes on and on and often a family get antsy for more specific information and we just don't have it. We, tell them it takes a long time and a long time doesn't necessarily mean bad. In Colombia we had things going on for months before we got contacts. At that time we could say that there was never anybody killed by their captives. There were two cases where one died of a heart attack while captive, and another died of a heart attack while being released. Since then, there have been people killed in captivity.

Q: What about American businesses in Colombia, did they sort of take care of their own?

HOBBS: They had quite an elaborate security network because there was a big threat. Occidental Petroleum was blown up once. Coca Cola was constantly getting threats. Occasionally they would lose a bottling plant or something. Things that were symbols of America or companies that were known to be American companies were often picked on by the guerillas to further their image of protecting the country from exploitation by capitalists. So, they had very, very rigorous security requirements for their employees.

One time the guerillas kidnapped a man who they thought was a Filipino and actually he was an American. We guarded that information very carefully because we didn't want them to know they had an American, which would have made the man a bigger prize. He got out without them ever knowing he was an American.

But, once in a while the security net doesn't work and they get somebody caught. We never wanted the Colombian government to rescue them. They weren't well trained and lost a couple people. The daughter of one of the presidents was kidnapped once and in the rescue attempt they killed her. That is not a very good outcome.

There was one lucky person, a friend of Estrada, who was the son of a president, who was mayor of Bogota at the time he was kidnapped. There was an operation of some kind going on and inadvertently they rescued him. He sort of walked away from the situation while shooting was going on.

We tried to keep the Colombians relaxed and not to rush things. Don't try to rescue anybody, try to talk them out.

Q: Did you find Colombia a violent society with a lot of guns and problems?

HOBBS: Yes and no. There are a lot of guns and far too much violence. I was in a hotel for the first three months I was in Colombia waiting for an apartment. After moving into an apartment I went back to the hotel for a meal. I left around 9:30 at night and two cars almost collided at the intersection. It was a small hotel in a very nice residential area in the northern part of Bogota. There wasn't a lot traffic there then. Both drivers jump out of their cars and start screaming at each other–a man in his forties and a woman probably in her thirties. They were face to face when suddenly the woman reached in her purse, pulled out a gun and shot the guy. I was only about 15 yards away. I stood there like a dummy and watched. She waived the pistol in the air and looked around, then shot the man in the stomach again. He sinks to the ground and I finally get enough sense to sink behind a car. An elderly private guard appears and walks over to her and takes the gun from her hand. Then there was yelling and screaming and she walked over to the guy on the ground and spit on him. It was probably over an hour before the police finally came. When they did come there were about 15 motorcycles pulling up. Then a Volkswagen police car pulled up and they threw the man into the back seat and headed off to the hospital. I thought he might be dead for awhile, but he did move when they picked him up.

I never knew what happened to him because that same night there had been a shoot out in an Italian restaurant where a man, who, the papers pointed out over and over, was a veteran of the United States army and fought in Vietnam, although a Colombian citizen, had freaked out and gone to this restaurant and shot and killed 20 some people. He just cleaned out the restaurant. It was amazing because just everybody in the restaurant was armed but nobody had the nerve to take on this guy. It was incredible.

I saw another guy killed on a street. It was common, really. And, yet, I found that sometimes Colombians would go a long way to avoid confrontation and violence. If you get in a traffic jam and are able to catch a person's eye and look him straight in the eye, you win, they will give. You can almost always get them to back off if you get eye contact.

Q: What about as a consular officer dealing with the judiciary and policy force?

HOBBS: The prisons were lousy but we could usually get the few prisoners we had into better conditions than anyone else in the country had. They would treat them okay. So, we got good cooperation from the jails. To help with our anti-fraud efforts, there was a lot of visa fraud in Colombia, we had a Colombian policeman and a representative from the Colombian FBI equivalent organization, working out of the embassy. They assisted us in fraud investigations. You always wondered how much they made on the side doing this. I made sure we had new people every year to prevent them from getting too entrenched.

When we had a fraud to which a person would confess, the police would say they were going to take them away and arrest them. However, I knew what happened. They took them down the street about three blocks, out of sight of the embassy and then they would

come to some sort of agreement. There was never any prosecution that we could point to. They were cooperative, but on the other hand their system took over and they would take the pay offs. But, at least it hassled the fraud people a bit and the perpetrator didn't get the visa and had to pay off the cops.

With the military we had not too much to do on the consular side other than the kidnappings. The military attaché when I first got there felt it was imperative that every military person in the country get a visa, so he had an incredible number of referrals. I spent a good bit of time making sure these referrals were legitimate and referring to people they actually knew.

Basically the cooperation with the Colombian authorities was very good. I enjoyed the Colombian people, liked their culture and atmosphere.

Q: Did you get any reflections as a consular officer from the Colombian community that settled in Miami? I am thinking of the ones who became American citizens. Were they a problem pressing for visas, etc.?

HOBBS: No, there wasn't much of that. I guess this was because the Colombians living in the States tried to avoid traveling to Colombia.

There was one time somebody came to tell me there was a guy in the lobby who wanted to see me, an American from Colombia. I had him come up and it turned out he had come in to brag a little bit. He was a fairly gregarious guy, an insurance person. He was head of the regional New England Association of Insurance Brokers, or something. He was also, so he said, the head of the Republican party for Massachusetts. He just wanted to let me know that he had gotten to the States in the early sixties on a tourist visa and never came back. He wanted me to know that not everybody who goes to the United States illegally is going to be a bum. Some of us, he said, become important people and make more money than the president. I congratulated him on his great success and didn't show any hard feelings that he got a visa which he misused by staying in the States.

I tell some of the people I work with in the consular business that the system is not perfect by any means. Once you have lost a case I don't see any reason to get excited about it. You do your best and try to make good decisions. The system is just not there to be perfect, especially when you get congressional pressure to issue visas. The poor consuls are getting mixed messages--keep all the bad guys out but issue a visa if there is influence. It is doomed to be less then perfect.

Q: It's a hard one. I used to have the same thing when I was in Korea telling the young vice consuls to do their best.

HOBBS: We have to be philosophical about it. We have no excuse not to do our best, but what we are given to work with, our best is quite frankly not good enough. We need more bodies to do the job as well as we know we could. But, we do the best we can with what we have and I go home and never lose any sleep.

Q: In 1989 you left the consular section and what?

HOBBS: I was getting ready to leave Colombia and was looking around where I could go next. The one job that I had a lot of pressure on me to take was the consul general in Manila, which I would have loved to have had, in a way. But, I had kids in school in the States and it was a long way from Manila to the States, phone calls are difficult, etc. I decided not to go there. I had the good fortune of having the ambassador, Ted McNamara, who I had known ever since I came into the Service, ask if I would stay on as political counselor for a year and possibly DCM after that. After thinking about it for a while I decided why not, I was having a good time, it would be a great assignment. So, I went on home leave and returned to be the political counselor.

While I was on home leave we got word that Galan, who was running for president, was shot and killed. He would have been, I think, a great president if he had made it. His campaign manager, Gaviria, became a presidential candidate and won and went on to be, I think, an excellent president. He later became the head of the OES. He did a very good job of collaborating with McNamara. I had a good time working on political issues and then later as DCM.

Q: So from 1989 to 1992 you were back in Colombia?

HOBBS: Yes. From 1989-90 I was political counselor and from 1990-92 I was DCM. So, it was a six year tour.

Q: That's a long time. What was the political situation and how did the embassy deal with the Colombian side during this period?

