Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ARTHUR A. HOUGHTON III

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

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

Q: Today is the 30th of April 2001. This is an interview with Arthur A. Houghton III. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well, let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little something about your family?

HOUGHTON: I was born May 6, 1940 in New York City. My mother was Ellen Crenshaw from a Richmond family. My father was Arthur Houghton from an upper New York State family. I lived my early life in New York City itself.

Q: The year you were born, again, was...?

HOUGHTON: 1940, May 6, 1940. I lived my early life in New York City after my fourth year and stayed there until I went off to school and later to college.

Q: First could you give me the background and interests of your father.

HOUGHTON: My father is a manufacturer of glass products, a member of the board and management of Corning Glass Works at Corning, New York.

Q: Where had he gotten his education?

HOUGHTON: He went to Harvard and three private schools before that.

Q: Where?

HOUGHTON: St. Paul's.

Q: When did the family come over? Where did they come from? Do you know much about them?

HOUGHTON: My father's side of the family?

Q: You father's side of the family, yes.

HOUGHTON: My father's side of the family had been in Corning, New York, since the Brooklyn Glass Company was moved up there in the 1860s. Before that, the Brooklyn Glass Company had been in the hands of a distant relative obviously, Henry Houghton, who moved there from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where there were a lot of other Houghtons who had first settled in Massachusetts in the 1630s.

Q: On your mother's side?

HOUGHTON: My mother came from a family from Richmond, and most of her antecedents within the previous hundred years were also from Richmond or areas of Virginia.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

HOUGHTON: She had been married to a close friend of my father who'd gone to school with him, went through college with him, and later worked at the Corning Glass Works, Steuben Glass Division, and she would have met my father through him.

Q: Of course, the Corning Glass Works I always think of as the preeminent glass company in the United States. Was your father's father with Corning?

HOUGHTON: He was with Corning, and you can go back four generations or so.

Q: By the time you were just beginning to enter kindergarten/nursery school, the war ended.

HOUGHTON: Well, yes, the war ended in '45. I was five years old, and I think I probably went to kindergarten at the age of five of six.

Q: Where'd you go to elementary school or the equivalent?

HOUGHTON: Let me see. I went first to a very, very prestigious kindergarten here in Washington DC for a year or so, and then I went to elementary school in New York City, and then at the age of 11 I went to a boarding school in Lakeville, Connecticut, Indian Mountain School, graduated from that, and went to a school called St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire. I was asked to leave after two years there and went to a school called Dublin in Dublin, New Hampshire for three years, and then went on to Harvard from there.

Q: Well, let's talk about schools. What I'm trying to do is get some background of people so that when somebody reads this, whenever they read about these people concerned with American foreign affairs, they'll have an idea where they're coming from and who they are. I just came back last week from my 55th reunion at Kent School in Connecticut Valley. Before you went off to St. Paul's, while you were still young, what were your

interests?

HOUGHTON: Let me see. Before I went off to St. Paul's, I was a nature person. I collected animals but small animals, had a seagull for a pet at one point, but also I won a nature prize at an earlier point in camp for bringing a lot of snakes and skinks and other reptiles. I had an interest in science and an interest in astronomy that I maintained through St. Paul's, through my early years at all my schools, and that translated into an interest in rocket science and technology when I went on to Harvard.

Q: By the time you went to St. Paul's, you had the science side. What about reading, interest in, say, reading or history or that sort of thing?

HOUGHTON: Probably mostly escape literature, one way or the other. That would have been Jules Verne and others.

Q: Richard Halliburton?

HOUGHTON: I don't recall that I read Richard Halliburton at that time, but I may have. Works by various authors on travel and other things of a nature like that.

Q: You were at St. Paul's from when to when?

HOUGHTON: 1953 to '55.

Q: What was St. Paul's like? It's one of the preeminent prep schools in the United States, but what was it like in this '53 to '55 period?

HOUGHTON: Well, it had a really strong sense of identity. It seemed to me it had a large number of students. I had problems of integration personally speaking. I had a limited number of friends. I also had a hearing problem at the time that was not identified or misidentified, so I'm sure I missed a lot of what went on. But it had a fully well rounded program with lots of alternatives. If you didn't like skating in the winter, you could actually go ski. If you didn't like that, you could do gymnastics. It was well equipped in almost every area and had a very diverse set of offerings for young scholars and students.

Q: Did you feel that this was part of sort of a bonding operation of – I don't know what you call it – the power elite or whatever it is?

HOUGHTON: No, I'm sure I didn't think anything about that at all, neither about bonding, or about the sociology of schools or about power or elite. I don't recall that I gave much thought to any of those.

Q: I'm not sure that the students ever did, but this is one of the theses that has been propounded, that a certain number of these prep schools – it's all gone by the boards, it's just a different world now, but at one time it was felt this was sort of an enclosed world.