HOBBS: When I first got to Colombia there used to be a fair amount of questioning inside the embassy whether the government under Barco was really committed to the anti-narcotic effort. Then Barco got really tough and let us have extradition for a while before a constitutional amendment stopped it. Barco sort of became our hero in a way.

When Gaviria came in the same thing happened. It seems like one of the characteristics of Colombian politics is as a person takes power they usually try to unify the country, reach out and touch everybody. So, Gaviria appeared at first to be making concessions to the narcos. But some of us who had been there long enough, and I certainly was one, remembered we used to say the same thing about Barco and he got really tough, so we shouldn't necessarily assume that because Gaviria was trying to make some concessions to show that the government was being reasonable, we wouldn't later on get more support.

I remember they had worked out this deal where the persons who were accused of narcotic traffic could confess and turn themselves in and get a reduced sentence for doing that. If they cooperated and gave the government information they could get an even more reduced sentence. So, someone who was caught and tried could get up to 30 years,

but by turning himself in and cooperating and with good behavior get off with three or four years. That seemed to us to be excessive. But, the Colombians felt they needed to show that they were not just fighting the Americans' war for them but were acting in a Colombian context. That is why I think sometimes the Colombians get the rap of being very violent, but in a way they are not that violent. A lot of violence goes on, yes, but they kind of look for compromise, concessions to make things work without confrontation. So, we had that going on during the first years of the Gaviria administration.

There was constitutional reform going on which was very mischievous because the narcos were deep into that process. They were influencing the congressmen to get a constitution that was more to their liking. It was very hard to get the Colombians to see that and to accept that. They had a hard time understanding how deep the corruption was, how deep the penetration of the narcotic traffic had become. Early on they tried to kid themselves by believing drugs were an American problem, they were only selling them. They didn't realize that once you get into a drug situation with such a large mafia that they would end up suffering the consequences themselves. And one of them was violence.

Medellin was particularly violent. It was a wonderful place that became one of the most violent places on earth. Business suffered greatly, people took their investments elsewhere. The city became a shell of what it was. And, what they couldn't see was that this was going to happen to the whole country as the mafia got deeper and deeper into it. They would kid themselves about how the influence wasn't so deep and how could commerce be influenced. We would find evidence of all this. Some Colombians would come and tell you confidentially on the side that we were doing the right thing. This was really bad and we were in trouble. But, yet, it was very hard for them to accept that in a public way.

So, we always had this tension with Colombia. They were trying to do the right thing. They had a very good anti-narcotic police that worked very hard with us to try to crush drug trafficking. There were military who were working very hard to try to do the right thing. It was a very mixed message. You would get victories and defeats every day.

I remember during the extraditions, there was this case where the judge called me and said that she was being told by lawyers for this person we were trying to get out of there, that we had his identity wrong and therefore he shouldn't be extradited. She wanted to know if I could do more to prove his identity. I asked like what? Pilot's license, driver's license, etc. I pulled every stop I could and got all this stuff together the same day and called her up a little after 5:00 to tell her I had everything she requested. She said she would come over and look at it. She came over to the embassy and walked into the room and you would never guess she was a judge with that kind of power and backbone, but more like she might have worked at a fruit stand somewhere on the street. A very simple woman, not very well dressed. I talked to her a little bit and realized this was a very simple woman really. She wasn't any big deal. I asked if she would like to meet the ambassador and she was thrilled never having met an ambassador before. We joined the

ambassador and talked for a little bit. I asked her how she got here. After all she was coming over here to look at information that may put somebody in jail in the United States for life. Did she have bodyguards? "Oh, I just came in a taxi," she said. I asked if she wasn't afraid sometimes without bodyguards? She said, "You just have to do what you have to do." She was just doing the right thing, being honorable.

There are all kinds of Colombians like that who are brave, love their country, want to do the right thing, and will do it in the face of great danger. You have to wonder how many of us would do what they do in similar circumstance. Yet, Colombia has a bad reputation like they are all narcos. Of course, there is certainly enough corruption there to make it a difficult place to make progress. It is a country that constantly has you going in both directions. You are proud of what you are doing, admire some of the people you work with, yet are constantly being shown that things are not working very well.

Q: What was your impression of the Colombian congress?

HOBBS: It was a useless and corrupt institution basically. The presidency of Colombia is fairly strong and the congress doesn't really have much power. It is fairly corrupt and easy to get one congressman at a time in your pocket and after awhile you get a whole bunch of them in your pocket. It looks as if they have the president now. We didn't spend a lot of time hobnobbing with congressmen.

Q: I think that is interesting that congress is not the place you would go to make your points to get something down.

HOBBS: You go to the head of the national police, the head of the military, the ministers and the presidency.

There would be some congressman who were good contacts and well clued into what was happening. We used to spend a fair amount of time with Botero, who became the minister of defense in the Samper administration. He is the son of the famous sculptor. He seemed to be someone who was on his way up, but then, of course, he got caught in a scandal in the Samper administration and ended up in jail for corruption, narcotic influence. Even someone like that who appeared at the time to be somebody maybe a little bit above that, turned out not to be. So, we didn't work too closely with the congress, we worked with the other institutions.

Q: What was your impression of Ambassador McNamara?

HOBBS: In retrospect he seemed to be the right person at the time. He had a fairly extensive political/military background so he knew very much the military side of things. When Gaviria was elected and we were pretty sure they were committed to the effort, we suddenly got a tremendous amount of military assistance available to us. McNamara knew how to work that system very well and how to get it to Colombia and then apply it to the effort in Colombia. I don't think he was appointed to that job because of his background, but once there and the opportunities were available, he really did a great job

of getting assistance for Colombia. I think we had a very good thing going there during the Gaviria years. We provided them a lot of the wherewithal they needed to do the job and they were the soldiers on the ground doing the job.

Q: At some point, I'm not sure it was during this time, there was a highly publicized case in the United States about drug lords being arrested and being put into luxurious quarters, etc. Did this happen during the time you were there? If so, what role did the embassy play?

HOBBS: That was a difficult one. The Ocholas turned themselves in and then later Escobar was captured. The Colombians started hearing accusations that these narcos were living in rather luxurious surroundings. They built a special place to hold the Ocholas. So we became convinced they were living a pretty good existence under the circumstances. There was evidence that Escobar was leaving the prison at night and going to parties. They pretty much carried on business as usual from the safety of the prison. We put a lot of pressure on the presidency to do something about that. They kept telling us it wasn't true, although looking back on it now they must have known that it was true. I think they just didn't want to take on the narcos in that way. They figured if they got them in jail, maybe they could tighten the noose later. One of them asked me once how quickly did we get our mafia under control. How many years was it they were working mafia business out of prison? They were kind of aware that it took us a long time to really get control. They felt we owed them a little time to get their situation under control. And they probably are right. Why should we expect them to do in one year what took us 20 or 30 years. So, it is a difficult situation.

Q: As DCM you were responsible for the daily management of the embassy. Colombia was a dangerous place and embassy people were targets. What did you find you had to do?

HOBBS: It was difficult in a way because we had a number of agencies in the embassy. When you have an embassy where minor or all dependents are evacuated out, and there is danger pay and hardship pay you attract sort of the Lone Ranger types. You had a lot of cowboys who were risk takers and hard to control somewhat. So, we put bars off limits. We had people leaving their weapons in bars and taxis and strange places. We had a lot of these problems inside the embassy. It was a pretty rough crowd. You get a little smattering of that and it is hard to control.

There was an incident where an officer was accused of hitting a senator's car and running, and doing quite a bit of damage. The officer denied he was ever there, but the guy had a perfect description of him. We constantly changed license plates among our cars so it would be harder to identify who was who. The license plate that was supposed to be on this guy's car was not the license plate that the senator said he saw. But, he saw the plate that the guy really had on his car, so he must have seen the plate and taken it down. We were never able to get the guy to admit that he was there. You are constantly trying to deal with almost juvenile delinquents, it is just incredible. Trying to keep things under control was difficult.

DEA had a large, large contingent. I was told before I went there that the most difficult job as an ambassador was control over the AID operation. However, we didn't have much of an AID operation. The difficult one was DEA. There were so many of them and many had spent a long time with the drug war.

When the head of the DAS, the sort of Colombian FBI, was fired, DEA was very upset by that. They thought he was sort of a hero of the drug war. But, the president had gotten the idea that he really wasn't as committed as he should be. In fact, some of us believe he was committed to fighting the Medellin group but was really in the pocket of the Cali group. There was some indication of that, but no proof. We sent a cable to Washington about the firing. The political officer who wrote it took it down to DEA to clear it, but they didn't agree with it. DEA wanted to send a different cable which was sort of juvenile and poorly done. I told them that they were entitled to say what they wanted but they should do a better job of it. The cable was not well drafted. I got a call from Phil McQueen, who was deputy assistant secretary in ARA a couple of hours after sending the telegram. He said, "I hear you are squashing DEA reporting? What is this about?" I said, "What do you mean squashing their reporting?" Well, the DEA guys had called their headquarters and their headquarters had called the State Department saying I had stopped them from reporting on this incident. I called up the head of DEA and told him this was not true, I was just trying to tell him that the cable as is was very badly written and would look stupid. I told him I didn't care if he sent it, but put on it that the embassy did not clear it. And, so they did. [Then a] call asking "what sort of garbage was coming out of Bogota. This is the stupidest cable I ever saw". That is what I thought too, that is what I was squashing.

The next day the head of DEA comes in to see me and said, "You know, that wasn't very nice what you did yesterday." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You let us look like fools and you shouldn't have done that." "Listen," I said, "I tried to stop you and you went around me to Washington with accusations against me so I let you fall over yourself because you deserve it." We had a very blunt conversation. It was an example of how difficult it was sometimes to bring these people into line.

It was the same guy that when he left made a lot of accusations against the Colombians. He was really upset with them. He had been there a long time. I basically figured out that he had two contacts. One was the head of the DAS and one was the head of the national forces and that was basically it. Whereas we in the embassy needed much broader contacts to understand the country, and many of the officers had broader contacts and therefore were able to put things into a better perspective. With limited contacts it is very hard to see things as they really might be.

Q: I think this is always one of the real problems with DEA and CIA. Sometimes they get wedded to their contacts which may be really very few and they have been milking them for a long time so that their point of view is really much more restricted than is apparent. It is the way they operate.

HOBBS: Early on in my career it was made clear to me by an incident that happened in a meeting I had with my consul general over a grant for somebody to go to the States. There was someone I had chosen who supposedly had some communist affiliations. We were questioning the station chief about all that and pressuring him some to come up with some proof. At one point in the meeting he blurted out they had just one contact. Someone said, "One contact, is that all?" "Well, that is all we need," he said. It turned out they had one contact who could deal with that issue. It seemed almost incredible and hard to believe. I always thought there was a vast network out there, when in fact sometimes they are hanging on by a very thin thread.

In the case of the DEA in Bogota, I felt they needed broader contacts. But, they were police and wanted to hang out with police. Fine, but give us who have broader contacts a little credence that we may have a better view of what is happening.

Q: Did you find DEA was getting involved with things they shouldn't get involved in? This seems to be a standard problem. They are basically policemen and hard for them to observe the political niceties.

HOBBS: They often had a more gruff approach to things. There were pistol incidents. One guy killed a person walking across the highway in Bogota. I don't think it was his fault, but the whole attitude was "casualty of the drug war here." They maybe needed to be a little more sensitive sometimes. Their attitude was they could do what they wanted.

My personal belief was that our huge security apparatus was more than we needed. Certainly the ambassador had to be protected, and I suppose the head of DEA, but the narcos really didn't want us. I don't think they would have taken the ambassador out, although the guerillas might. They were shipping enormous quantities of drugs to the States and we were burning crops, smashing labs, and seizing narcotics on their way out of the country and into the country, but the price was not going up or quality down, so it led you to believe there was still enough in it to deal with the market. So, that being the case and with profits being enormous, why would they want to take on the United States by killing the ambassador or some other official American.

There were restaurants where we were known to hang out. There might be ten or twelve staff members having lunch and all speaking English to each other and obviously Americans. I remember once a woman in the donut shop across the street when I went in there once in a loud voice asked me how everything was at the embassy. So, anyone who wanted to take out ten or twelve Americans could throw a hand grenade in a restaurant around noon anywhere around five or six blocks of the embassy and you get several without even thinking. Or they could follow cars, only DEA agents drove armored Ford Broncos, and discover what bars they frequented. The head of the DEA had a BMW, one of the few in the country, so he could be watched. There were a lot of reasons to ask yourself, if we are so threatened why are we living like this? So, I think there was a little of that going on.

There were huge battles over the danger report. I remember once, after I became DCM,

the first paragraph of the report was "Whenever we dare to venture onto the streets, we are constantly looking over our shoulder for signs of people following us." I called up the security officer and said, "Come on, this is a blatant exaggeration of what is really going on. We are having a great old time down here." We could go almost anywhere in the northern part of the city. Nobody really had their life all that much restricted. You had to be careful going into the countryside because the guerillas were out there.

Q: So you really had two groups, the guerillas were one...

HOBBS: Yes. They never got too much into the city, although occasionally they would get into the outskirts. But inside the city the narco traffickers probably didn't want to take us out. I came up with a conclusion and I told this to someone in the Department. There is a system in place for putting in danger pay but there is not a system for taking it back out. And, we need to have a system, if there are a large number of extensions for reups, and you want to stay on for another year. Why would you want to do that if you are going to die? If people are clamoring to get there and you don't have any difficulty filling positions because everybody loves to go there. Bogota, I think, eventually got the reputation of being kind of a sleeper. It was a great place, great climate, great food, nice people, a lot of fun and lots of money. If we really thought we would have to earn that money by a few of us being whacked each year, I think the number of people who wanted to stay longer would have decreased. However, I stayed six years and there were many others who extended their tours. This to me is an indication that things might not be quite as bad as people are saying. There should be a system for dealing with danger pay situations by using certain criteria.

I remember being at a meeting to discuss with Ambassador McNamara the question of whether to bring back minor dependents and there was a lot of pressure from the staffers not to let that happen because they feared it might send a message to Washington that things were not dangerous there and they would lose their danger pay. I used to say to them that we were not here to make decisions on the basis of how it affects our danger pay, we should make decisions based on what is right under the circumstances and if that effects the danger pay, so be it. I felt if we could get the children back we might give a different impression. People going to Little League games, PTA meetings, are not going to bars as much.

Q: I spent 18 months in Saigon during the war and it was very much the same. A different lifestyle.