HOUGHTON: Well, you're asking a different question. You're asking what I thought at the time. That was what you were asking, not what I think today. I think what you're suggesting is perfectly, that in the end most of these schools taken together are taught according to a format that was mostly transferable from one to the other, the same kind of format. And the indoctrination that one received in terms of what made a whole, a complete youth would have been pretty much the same from one school to the next, of almost any size; also the sort of sense of ownership of one's own future and a mission in terms of the obligations of young people to society, to themselves, and to their family, which may have missed a few but overall did have a tendency to take hold as a characteristic of those schools broadly speaking in my view.

Q: It was not just public service but service in general. You were expected to contribute something.

HOUGHTON: You pay back into society what society's given to you.

Q: So you were asked to leave. Was this academic?

HOUGHTON: Yes, purely academic.

Q: Were you able to sort of diagnose what the problem was?

HOUGHTON: Well, not specifically, but very simply when I went to a much smaller school I was able to find my own sort of headway and prevail. I did well in my courses and managed to sort of mostly lead the class all the way through the school. I think it was a factor of numbers, though. You weren't being drowned out by the next 150 boys who were ahead of you.

Q: Some of the schools are much bigger. In my school I was in a class of about 70, I think, which made it a little more doable. You graduated from Dublin School?

HOUGHTON: That's correct.

Q: When?

HOUGHTON: 1958.

Q: And you were thinking about what you wanted to do as far as what school to go to and what sort of major you might want to take?

HOUGHTON: Surely. I was expected to apply to Harvard in any circumstance, which I did, and it accepted me. My interest was in science and technical subjects, and it was no surprise to me when the issue of major came up that I then elected to be an engineering major, which I did.

Q: You were there '58 to '62?

HOUGHTON: '58 to '63.

Q: I would think that if engineering were sort of what you wanted, Yale would be the place to go.

HOUGHTON: No, I wanted to go to Harvard and then as a second-tier choice I wanted engineering as a major. So going to Harvard became the first choice, and when I was there with the decision as to what my major was, I chose engineering. I changed the major in the second year.

Q: What was the Engineering Department like at that time?

HOUGHTON: It was obviously not as strong as any of the major engineering schools, MIT, for example, right around the corner, but it was able. It taught civil engineering, electrical engineering; it taught technical subjects. It had a standard set of courses that it would offer to freshmen, of which I took a number. At the same time Harvard was very interested that freshmen were broadly rounded, so the college wanted you to have humanities, social sciences, and so forth, which I then took as well.

Q: You say you switched your major?

HOUGHTON: Government.

Q: What brought that about?

HOUGHTON: Well, because I did a reassessment as to whether engineering was a subject I wanted to remain in, and the assessment came up negative. I was increasingly interested in public affairs. During the summer prior to my sophomore year I took a number of courses at Harvard again, most of which focused on international issues including US foreign policy, Russian/Soviet domestic and foreign policy. It interested me more and it could capture my imagination more completely than engineering would.

Q: You had the election of 1960 while you were at Harvard. Did you get caught up in sort of the Kennedy camp or not?

HOUGHTON: No.

Q: Did you get caught up in the other side, the Nixon one?

HOUGHTON: No. I was relatively apolitical at that age, and there were no great sweeping issues that caught my imagination at the time of a national level that would focus me in particular on one group, one party or the other, or one candidate or the other.

Q: While you were working on government, was it increasingly more towards the international side?

HOUGHTON: Yes, it was.

Q: Did you find yourself looking at any particular area of the world?

HOUGHTON: Yes, over time I became increasingly interested in the Far East and in China in particular. By the time I was a senior I had taken a number of courses in Far Eastern studies. I was very interested in China and frustrated by the idea that as an American citizen I couldn't go there.

Q: Did you take any courses with Reischauer or Fairbank?

HOUGHTON: Yes, Fairbank. Hank Fairbank was there at the time, a very interesting fellow.

Q: Was there a rather strong group taking studies for the Far East at that time?

HOUGHTON: Well, you had a number of groups. You had a number of people involved in international affairs. There was a Soviet studies group that was alive and active then. They were very strong and active, and, yes, there was a group involved in the Far East. I don't think I got very close into either of them at all. I remained pretty much within the undergraduate circuit throughout.

Q: While you were moving up towards '63, towards graduation, were you thinking of any particular area of what you wanted to do?

HOUGHTON: Yes, it seemed to me that I should be interested in a career that at least had some relationship to foreign affairs and to the political process. The resolution seemed to land on my doorstep when I receive a letter from a local CIA recruiter saying, "We'd like to see you."

Q: When I was at Williams – I graduated in 1950 – the CIA was all over the place at that time. There was a lot of recruitment just at that particular time.

HOUGHTON: Well, I received a form letter in 1963 in the spring about the time that I was trying to figure out what should I be doing over the course of the next number of years – it must have been about April or early May, maybe April 1963 – that invited me and anyone else, I assumed, interested in languages, international relations, or who had some special cut at foreign studies at any of the universities in the Boston area. I assume that they would have received the same letter, because it was clearly a form letter. I looked at it, however, and took it as a direct invitation to me. I then called up and made an appointment to go to the Federal Office Building in downtown Boston and see the

local recruiter who had asked in this letter for me to come and visit him, which I then did.

Q: Obviously this is an unclassified interview, but what were they telling you you'd be doing?

HOUGHTON: Let me just go through the process. I went over. We had a little discussion about who I was, what my background and my interest was where I'd been, and in a very short period of time, within 15 minutes, he said, "I can't deal with you from this end. You're going to have to go down to Langley, Virginia, and I'm going to give you a ticket to go there next week." So I was given a ticket to fly down to Agency headquarters and went through a series of interviews for the junior officer program. I was then offered a position during the course of the interview process, pending the determination of my military status. I asked the question "What would I be doing?" to which I was told I couldn't be told. It was a process of deliberate evasion of whoever the applicant was: "All you have to do is love us and then you can come in and then you'll find out about it." I assume I passed the written examination, but then I failed the physical. I couldn't pass the ear test. So the same day I was asked to please report to the exit and received 35 dollars so that I could take myself back to Boston. That was the end result of my interview process for the CIA.

Q: So back to Boston, and then what happened?

HOUGHTON: I went to Boston, and the following day I reported to the Central Square Army recruiter and offered myself for the draft knowing that, even though it meant three years of service as opposed to two – the draft was in effect – I would be able to select the area of specialized service. I was given bloody hell by the local recruiter who wanted to know why somebody from Harvard was trying to pull his leg, and I said, "Because that's what I intend to do and want to do." He said, "Well, you report here, Sonny, tomorrow morning at 0700 and I'll give you your transportation to the other side," over to the Boston Army depot, where I would have my physical examination. I accepted the invitation. I asked where my return MTA token was coming from, having been liberally doused with expense money to come down to Washington and go back, and now I was being given one 15-cent MTA (subway) ticket. I was informed that I wouldn't get the return one until I'd appeared and gone through all the physical examinations on the Army side. I did that and I was again washed out because of my hearing. The two doctors, who obviously seemed to either be interested in me or fulfilling a quota, asked me to go through the ear machine several times, and even going through several times it didn't work. So in the end I was neither qualified for CIA duty or for military duty of any kind. Years later I found out that, when I applied to the State Department, the State Department couldn't have cared less. They really were more interested in whether I spoke properly as opposed to listened.

Q: At least this cleared the way that you weren't going to be stuck with....

HOUGHTON: It gave me three years of my life back. I was prepared to give three years

to national military service, but they gave me my three years back. I walked out feeling like a free man. I then undertook a course of study, a brief course of study, at Harvard for that summer in Arabic and went off to the Middle East to sign up for a longer-duration Arabic course and went through Africa for the following year, and came back and went into Arabic language training. This was from ‘64 to ‘65, and from ‘65 to ‘66 signed up to a master’s degree program at the American University of Beirut (AUB), and came back to Washington after that point.

Q: With a hearing problem did you have a problem with Arabic? I think of Vietnamese, which is a tonal language, and I’m not quite sure what tone-deaf Vietnamese do.

HOUGHTON: I’m not tone deaf. I only have difficulty hearing at high frequencies principally and at some low frequencies as well, but normal conversational tones, no, and it didn’t seem to be any impediment at learning a foreign language, at least for me.

Q: How’d you find Arabic?

HOUGHTON: Absorbing, difficult. You really had to apply yourself. I felt myself incomplete, which I was, when I finished a year, after nine months of study at the institution that I went to. In fact, after I came into the State Department, they sent me back to complete my Arabic studies and gave me another year.

Q: AUB, you were in AUB?

HOUGHTON: Yes, I was at AUB for one year between ‘65 and ‘66, one summer to the next.

Q: What was AUB like? That’s American University of Beirut. What was it like at that time?

HOUGHTON: In what sense?

Q: Well, in the first place, sort of the mix in the faculty?

HOUGHTON: Well, the faculty was a mixture of American and Palestinian, Lebanese and others. Most of them were capable people who’d gone through courses of study in the United States or at the American University itself. I was given to a Lebanese, a Shiite Lebanese, named Nebi Ferz, a very fine man, who was very interested in the history of the Middle East, and I pursued my course of studies under his guidance. I wrote my dissertation on the American engagement with the issue of Palestine in the Wilsonian period immediately after World War I. It was a wonderful place to study, of course. Beirut is a lovely place to be, interesting. One had the ability to either use one’s Arabic or not, at least in the city, while in the country you could at least have the opportunity to practice one’s colloquial language. The library was adequate, not great but adequate, and generally speaking there was enough to keep one as busy as one wanted to there.

Q: What about the student body?

HOUGHTON: Mixed student body, a limited number of Americans undergraduate, very limited number of Americans undergraduate; now, at the graduate level the largest number of people taking courses in Near Eastern studies were Americans such as myself.

Q: By this time was AUB sort of on the – I don't want to say the black list, but no longer teaching the future Arabic leaders and all?