HOBBS: And the lifestyle that comes with children is probably a little bit less risky, less dangerous than the lifestyle that we would be encouraging by having all bachelors. So, I saw it a way of actually enhancing security by bringing the children back, but people were against that. No one would ever admit the reason openly because you are not supposed to do that, to say it would endanger the danger pay. However, the pressure was incredible and you would get all the feedback. The vans, that took people to and from the embassy, passed all the information back and forth. That was another thing, if you get the danger pay dropped people would have to start paying for the vans. So, there were all

kinds of benefits people wished to keep.

Q: What about the cities, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla? Were we able to do much coverage in those places?

HOBBS: Medellin was a place that was put off limits before I got there and never put back on limits during the time I was there because Escobar and his gang were running that place. I did get their twice myself. McNamara went down their once and occasionally the DEA went there. We had some ways of getting their occasionally but very little normal contact. It was always very highly structured.

Cali was more normal. We could get down there until the end of my time when it was put off limits as well. This was a shame as it is a wonderful city. You could go in there and make your contacts and do business. We started getting word that the narcos were watching very carefully our movements, they knew when we were there, where we stayed, who we contacted, etc. We got a little nervous about having people go to a place where they were so well observed. Again there was the question of whether they would actually do something. I kind of doubt it. But, having our people in a city controlled by the narcos, we couldn't trust the police for protection, we put that city off limits too.

Barranquilla was never put off limits but it was a city that was full of narcotic traffic, basically the jumping off point, transporting headquarters of the mafia. We kept the consulate open long enough until we wanted to close it for State Department reasons as a concession to DEA because they wanted to have a group of agents working out of that consulate. I never understood why they had to have a consulate as a cover because it was a very thin cover. There were only a couple consular people there and lots of DEA agents and again the way they moved about and the atmosphere in which they worked it was pretty obvious to everybody who they were. So, I don't think the cover was very good anyway.

When I was still the consul general there we had an inspection and Fred Chapin, head of the inspection team, said he had closed Baranquilla once when he was in ARA and he was kind of surprised to see it was opened again. His job was to close it again. At that time I was still a big believer in DEA's story that they needed that place, and fussed with Fred about it. I went up to Washington and fussed some more. We got DEA to pay for half the cost of running the post. I went to Fred and he said they were only trying to save money. So, I thought we had pulled off a good deal to get DEA to pay half the cost of the consulate's operation. But, I found out later when I was DCM they had never paid. Then I changed my mind and decided to close the place. It was only being left open for DEA's use and if they wouldn't pay half the costs, let's close it. It took all the time I was there and about three more years. It only closed last year, I think. DEA was of the opinion that the post was necessary for cover, but that State should pay for it. I thought that was pretty brazen. Finally we did get it closed.

Q: While you were there did Morris Busby come in?

HOBBS: Yes, he did.

Q: How did he operate?

HOBBS: He comes through with a military background as an officer. He was probably chosen for that job as much as anything because of his background. He enjoyed very much, I think, the whole apparatus. The military assistance, the work with the military. He worked very well with the president and the defense minister and police. It was clear he was very much into the drug war. I think he went there with that clearly being his number one priority and spent a lot of time working on it.

He did a good job of keeping the flow of assistance to Colombia and seeing it was applied in a productive way. He was very good at working the crowd inside the embassy. He would get the group together and wear us down. If he wanted something or wanted to get somewhere he would get everybody together and wear them until they all agreed. He never crushed people's opportunities to express themselves, but he was very persistent and forceful and took people along pretty much. I think he was a good appointment.

HOBBS: I came back to Washington in July, 1992, to become deputy assistant secretary [for Consular Affairs] in Overseas Citizenship Services, and then a year later principal deputy assistant secretary.

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Q: Today is March 12, 1997.

HOBBS: I worked in overseas citizenship services until May, 1993.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary for consular affairs?

HOBBS: Betty Tamposi was assistant secretary for consular affairs when I came back. She held this position about six months before she got fired, so I worked with her a little bit during that time.

Q: Betty Tamposi was fired and it was one of the political scandals of the day. Could you first talk about how she ran the Bureau of Consular Affairs from your perspective, and what seemed to be her major interests of concentration?

HOBBS: It was a strange bureau at that time because she was very inexperienced. She had unpredictable interests. You never really knew what she would focus on. But what I gathered more than anything was that she just wanted to make sure there were no ripples anywhere. She wanted to make sure that everything went smoothly. She didn't always know what that was, so sometimes she would make us do things that didn't make a lot of sense. She didn't have the perspective that some of us who have been in this field for a while had. She was quite involved in the change of the color of the passport from blue to green. She was involved in some trips which she seemed to enjoy. We had no real

citizens disasters. She had been there during the explosion of a Pan Am airplane and there was a lot of criticism...

Q: This was the Lockerbie incident over Scotland.

HOBBS: Yes, it killed everybody on board. It was a major event. There was a lot of criticism by the families of the victims of the way this whole thing was handled by the airlines and the government. She was quite interested in making sure we were organized in a way to deal with such situations in the future, which, of course, is a very good thing.

She didn't know who's advice to take so it was kind of a bureau that was a little bit on edge when I got there.

Q: Did you have the feeling that, although she had been there more than a year, she didn't trust some of the Foreign Service. Was she coming from the idea that these are people who would not support her, or...?

HOBBS: Actually it is not an unusual point of view. You see it happens often when somebody comes into government as a political appointee. They don't quite know who their friends are. Most people figure it out fairly quickly, but in her case I don't think she still had figured it out yet when I got there. She was still uncertain who she had to deal with. It was hard. She had a person who was from New Hampshire, where she was from, who was kind of her staff assistant, but he clearly didn't have any influence over her. He was more or less just carrying out her orders. He wasn't someone who was actually giving her advice. He was a middle man. So, the bureau was kind of doing its thing on a day-to-day basis as much as it could, trying not to get the attention of the ladyship of the bureau because you never knew what was going to be the reaction. Everybody was trying to make sure that what they did, they did in such a way as to not attract attention, just get through the day. It was not a very pleasant atmosphere.

Q: Was part of the problem if you said, okay, we have this problem, you might get a totally unexpected answer or solution. One that really wasn't terribly viable?

HOBBS: Or be told to do something that made no sense whatsoever. I noticed in the staff meetings that people tried not to say anything, or something so innocuous that it couldn't possibly get anybody's attention. If you were working on something that was a real issue you would try to get it done before you made an announcement of it, and even after that you might not want to say anything because she might want to know what you had done and possibly disapprove and make you undo it. It was better to keep a very low profile.

One case she got interested in was a case of an American woman who had married a Syrian citizen. They lived in the States for a while and then they split up. He went to Saudi Arabia to work in a hospital there. He returned to the States at one point and took their child away. Miss Tamposi got very interested in this child abduction case. The neighbor of Secretary Christopher was an attorney who was giving some time to this case, so it had quite a lot of interest at a high level. In fact, that was the case she was

working on when she got fired.

Q: What could we do in a case like this and what would the assistant secretary do to add to it?

HOBBS: Actually there is not a lot you can do. But, what you can do in most countries is hard to do in Islamic countries. Some people will try to rescue their child back, kidnap the child back. That, of course, is violating the laws of the country and the State Department can not be involved in helping people do that, especially if you are involved in helping someone re-kidnap their child and something goes wrong and the child or parent get killed, or the consul killed. This is not something we want to be involved in. So, we try to make these cases go through the legal system of the country. To get the courts to look up the claims of the two sides and to make a decision as to which parent should have the child, etc.