HOUGHTON: Oh, no, I think it was. The alternate universities for young Arabs in Lebanon were very limited. There was the St. Joseph's University, which is principally French, or Lebanese University, which was not considered very good. There was no alternative American course of study in the Middle East, except for the American University of Cairo, but that was much more Egyptianized. Egypt had its own sort of problem with respect to other Arab countries in that it was highly politicized under the Nasser regime and a lot of families around Egypt didn't want to send their kids there. The big wave of Arab and other Middle Eastern students who decided that they really could go to the United States to learn hadn't occurred at that time, and so AUB was still a major event and an extremely desirable university for certain people to send their children to. Since the children frequently came from elites of countries in the Middle East, they returned to the elites and continued to play a leadership role.

Q: How was Nasserism playing at that time?

HOUGHTON: Loudly. This was in the early 1960s, early to mid 1960s, and the general sort of sense was that, if Nasser wanted to bring people out into the streets of almost any country in the Middle East, he could do it. In Lebanon there is this sort of mixed interplay of foreign influences and pressures both on the Lebanese government as well as within sort of the social and demographic structure of Lebanon itself. There were groups that were Nasserist, there were groups that were pro-Iraqi, there were groups that were financed by the Kuwaitis and Saudis, as well as by, of course, the United States and others. The Soviets were in there with both feet. It was a great place to be to see this interplay of different political factions.

Q: What was the civil war that was going on in '58? What was that all about? Do you know?

HOUGHTON: I came to the Middle East after the '58 war. The '58 war really was a collision of nationalist influences and political plays by major states such as Syria and Lebanon, and Egypt in other countries of the Middle East, and Iraq the overthrow of the king, the monarchy, in a bloody coup, and the establishment of an Arab nationalist regime there, which then sought to play itself against the others. It was a period of intense turmoil which then appeared to be extraordinarily threatening to certain groups in Lebanon. They then called for our assistance among others, but were also prepared to take up arms to

promote their own particular cause such as Christians in Lebanon, Muslim nationalists as well as Druze, a separate group within Lebanon itself, which you know about, and it all sort of collided in the early summer of 1958.

Q: While you were there in '65-'66 were the waters placid by this time?

HOUGHTON: The surface waters were placid, but there was a great sense of sort of turmoil underneath. Lots of different things were going on. You still had external influence to one degree or the other coming from many, many quarters and many countries inside Lebanon itself. You had an increasing division between, on one hand, a Muslim community divided between Sunni Muslims and Shiites against the tradition overlords of Lebanon themselves, deeply concerned about their own position within Lebanon, continued to dominate basically the politics of the country. And the memory of the war was still there. You could pass through mountain villages that had been shelled. There was a certain amount of physical destruction that had taken place during the course of the '58 war. There were towns that had been exclusive Druze, for example, or exclusively Muslim that had resisted attacks by Christians or vice versa, and the memories were all there. One didn't talk much about them. Lebanon is a country where there are from time to time certain subjects one does not discuss. The nature of the war, the reasons for the civil war, what was finished or what was unfinished were subjects that one didn't raise with the Lebanese, normally speaking. I was a student, which meant that I had to be reasonably guarded in terms of what my apparent interests were so that I not be suspected of being something else, an informer for the United States, in the intelligence service of another country, etcetera. There's always that sort of suspicion: What are you here to learn Arabic for? Why are you interested in us? What are you here to learn our culture and history for other than to inform your government and find other ways to exert control on the part of the United States over our lives? It's a very standard sort of traditional view in the Middle East. If the conspiracy isn't overt, then it must be covert, and exist.

Q: In your getting around, did you find that the Shiite minority or something was sort of overlooked at that time?

HOUGHTON: Well, the question as to were the Shiites a minority is an interesting question demographically. Who knows? There was never a census. Censuses were deliberately avoided.

Q: There was a census in 1930 or something like that?

HOUGHTON: It was in the '40s that the census was taken. But the Christians held onto a census figure that placed them in the majority even though at that time they were probably moving toward below the 50 percent mark. Within the Muslim communities Shiites were probably the largest number, but one didn't talk. It was a dirty little secret. If the Shiites were the largest number, they were nevertheless the most impoverished both economically as well as politically, and they could lump it.

Q: Was it a group that in a way you almost had to be careful not to get too involved with, that this would raise suspicions?

HOUGHTON: Lots of groups one wanted to avoid. Frequently one would run into Lebanese and others in Lebanon including Palestinians who wanted to enlist someone else to their cause for the support of what they themselves were interested in. You had an interesting job avoiding that kind of entanglement.

Q: What about Israel? Did you get early recognition of Israel...?

HOUGHTON: I don't think anybody mentioned Israel. It was still called Occupied Palestine at the time, and even to mention the word 'Israel' was to push a hot button.

Q: Did you sense among, say, the Americans who were taking Arabic the accusation which I think may come from sort of Israelis sources, certainly within the American Foreign Service connotation: if you were an Arabist ipso facto you were anti-Semitic. This was sort of thrown out at one time or another. Was that around at all?