This seems kind of wimpy to some people because all they want is their child back. Unfortunately, one of the problems we have is that most Americans would like to see our rights take precedent over the rights of anybody else in another country. That is understandable but unfortunately the citizens of other countries have a similar opinion.

We often are seen as being less then helpful because we are not able to go over and slap a judge to get him to do the right thing. So, you have to work the legal system with lawyers from those countries. Sometimes decisions go against the Americans and they don't think, therefore, that we do enough.

With Islamic countries there is a particular problem because the religious aspect gets mixed up in the sociology of all of this. These children are often seen to be more or less property of the father and must be raised in an environment that is Muslim. Needless to say usually the American parent is not Muslim. It is very hard for a Muslim court to give the child up. So, the assistant secretary can do very little other than show sympathy and concern, which is helpful.

In that particular case there was an opening that we exploited. The Syrian citizen was not in his own country, he was in Saudi Arabia, and we were able to get some leverage there and have things work a little differently than in most such cases. Tamposi was very interested in following the plot and how things worked, and that was fine. I had no problem keeping her informed. She met with the American mother of the child.

Q: I've been told she was really very, very good in dealing with people.

HOBBS: I sat in on some of those meetings and she did well because she always expressed very effusively her concern and sorrow at what had happened, and would do everything possible. She came across very sincere that she really did feel that way. Unfortunately, at times you give the impression you care so much that people expect something more to happen then does. She would express herself in a way that it would appear to the person to be promising something. They could count on her because she

really cared. And, she did. This came back to haunt us sometimes because we couldn't actually pull off sometimes everything we would like because the conditions were not there. But, she did come across as a very caring person.

[*Q: David could you explain what happened to Assistant Secretary Tamposi?*

HOBBS: Actually, I was there, almost. The day that she got relieved of her position, we were going to meet with the attorney, who was the neighbor of Secretary Christopher.

Q: At this time Warren Christopher was Deputy Secretary?

HOBBS: He was out of government but he still was someone with influence.

She arranged to meet with this attorney and the mother of the child. He was going to meet also with the assistant secretary for Middle Eastern affairs the same day. I came into work that morning and had seen in the newspaper that Ross Perot's passport files had been looked at.

Q: He had been a candidate for president.

HOBBS: Right.

Q: Give a little background of why there was such a hullabaloo.

HOBBS: A few weeks before that there had been all this uproar in the press about the assistant secretary for consular affairs being involved in a look-see at the Clinton passport file because some people believed there might be something in there that showed Clinton may have at one point when he was in London looked into renouncing his citizenship in order to avoid serving in the United States military. She was involved in taking a look at the passport files and that came out and got all kinds of press coverage. This made the Bush Administration, I think, uncomfortable. Eagleburger was acting secretary of state at the time. She got through that scrap. Then there was another allegation of her looking at the Ross Perot passport files.

That morning she wanted me to come in and see her so we could talk about what we were going to say when the mother and lawyer came to see her.

Q: This was the case of an American mother whose Syrian husband had kidnapped their daughter.

HOBBS: Yes. I went into her office and the first thing I said was, "Did you see the paper this morning, Betty?" She told me she hadn't. I said that there was a little article on the front page about the Ross Perot files being looked at and she might want to read it. She whipped around and grabbed a newspaper behind her and looked at the article for a second or two. She then said to me, "I can't see you now I will see you later." So, I left.

I assumed she then read the article. On my way out I asked her secretary what time did Miss Tamposi want to see me and she said she would figure it out. About 10:00 or 10:30, I was told to get up there to see her. So, I went in and we were going to talk about this case. We had been talking for a short time when a phone call came saying Eagleburger wanted to see her right away. She excused herself and left.

I immediately had an inkling that this may be the meeting at which she might get fired knowing all I knew that had gone on and then today's news. She didn't seem to have any inkling of that. She went off very chipper.

The meeting with the lawyer was supposed to take place an hour later. I was going to meet her in her office at that time. I went up to see her and she was not there. I went downstairs to meet with the attorney, the mother and a congressional staffer and chatted with them for a while. I then excused myself and went across the hall to use the phone and find out what had happened to Miss Tamposi. I was told she had just gone into her office and seemed to have been crying and maybe I should hold them off a little longer. I went back to the conference room and chit chatted some more. I excused myself a second time explaining I had to make a phone call. The secretary told me maybe I should just carry on with the meeting because she didn't think she was going to be able to handle it. So, I went back and apologized explaining that she had had to see the acting secretary and something very important had come up and she would not be able to attend the meeting. We went on with the meeting.

I remember the congressional staffer saying this shows how much Miss Tamposi cares about these cases, she didn't even bother to come to the meeting. The attorney said that he thought today's newspaper might have something to do with this.

After the meeting I went upstairs to tell her what happened so that she would be fully informed right away. She was just coming out of her office and she was crying. She went out of the office, and I guess down in the elevator to somewhere. Right then I knew what had happened. I just knew she had been fired. A few minutes later the noon briefing began and the announcement was that she had been relieved of her job. By that time I was down on the fourth floor again and it swept through the office. People came running out of their offices chatting and obviously quite excited about this change. And then things settled down for a bit and we carried on for a while with Jim Ward as the acting assistant secretary until Miss Ryan was appointed assistant secretary with the new administration.

This was an example of a person who didn't even realize what was happening as the end was coming and when it did come it was so sad. The reaction of the staff - such joy. A lot of people got chewed up a bit and I guess couldn't help but enjoy the day that she left.

Q: Well she went through her deputies rather quickly, didn't she?

HOBBS: Right.

Q: It was not a happy office.

HOBBS: She went through her deputies quite early, yes. I had been interviewed once before, earlier, for the principal DAS job and I didn't get it. Just as well as I look back on it now.

Q: What did the job for overseas citizens services consist of and did you have any particular problems areas or cases?

HOBBS: From time to time there is something that gets a lot of attention, that that office works on, but during that year I was there, there were really no major events. So, it was just the usual Americans dying abroad, being arrested abroad, running out of money abroad, etc.

The issue which most caught my attention, though, was the children's issue. This relates to the kidnaping of children. Under the Hague Convention a secretariat in the Hague administers to member countries legal assistance and advise to citizens whose children have been kidnapped to that country. In other words, if a foreigner's child is kidnapped to the United States, then the United States has to provide assistance to that foreign parent and work in the court systems to get a hearing. Of course you have to identify where the child is which is kind of hard to do.

We were not doing a very good job because we have a very difficult system to work. We don't have a central legal system in the United States. Every state has its own court system. We have a hard time finding the children in the first place. Then when we found them we had no way of providing legal services to them because we in the State Department have nothing to say about that. It is all state jurisdictions. So, we had to do a lot of explaining. We would talk to judges and explain the Hague Convention and about our being a part of it and what our obligations were under the Convention and therefore what that judge's obligations were under the Convention. Many of the judges never heard of the Convention and not all wanted to listen to us. Then we had to try to find attorneys, mostly through the yellow pages, and see if they would donate some time to a case. Sometimes you would get something, but it was a very chaotic and very unsatisfactory way of dealing with these issues. So, I decided we had to do better than that. We created an office which dealt with these issues and had to get them a much higher profile and throw more resources at it in order to do the job right.

Well, of course, you can't get more resources, so I had to carve them out of the rest of OCS. We had a general reorganization of OCS, taking out enough to create an office of about eight people to do children's issues. The task of creating a children's issues office got mixed up in what became in two or three months the necessity to do the whole government reorganization and downsizing to the extent possible. That became a long, difficult, traumatic process. But, we achieved it. We got the children's issues office up and running.

Then we discovered something that was quite interesting. The Department of Justice was

giving a grant to this national center for missing and exploited children, which has a national headquarters in Arlington. That office was engaged in trying to locate children that disappeared inside the United States and to try to deal with the exploitation of children. So this office had a large network already out there with the police around the country.

Former FBI people were working with the center. They had good connections with the police to locate children. We met with these people and they offered to take on a good chuck of the work the State Department was doing using money that the Justice Department provided. It was a Tom Sawyer solution if there ever was one.

So, we were able to get out of the business of trying to round up lawyers and explain to judges and concentrate on tracking cases and keeping ourselves informed and making sure everybody knew what they were supposed to know. We were able to do a better job by transferring part of the work to an NGO [non-governmental organization]. That was a major accomplishment.

Q: Then you became principal deputy when?

HOBBS: May, 1993.

Q: Until when?

HOBBS: Until around May, 1995.

Q: What did the principal deputy do?

HOBBS: Under the reorganization that we were going through in the early part of the Clinton Administration, one of the things that the Department of State tried to do was to cut down on the number of deputy assistant secretaries of the bureaus. The consular bureau gave up one. We used to have a deputy assistant secretary for visa services, for passport services and for overseas citizens services. Then we had a principal deputy assistant secretary who was kind of the person between the assistant secretary and the other deputy assistant secretaries. Kind of an alter ego to the assistant secretary. When the assistant secretary traveled the deputy ran the bureau and did more of the day-to-day management of the bureau while the assistant secretary did more policy stuff and the public relations stuff.

When we lost one position we had to decide which one it would be. We didn't want to give up anyone for any of the functions, i.e. visas, passport or citizen services, because we felt each of them was important and needed to have somebody to deal with them in the bureaucracy. So, we decided to give up the principal position which had for many years, since the time of Barbara Watson, been filled by a political Foreign Service officer, who came in and sort of helped the bureau with its inner-building relations. I guess the theory was that they had better contacts throughout the building.

So, we decided to give up that position, which at that time had been held by Jim Ward, who was I guess the first consular officer to hold that position. We decided that we would make one of the three remaining deputy assistant secretaries wear two hats, both be a principal and still run one of the other functions. It was decided to make it overseas citizens services because it was the one which had the smallest staff of the three. In fact, we gave the anti-fraud effort also to the principal DAS to oversee.

So, I continued to oversee overseas citizens services, took on the anti-fraud problem as well and did the principal job moving upstairs to sit in the front office with the assistant secretary, as did all the other DAS's at that time. So, we had a little more of a team working together, not being off in little individual empires scattered around the building. I worked then with Mary Ryan for two years. It was a fascinating time. She is fantastic to work with.

Q: Could you talk about Mary's operating style and what were her priorities?

HOBBS: Mary puts a great deal of emphasis on the people that she works with. She is very, very good with people. She cuts away a lot of the layers that can exist between an assistant secretary and those down in the more junior positions. She is very informal and insists on being called by her first name. She was an ambassador before she took this job but she never uses the title. She tries to make everybody feel comfortable. She likes to get what is really going on by cutting away barriers to communication. And, she communicates a lot. She is always sending e-mails to people and cables and calling people. She picks up a tremendous amount of information this way. Therefore she is able to spot people's problems and how they feel about them and to respond to them and give a feeling that she cares about them.

So, I think she has created a very good morale in the bureau. She tries to emphasize the public service part of the consular business. We are supposed to serve the people and she likes to see a positive attitude among the consular staff towards the public. She harps on that a great deal and needs to, I find. Sometimes people forget why they are here, to serve somebody.

Q: We are using the present tense because she is still assistant secretary.

HOBBS: Yes.

Q: It probably didn't hit you as hard as say it has hit lately, but how did you deal with the problems of downsizing? Our consular workload tends to keep going up, but the number of people available tends to go down because of government cutbacks. Was that a major problem?

HOBBS: Yes, that was a major problem. It is something we were greatly concerned about. We are bringing in fewer Foreign Service officers than we used to bring in and we use Foreign Service officers in the first year to fill a large number of consular positions. We need a lot of junior officers for visa interviews, issuing of passports, etc., but don't

need so many in the higher ranks, allowing the officers to go on and do other things. That has worked quite well over the years, but we are cutting back the numbers quite significantly so we don't have enough junior people to fill the many consular positions all around the world.

So, to deal with that we have done several things. We bring in people from other cones, security officers, secretaries, communicators, to come over to work a tour or two, or sometimes to lateral [transfer] into the consular function. That is okay, as long as you make sure you are just choosing the very, very best. It has always been a problem trying to figure out who those people are.

Now we also started the professional associates program which are spouses or dependents of a Foreign Service officer, who has been chosen to work as a professional associate and do some consular work. They can have commissions, can make decisions, and adjudicate. The idea is, I guess, that they will always do this at the junior level. We are creating more and more of those people and the idea would be if you have a shortage somewhere but someone is at a post with a spouse who is willing to work and is in the professional associates program, than you can not bother to send a Foreign Service officer to some position there, but use the professional associate. The Foreign Service officer can be sent somewhere else where there may not be a professional associate available.

This is okay in a way, but as you get more and more of them, you are creating a sub-category of consular officers who I personally don't believe are going to be satisfied to stay forever in this non-career status, not having sick leave, annual leave, R&R, home leave, or a pension. They are going to want all these things with time, I think, and if the Foreign Service's response to all that is yes, you can have all those things, then what do you have? Basically you have some Foreign Service officers, consular specialty, who may or may not be the people you would have gotten if you had done it a different way and maybe it is better and maybe it is worse.

But, it is going to be just another mess. I am sorry to see it having to go so far that way. I liked it better when we were recruiting people for the consular function, when we had cones. Most of them from the beginning knew why they were there and there was no struggling to get themselves straightened out and into a specialty they liked best. I feel now that we are creating a situation where we have not enough people to do the job and what we do have, the way we are getting them we are creating tensions that are going to come to life and be very difficult.

Q: I was dealing with personnel with Lorey Lawrence back in 1967-68 and we found the situation had developed over many years where we had sort of the program of people who weren't as qualified, educationally and frankly intellectually, as the regularly recruited Foreign Service officer. But they t had been brought in as staff officers to become vice consuls and just by osmosis had moved up into about the equivalent military rank of major. They were of a different caliber than the regular Foreign Service officer, and (1) they really weren't that good. But they might have been very good specialists but had no feel for the political ramification. And (2) they gave consular work a bad name, so

that anybody who came in as a young officer would take a look at these old hands and say those aren't my type of people and get the hell out.

HOBBS: That is exactly right. I certainly noticed that when I came into the Foreign Service in 1966. I worked for some of those and worked with some and had some work for me later and I can tell you it was very difficult. There was a definite difference between the two groups and it wasn't all that easy. What I am afraid of is that we are doing it all over again.

Q: Oh, I think we are. Trying to solve a short term problem by doing this will cause difficulties. How are you going to end up saying no to the wives of the people in the Service?

HOBBS: I feel we are missing out something here, and Mary Ryan is worried about this problem. She fought the idea of professional associates for a while. It was something that was actually thought up by the inspectors. They sold it as something that would be for all the cones, but it is happening only in the consular cone and a few in the admin cone.

Q: Yes, we are back to the old staff officers.