HOUGHTON: Sure, absolutely. I think behind it you have a situation where young Americans who went to Beirut or to the Middle East to learn, study, or work and who had not gone to Israel and had no special interest in Israel itself were exposed to influences that came from principally Arab sources, entirely Arab sources. The result was that one's view of the Middle East and the Middle East problem was almost entirely by experience on one side of a bipolar issue. One would find one's friends, in discussion with one's friends, frequently the discussion came out as to what to do with the Middle East problem and what to do with the Middle East issue. In many cases people would voice views that would certainly look to Israelis or to Israeli supporters as if they were pro-Arab and anti-Israel. One didn't deal with issues of anti-Semitism. You know, an accusation of anti-Semitism won't come from an Arab; it will come from somebody who is either Israeli or Jewish or is a supporter of either of those particular positions. You didn't get that in Beirut. I had two good friends in Beirut – actually they were rather adventurous – a young couple who were Jewish and they wanted to see what it was like so they planted themselves there and studied at the American University of Beirut. I wonder what's ever become of them. Both of them were interested in this and they had a fascination with the Arab side of the equation because they knew the other. They'd been to Israel, they had lived in Jewish communities in the United States, and were themselves Jewish. So that was part of it, but nobody ever raised the issue of anti-Semitism there at that time.

Q: Did you have any contact with the American embassy or language officers or anything like that?

HOUGHTON: Sure, absolutely, we ran into them from time to time.

Q: Was this part of your future plan? Were you thinking of ARAMCO or academic

world?

HOUGHTON: No, I was interested in the Department of State, probably from an early point after I had arrived in Lebanon. I had the exposure to an offer from the US government from the Agency, CIA, that did not materialize. My interest in national service, national military service, which had been frustrated, nevertheless continued to hold a residue of interest for me in terms of national service in some other manner, and I was interested in the State Department as a possible future job even as I was going through Arabic in the early stages.

Q: Had you made any approach to the State Department at that time?

HOUGHTON: In the first year that I went out to Beirut, I studied Arabic there and I made no approach to the State Department. I occasionally would talk to people who were at the embassy. For example, at a reception or another social event one ran into embassy officers, consular officers and others, and one recognized that they did embassy things whatever they were, but we didn't see a great deal of it. At the same time, I went to a British school. It was a British foreign office school, and the British foreign office school was peopled by young people from the British foreign office who themselves were going to go and do embassy things. It was the national interest in the political interplay and in what the British were doing, what the Soviets were doing, even what the Americans were doing, and so one was exposed to that at that particular point. At the end of that year, I was in Washington for a month or so and I went down to see the Board of Examiners to find out what it meant to apply for the Foreign Service. I had already taken the Foreign Service written exam – don't ask me when, because I don't remember when that was – but whoever it was in the Board of Examiners said, "Why don't you take the oral? I think we have a slot for you. Come and see us next Monday." I said I wasn't prepared, I hadn't done anything, I hadn't thought about it a great deal, and he said, "Oh, go ahead. You may pass it. Who knows? See where you are." So I did, and I didn't pass the oral that time. It was one of those moments where I took the advice, but nevertheless that wasn't the block, because I was going back to the Middle East to the American University in any case.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

HOUGHTON: Yes, I do. Thank you for the question. There were a number of questions with respect to, obviously, me personally, obviously about my comprehension of foreign affairs, about my experience in the Middle East. Then I was given sort of a set of spot questions that went to things like "What was the name of the inn where John Wilkes Booth hid up after he'd assassinated Lincoln?" I couldn't answer that question, and there were a series of others that were of that sort of American history trivia that gave me a deep negative on what my understanding of my own country was about. In the view of the Foreign Service examiners, it was perfectly clear to them in any event that I needed to be able to represent the United States and to answer questions of a probing and profound nature from those people I would be coming in contact with abroad who would be very

interested in all of this. Between you and me, I never found anybody ever interested at that level of American history or anything other than why America conducts its policy as it does today – "Don't tell me about last year." I thought at the time it was fair, but looking backward I thought it was a misperception, I think willful misperception, of what other people would be interested in on the part of the United States, the sort of evangelical aspect of us: "Well, we have so much to tell you about our democracy that you must want to know about it." No, it doesn't happen that way.

Q: Not at all. Then you went back....

HOUGHTON: To AUB, and I went there for a year, took a course of Middle Eastern studies, Arab world studies, and got my master's degree at the end of that year.

Q: When did you get your master's degree?

HOUGHTON: It would have been in the summer of 1966.

Q: Was there any feeling at the time that all hell was going to break loose again in the Middle East at some point? I'm talking about the Arab-Israeli side of things.

HOUGHTON: To the extent that I personally paid attention to it, it seemed to me, I'm sure, that the underlying tensions and the sense of grievance would at some point build up toward some kind of a conflict, but who knows what form it would take.

Q: It's often interesting that Lebanon was never really, although it suffered probably more than any other state. You've got Syria and Egypt, which really have carried on the brunt of the fighting, where the Lebanese have sort of been passive – I won't say bystanders – and get beaten up from time to time. Did you find within Lebanon that lots of Lebanese were saying, "Let's go get those Israelis" or something like that?