HOBBS: Since the mid-sixties, when I came in, and then until the mid-eighties, I think we made a lot of progress, and Barbara Watson was somebody who supported this.

Q: It was around 1967-68 when I was in personnel and Barbara Watson was the instigating force saying that we have to do something about this.

HOBBS: I saw this prejudice that there was in the Service towards consular and administrative work begin to decrease. You would see more respect for people in the consular function and admin function on the part of the others in the political and economic functions. They recognized that some pretty smart people were coming in. They might not want to do it themselves, but they could see the change. I am afraid we are going to lose all that again. That is a shame.

We have had a lot of talks about that in the front office in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, how to deal with that. There is money coming in from the visa fee, and a lot of that now is being spent in the Department on a lot of things, not all consular related. You know, the Consular Bureau brings in an enormous amount of money to the Treasury of the United States, and it seems to me that we should spend some of that money to provide a decent service to those people who are paying that money.

I remember once when I was principal deputy assistant secretary in consular affairs, a delegation from Korea wanted to come and see Mary Ryan. She was traveling so I met with them. They were members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, some Koreans, some Americans. I listened to them talk. They were outraged. Their attitude was we Koreans come to the United States in large numbers and spend enormous amounts of money here, because we are big spenders, and in any normal business when a good

customer like us comes in they treat you well, but we are treated like dogs. They were very blunt. They had to stand out in lines in the heat, the rain, the cold. When we get inside we get snarled at by overworked and grumpy staff and we are not happy about this.

What could I say? I told them they were absolutely right. That is not the way they should be treated. But, they should know that we in the State Department are trying very hard to get enough money to do the job and they are talking to the wrong people. We understand. What I couldn't tell them was where they ought to go, up on the Hill, I suppose, to try to make sure the people who appropriate money understand. But, money it is always a problem.

But now we have this large amount of money rolling in under the visa fee and it seems to me the Department needs to spend enough money to make sure that consular sections are (1) fairly comfortable to work in, because they are often the most rundown part of the embassy due to the amount of traffic through the section and creates a bad image and morale working in the least desirable part of an embassy; (2) enough staff so that people who come for service can be served; and (3) spend a lot of money training staff constantly because the image of the United States in many people's minds is determined by their experience with the United States embassies and most of their experience is with the consular section of that embassy, but it is so hard to get that amount of money. It is a frustrating function to work in because we also believe what we do is fun, is important, get satisfaction out of helping people get services they need. I enjoy managing staffs, motivating them, trying to achieve a goal. But, you are always working with half a deck.

Q: Was there anything else we should talk about during this period?

HOBBS: The reorganizing was a very, very difficult experience, We tried to reorganize the bureau's overseas citizenship office in a way that would cut down on the number of people that clients would have to contact to deal with an issue. The idea was to have the officer who handles North Africa, handle everything that goes on there, whether it is emergency service or one of the run of the mill consular services. That was very difficult to get across because people had been so stuck in their ways. People had so dug into their little portion of the work. So, we had a tremendous amount of resistance in meeting, after meeting, after meeting with the staff to try to get their ideas, get their concerns, to work the thing through. It got around the building that we were tearing the place a part. Dick Moose, the Under Secretary, asked me once what we were doing over in Consular. I said we were trying to carry out the vice president's directive, but it is not easy.

We had to rewrite all the position descriptions. I contacted a former personnel officer, I think with the State Department, to rewrite all the position descriptions as we were working through all this. You didn't want to have the position downgraded in the process or you really would have a revolution on your hands. This guy comes with a lot of positions lower graded than they were when they had less variety to do. I understand that in government if you had a broader function, you could get a higher grade than if you had a narrow function. I remember once when I was trying to get an upgrade of the staff in Japan, because they worked so hard turning out so many visas. I was told it didn't matter

how hard you worked, if you only do a certain function, that is all you get. So, I thought that would apply still. I found when you deal with that issue it depends on what you want to do they will tell you anything they can to stop you. So, after this guy went through the whole process of rewriting the job descriptions and then told me some of them were downgraded, I told him that wouldn't work. I told him to go back and think about it some more. We fussed and fussed for months. At one point he said, "You know, I have some advice if you would like to hear it?" I said, "Yes, I'm always interested in hearing advice." He said, "Well, my advice to you is if you ever have the chance to do something like this again, don't do it. It is always a mistake. Changing things upsets things. You should never do this kind of thing." I thought that was a lot of help. I thought trying to do things differently wasn't a sin, but it evidently is a sin in the bureaucracy, to change anything.

So, I had a lot of sympathy with what the vice president was trying to accomplish, but I also learned from personal bitter experience that it isn't easy to do something. You can't wave a wand, it doesn't happen, it takes a tremendous amount of effort. So, I spent two years of my life working like a dog to do something that you would think was a very minor thing. What I didn't take away from the experience was the advice of that person. If I ever have the chance again, I will do it again.

Q: Well, David, let's talk about going to Guyana as ambassador. You were there from when to when?

HOBBS: Just about a year, 1995-96.

Q: How did that come about?

HOBBS: I had been in the job of principal DAS for a couple of years and had been going to a lot meetings in the management family, Dick Moose, the director general, diplomatic security and foreign buildings, etc. They got to know me. Near Christmas I got a call from the director general's office asking if I would be willing to have myself put forward as ambassador to Guyana. I thought about it a day or two and then agreed. The nominations began to move forward very slowly. I got a call that I was one of the hostages, as they were calling them around the building. Senator Helms [Republican, North Carolina] wanted to see the reorganization of the foreign affairs agencies, Arms Control, AID and State all rolled into one and didn't feel his idea had been given sufficient consideration and therefore thought he would get the attention of the foreign policy community by not approving anymore appointments. So we waited around for a while. In the end there was some kind of compromise worked out and the appointments began moving through. I got out the end of October, 1995. It took from December, 1994 until October, 1995 for the process to be completed.

Q: In getting ready for the assignment, what were American interests you were told in Guyana?

HOBBS: A couple of interests. One was the continuation on the road to democracy.

Guyana had not had a free election for about 25 years or so. Then they had a free election in 1992 and it was coming time for another election. The feeling was that Guyana should do it again, 1997. So, there was some concern that we keep an eye on that and coach them along and make sure the process works smoothly.

The president then had been out of power for over a quarter of a century because in 1966 he had lost the office of prime minister, because of some changes in electoral rules which the American and the British worked out as a way of getting him out of power.

Q: This was Jagan.

HOBBS: Cheddi Jagan, who was a well-known Marxist and quite a rabble rouser at an early time in his life. Jagan was manipulated out of power and then the person who got in power, Forbes Burnham, did not have real elections for all these years. So, when there was a free election, after we convinced Burnham's successor, Desmond Hoyte, who took over after Burnham died, he ought to have one, Cheddi Jagan won. So, he was back in power. We were hopeful that he would not try to do what his predecessor had done, which was once you are in power don't have any more elections. So, we had to make sure there was a clear understanding that this is what we expected.

It turned out to be no problem. Jagan, of course, is from the Indian Guyanese community, which is the majority in the country. Forbes Burnham, who took power in 1966 was Afro-Guyanese, which has a minority of the population. So, Jagan, being a member of the majority group, and since they vote very much along racial lines in Guyana, could be quite sure it was safe to have an election and win. So, there was no real problem with having an election later in 1995.