HOUGHTON: Most Lebanese I met would have said.... Well, they fell into two groups. There were Christian Lebanese who would have said and were telling me, "You know, we're really much more like the Israelis than most Arabs recognize. We're friends of the Israelis." That's all they were doing, saying, "We're not like other Arabs and we're not like Muslims, and we don't like them much, and that's their problem, not ours." Younger Muslim Lebanese, many of them, were pretty Palestinianized; that is, they had the sense of grievance and oppression that many Palestinians did about the occupation of Palestine by Israel with the feeling somehow that there was an enormous grievance that needed to be redressed somehow.

Q: How did the Arab world strike you? Of course, you were in – I hate to use the term – one of the most civilized. Lebanon was a civilized country compared, without the deep problems, say, of Syria or Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Were you getting any feel that you were studying the language by people who really weren't making much of what they had; in other words, that the Arabs didn't seem to be, in your perception or your thinking,

moving ahead within the 20th century as compared to, say, Europeans or the Israelis or Americans?

HOUGHTON: I'm sure I didn't think about it in that manner. Probably what impressed me the most was I was in a region of a single overlying culture called Arab, mostly Islamic, and, to one degree or another, entirely Arabic speaking and, to one degree or another, feeling themselves to be Arab but at dramatically different levels of cultural development within that region. Some were very tribal, for example Jordan or Saudi Arabia, and others were reaching toward being a more modern society with terrible problems achieving that and riven by political divisions and by a certain degree of anarchy that made it almost impossible for them to be compared to European states of a more traditional nature. Of course, we've found, haven't we, that certain European countries, particularly in the Balkans, break down in much the same way?

Q: Yes, absolutely. Were you getting any feeling personally about American policy towards the Middle East? If you're in the Arab world, you get hit over the head by our fairly strong support of Israel, which became more pronounced later, which didn't seem to very even handed. Was this a concern of yours?

HOUGHTON: It seemed to me that American policy was fairly even handed. What seemed to be the American policy pursued American interests, and American interests in the Middle East were principally in oil stability and the pursuit of oil, and that meant keeping the Arab-Israeli issue as quiet as it could be with the understanding or recognition that the United States wasn't going to do much to change its posture of extremely strong support at that time for Israel. That's the way it would have appeared at the time if I had managed to sit down and articulate it that way. There's no strong question as to whether the United States was even handed; it probably was not, nor did it purport to be – no, that's not true; it did purport to be.

Q: You got your master's in '66 in what?

HOUGHTON: In Arab studies.

Q: And then what?

HOUGHTON: Well, I had applied to the Foreign Service and I had taken the oral the second time around and had passed.

Q: How were the questions then?

HOUGHTON: I don't recall them as being substantially different. I do recall I seemed to have a better handle on not just what the answers were but how to answer the questions. I was a little bit more accomplished at examsmanship before the Board of Examiners.

Q: So did you enter the Foreign Service then?

HOUGHTON: I came into the Foreign Service in September 1966.

Q: Did you go through the basic officer course?

HOUGHTON: I went through the basic officer course, that's right.

Q: Do you recall what type of people were in it, the basic officer course?

HOUGHTON: You mean...?

Q: The student body.

HOUGHTON: The student body, yes, I do, sure. There were slightly less than 50 of us, 45 or 46, if I recall correctly. This was the A100 course. There were a half a dozen USIA officers and the rest of us were State. I would say that there were 30 percent women in the class, something of that nature. It was not what you call particularly diverse except for geography. The State Department at that point – you may recall this – had begun to select for geographic diversity for reasons that were not entirely clear at the time but somehow representing "the face of America" meant representing somebody from Iowa and Alaska as well as of the Eastern ilk.

Q: When I came in in 1955, we were supposed to represent a massive infusion of Main Street into the Foreign Service. The words changed but the idea stays the same, and I think they probably get about the same type of person.

HOUGHTON: Well, the template changed, of course, after a while. About three or four years later diversity meant people of different backgrounds, race, color and so forth. We had, to my recollection, one African American in the course. I don't think there were more than that. And there were a number of Hispanic Americans and at least one Asian American. But it was for the most part geographically as opposed to ethnically diverse. I became friends with a number of them, and they were all not terribly unlike me with interests of a fairly diverse nature, interested in foreign affairs, good schooling and preparation, and many of whom had traveled and were pretty sophisticated.

Q: Do you feel the A100 course gave you a pretty good introduction to the State Department?

HOUGHTON: The answer is yes. I think when you got down to particulars, the specific consular courses given by Miss Offi and the issues related to how to handle American citizens, the importance of what it really meant to do consular business were, I would say, more fundamentally important than any sort of particular set of courses in the general A100 except for the general exposure to a number of people who trooped through and gave talks to us. You asked a question earlier about schools as bonding institutions. The A100 was a bonding institution in a sense.

Q: Do you recall any of the people? Have you kept up with some of the people who were in the course?

HOUGHTON: I run into them from time to time. Keeping up would be too much, I think.

Q: Were you married at the time?

HOUGHTON: I was.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

HOUGHTON: Well, my then wife was from Washington DC, where both of her parents were in the State Department. Her father served in IO, and her mother was in the Bureau of Economic Affairs.

Q: I see. Well then, with your Arabic, was it pretty much a foregone conclusion that you were off to an Arabic post?

HOUGHTON: Not at all. I was, in fact, specifically told that my first assignment would have nothing to do with the Arab world at all, that they wanted to hold me back in the Department of State, and my first assignment was to the Bureau of International Immigration Affairs...

Q: IO.

HOUGHTON: ...until it was discovered that my father-in-law also worked there, whereupon the threat of being accused of nepotism raised its head and I was immediately reassigned to the Bureau of European Affairs, which was a much better assignment.

Q: Oh, yes. So you were in European Affairs from '66...?

HOUGHTON: Late '66 until '68, yes.

Q: What were you doing in European Affairs?

HOUGHTON: I was the junior staff assistant to the Bureau, to the Assistant Secretary.

Q: Who was the Assistant Secretary?

HOUGHTON: John Leddy.

Q: Oh, yes. Well now, what was John Leddy like and how did he operate?

HOUGHTON: John was one of those very able civil servants who knew his stuff very

well. He was highly respected within the Department. He was a quiet operator within, who dealt with European issues. He gave some of his hottest stuff to his two deputies, Walter Stoessel, who covered the Soviet Union, East European affairs and some tough issues, and the other to George Springsteen, who covered economic and the European immigration issues. But Leddy I saw occasionally. He was not what you call a very open individual and didn't operate that way. He had a secretary/receptionist who screened people and kept them away from his door. I've seen other assistant secretaries with much more open styles where staff assistants would go wandering in and out, but that was not the way it was when I was there, not with John.

Q: What were you doing?

HOUGHTON: As junior staff assistant, I'd come in and sort the cables and messages and make certain they got properly distributed to the four principals I worked for the Assistant Secretary, two deputies and the executive assistant, special assistant; made certain that letters were in proper order. After you're burned once or twice by an irate young SS officer who told you that a letter had one misspelling in it or had to be kicked back or the form was wrong, you learned pretty quickly, so you stopped things that went forward. Over time you saw that you had an important function in advising officers within the Bureau of what they needed to know that they might not otherwise hear from anybody else in terms of what things were going on that might affect their work. You tried to play a fairly neutral role between the officers of the Bureau and the Assistant Secretary's office. It was all very interesting work. After awhile you realized you were dealing with human beings who needed things from you, and the more client conscious you became, the better you were at what you did. People would need to know if their telegrams had been cleared, so you kept a little reminder; when something had been cleared, don't wait for them to come to you, give them a call. After awhile I got to know all the office hands, office directors on a first-name basis and virtually everybody else in the Bureau. The people I knew least were the middle- to lower-grade officers who did most of the work, but that's because I didn't see them. They weren't the ones who came up and asked questions of me; it was the senior people, senior staff. So it was sort of an odd collegial relationship with me at the very junior level working with people who'd been in the Service for many, many years.

Q: The European Bureau has had, from people I've talked to, the reputation of being sort of not only the preeminent bureau because it's got Paris, London and Rome in its purview but also its ability to produce sound, accurate, quick advice, in other words, in some ways the most professional bureau. Did you get that feel?

HOUGHTON: I certainly got the feeling it was a professional outfit, yes, I did. It was a well oiled machine. It was thoroughly staffed with people who knew what they were doing, including people who were civil service and who had long continuity in the offices which they dealt with. There were a number of offices where either frequently the deputy of the office would be somebody who had been there for years, 10 or 15 years, and they held the corporate memory, they knew what needed to be done, they'd seen cycle after

cycle after cycle of political appointee come in at the very top and at the assistant secretary level and knew what the requirement was to produce a particular product in terms of quality, quantity and time.

Q: This was towards the end of the Johnson Administration, and usually by that time in any administration that had been going for more than four years, it's usually gone through all the shakedowns and works well. Were there any problems that you were hearing, grousing in the corridors or something, about the political aspects of what we were doing?

HOUGHTON: Other than Vietnam, you mean?

Q: Well, other than Vietnam, yes.

HOUGHTON: No, no, and in the end I wasn't brought into corridor gossip about what was going on more broadly. My experience is that officers and offices tended to stick to business pretty much. There wasn't much cross transfer between one bureau and the next except at the senior level. As you know, frequently when the Foreign Service Officers get together in an informal setting, the last thing they talk about is policy or politics. The first thing they talk about is people, promotions, institution, is the system working, how is the service, and does the State Department do what we want it to do. But the big issues aren't brought up.

Q: You were a junior officer at this time, and a little matter called Vietnam was going on. We had an outfit – I think it was called JEFSOC, I'm not sure – a junior officer association. Vietnam did not pass unnoticed in the ranks of the Foreign Service. Did you get involved?

HOUGHTON: It did not affect me personally or anybody I knew directly within the context of my personal friends in the Foreign Service or those people I knew in the Bureau of European Affairs, partly because in the end issues related to Vietnam were above our pay grade for the most part. Secondly, we had a job to do, and I think our own sense of professional self esteem said that that's the job you were supposed to do and, if you have any time afterwards, then you can think about Vietnam but, thirdly, that's not something you can do much about. The idea of raising a question or in any manner protesting about a policy in an area that one had no responsibility for would have been absolute anathema.