The other issue was American investment opportunities. There were a number of American investment disputes, a number of American companies were expropriated during the Burnham years. Reynolds Aluminum was one example. These companies were anxious to get back what they were due. A new company had come in. An American telephone company had bought the telephone company of Guyana. There was great need for a new electric company and some American companies were interested in making that investment. It is a small country, about 700,000 people so they can't buy very much or produce very much, but what is there we would like to have Americans get a crack at, especially since Guyana gets a tremendous assistance from the IDB, International Development Bank, which is funded to a large extent by business in the United States. So, we put a little pressure there to make sure we had some consideration and our people had a chance.

Other than those two, there were not many issues.

Q: Was there any aftermath to the Jonestown business of 1976?

HOBBS: No, it is long forgotten. The jungle has taken it all over again. There is nothing left, you can't get there without going up a river and tramping through the jungle. The

Guyanese would like to forget about it completely. No Guyanese ever mentions it. Americans almost always mention it. As I was reading-in to go there I looked for any articles on Guyana in the newspapers that I might have missed and saw all kinds of references to Guyana. I said, "Oh, my god, this is interesting." I found out they were articles about the Branch Davidian...

Everybody on all sides of the political spectrum would agree that Jagan was clean. He lived a very modest life. There were always allegations about corruption of people who were in government, but it never touched him. I believe that is true. When I presented my credentials we had a chat afterwards. He told me I might be able to have 15 or 20 minutes, and he kept me for an hour and 20 minutes talking about a lot of things. He talked about the year when he lost the office of prime minister. He knew what the American role was in that and was not at all bitter about it. He said he understood that he talked too much and that got him into trouble.

He never felt himself to be a Castro, and I don't think he is. I think he is a much kinder and more gentle person. He is married to a woman who was born here in Chicago, but who is no longer an American citizen. I judged him as being to the end of his life a true believer in Marxism as the best way to manage an economy. Had he been able to he would have loved to have done that when he got his chance to be head of the country again, but Marxism was gone most everywhere. Cuba was there, but Cuba was no longer able to help him.

Q: *Was there any Cuban influence?*

HOBBS: Well, there is a Cuban embassy there and they were fond of the Cubans. But, the Cubans weren't helping them any, so I had much better access. The British, Canadians and Americans were the ones who mattered there. We had access and could get lots of attention. We were providing a lot of assistance. The Cubans couldn't provide anything basically. The Cuban ambassador was a personable fellow and I also greeted him, although I never talked to him very much.

The North Koreans and Chinese were there, too. But, nobody could help him. His only help was coming from the West--the Americans, British and Canadians and the European Union. So, he had to maintain his relations with us and he was very friendly. It was an odd situation because many of the entrepreneurs are Indian in the country and yet he is never very comfortable with entrepreneurship, he is more comfortable with a planned economy. The entrepreneurs would criticize Jagan's economic policy but they weren't inclined to vote in anyone else because they didn't want to be under an African as president. It was Jagan's turn and he was entitled to the office as long as he was there. Nobody had any inkling that he wouldn't be there for a long time, everybody thought his health was very good and that he might run even again.

The country is not making as much progress as it might if it were more open to business and allow foreign investment in with less hassle. It is going to be very interesting to see what happens now because the former president, who took over when Forbes Burnham

died, is running again from the African party. There is a Muslim Indian who came back to be finance minister in the early years of Cheddi Jagan, but had been away from the country so long he really didn't have his connections while he was finance minister and didn't stay too long. Now he is back running for president. You have a number of people within Jagan's party who are all trying to get themselves as presidential candidates for the PPP. Some of them are very much to the left, very Marxist and dogmatic and true believers, and some are more pragmatic. It will be interesting to see how it works out.

Q: Were there any problems that would concern you about border disputes?

HOBBS: Yes, those were the old long standing disputes, but they did not heat up. Venezuela has claims to about two-thirds of Guyana. Surinam has claims to about a fifth of Guyana. And Brazil not only is pushing a claim for some territory of Guyana, but there is no presence of the Guyanese on the border with Brazil, so the Brazilians are moving in so that that part of the country is gaining more and more Portuguese speakers. In another generation or two they could find a good chunk of that southern part could be pretty well populated with Brazilians. For a long, long time they have been trying to build a road from Georgetown to the Brazilian border. Some people are opposed to that because they think it will make it easy for the Brazilians to come on into Georgetown. They don't see that it also would make it easier for Georgetown people to get into the rest of their country.

The business community of Guyana has been very isolated. It is very protective and some of their biggest exports, sugar and rice, bring very favorable prices on the European market and they really don't have to compete as much as they would if they didn't have that. So, their production costs are high and when those favorable prices go away they are going to have a hard time producing sugar and rice at the prices they will have to sell them at. There is a gold mine there. There is not enough electricity which is inhibiting economic growth. They recognize that but haven't been able to find a solution.

There are lots and lots of allegations of corruption during the previous administration and in this administration. There is a lot of suspicion between one group and another. It is a country which hasn't been able to figure out how the different races deal with one another. I don't see a solution anytime soon.

Q: Do we have much AID or Peace Corps there?

HOBBS: Well, the Peace Corps went back there for the first time in 25 years as I was arriving. They left during the Forbes Burnham years because he was an avowed Marxist, and not friendly. We decided we just wouldn't have a Peace Corps. Now with this new administration, they came back. It was a small group. Originally there were about 24 but the number dwindled down to about 14 because a lot left early. It was a pretty challenging place to live, especially the way the Peace Corps goes about it. They try to live pretty much the way the people live. A new group came in, but it was a smaller group than anticipated. They may be approaching 30 now, but that is a small group.

The AID program has been decreased substantially. Just as I was arriving there they were hoping just the year before to go up to about a $10 million program. By the time I got there it dropped to about a $4 million and was heading towards $2 million. With that much money you can't have much of an impact.

The person who runs that program is doing a great job and is very innovative and gets a lot of milage out of a small program using the money as much as possible to leverage other AID projects in other countries and other organizations. I think we were able to get a little more impact than we might otherwise get.

USIS was closed down. It was basically State Department and a small, small AID mission which may not be there much longer, and a small Peace Corps. That was about it.

Q: You left there towards the end of 1996?

HOBBS: Right. I came back to the State Department. I went to the office of inspections for a little bit. I thought I might stay with it for a couple of years but decided that I would just retire, change jobs. Guyana was my last real job with the government. I'm looking forward to something else going on. I had a meeting today with a woman and didn't know I knew some of the people she worked with dealing with migration and refugee issues. The Carnegie Endowment for Peace has some people who work over there and she worked with them. They have breakfasts every so often and get a speaker together and they talk about the issues and publish articles, etc. I thought this might be rather fun. It is not a job, but something to do from time to time on the side, to keep up with the issues of migration which I have been working in on and off for thirty years and something I feel very strongly about.

Migration to the United States is a very good thing. We benefit tremendously. We are all migrants somewhere in our history. This country is what it is because of its migration. Sometimes it has been a large group and other times a smaller trickle. We thought at the turn of the century we could never stand up to the onslaught of migration from strange places like southern Europe. But, we managed all right and we are going to manage this time too. The Asians and the Hispanic are the large groups coming now days. But, I think we need to be less negative and a little bit more open to contributions these people make. Not ignoring the problems that come with it and dealing with those issues. But, we shouldn't let our dealing with the issue of illegal migration get in the way of our seeing what benefits we have received from legal migration. So, I will follow that issue with that crowd and write an article or something some time.

Q: Well, that is great. Thank you very much, David.

End of interview