Q: What about the civil rights movement? Young, educated people were getting involved in this. Did this sort of transpose itself at all?

HOUGHTON: I didn't see any aspect of that at all. To my recollection and to my knowledge, at the time that I came in, issues of civil rights were not what you call of high visibility within the State Department.

Q: While you were with European Affairs, were you tempted to go into Europe?

HOUGHTON: No, I wanted to get back to the Middle East.

Q: So what happened in '68?

HOUGHTON: In '68 I was asked what I wanted my next assignment to be – actually it would have been '67 at the time – and I said, "I'd like to go back to the Middle East, and I'd like to apply for language school in Beirut to be sure that the Arabic that I had taken before took." It was confirmed in terms of my ability to handle it properly, and I was accepted at the language school in Beirut, hearing problems and all. In early May, I guess it was, terminated my assignment with EUR, spent about a month on the Israel desk sort of reading in, maybe less than that, and then in June and July went over to Europe on a ship that took me to Beirut, where I would have arrived in the middle of the summer or something like that.

Q: So you took Arabic at the...?

HOUGHTON: Foreign Service Institute.

Q: When, '68 to...?

HOUGHTON: '68 to '69.

Q: Did you find a different Middle East after the '67 war?

HOUGHTON: Oh, sure, in many different ways. There were two things that happened: one, the Middle East was different and, two, I was different. I was now professionally involved in the US government.

Q: The outlook is completely....

HOUGHTON: Yes, of course.

Q: How about Lebanon when you went back there? What was it like?

HOUGHTON: Well, it was more troubled surely. The issue of what Palestinians were was extremely visible in Lebanon. Nasserism had receded, it seemed to me, and the influence of other countries was evidently less, but the state within a state that was growing, that is the Palestinian entity within Lebanon itself and the sense of Palestinian consciousness had grown and the Palestinians were already becoming something of a challenge to the Lebanese government even then. This was '68-'69.

Q: Building up to Black September in Jordan...

HOUGHTON: That was further on. That was in Jordan.

Q: ...in '70, but what I'm saying is that the '67 war had also displaced a significant number of Palestinians...

HOUGHTON: And Lebanese from the south as well.

Q: ...and Lebanese from the south as well.

HOUGHTON: Lebanon was no longer, it seemed to me, sort of a calm, sleepy place, not an easy place to be. It was a lot more political in the sense of nervousness and apprehension of things going on around Lebanon, that is, the possible reemergence of a '67 war again. In 1968 Lebanon was still formally at war with Israel, Syria was still formally at war with Israel, Egypt was, and Israel was not inclined to be reluctant to take the initiative, military initiative, if necessary in order to make a point in any of these countries, and did. There were Israeli overflights regularly and continuously and aerial dogfights that took place over the Golan Heights on a continuing basis. There was more disruption and convulsion that was taking place.

Q: How'd you find doing things the State Department way as opposed to the AUB way in learning the language?

HOUGHTON: I did what I needed to do to get the master's at AUB. The State Department was, you know, a professional organization professionally organized with certain expectations of what you needed to do in order to be able to fulfill the requirements of other people in whatever the job was, and that's the way a professional, it seemed to me, should be, and I accepted it.

Q: Did Arabic come back pretty quickly?

HOUGHTON: The Arabic grammar that I'd been given before came back very quickly. The year that I spent in Beirut at the language school improved that, improved my use of the language for colloquial purposes but also dramatically built up my vocabulary, which was helpful.

Q: Were you part of a class, or were you sort of by yourself?

HOUGHTON: No, there were three of us who came in together.

Q: Who were they?

HOUGHTON: David Ransom, David Mack and myself. We were part of a three-person class that came in at the same time.

Q: Well, you represent then a third of this trio that I've interviewed. The three of you

ended up as being quite good in Arabic, weren't you?

HOUGHTON: I think all of us came out with a 4, 4+ in some cases. I think I came out at least as well as the other two. I think David Mack had the most opportunity in Libya to use it, so he was fortunate in that regard. I went on after that to Amman, Jordan, where it was useful but then to Egypt, when it atrophied.

Q: Well, this was the thing. With David Mack, he was saying he was having a ball in Libya because he was there when Qadhafi was taking over and he was the Arabic language officer. His DCM got a little annoyed with him. At one point he said, "I know you're having fun, but I want you to know I'm not."

HOUGHTON: Great story.

Q: In '69 where'd you go?

HOUGHTON: Jordan, Amman.

Q: You were there from '69 to...?

HOUGHTON: To '70. It was originally a three-year assignment, but it was shortened by two years because of the sort of internal convulsion that took place in May of 1969. This was the predecessor to Black September. You could color it, but it was in May. It all took place in May when fighting broke out, generally speaking, through the city of Amman.

Q: Jordan, when you went there in '69, certainly was a different animal than Lebanon, wasn't it?

HOUGHTON: Sure, in every way.

Q: How were relations between the United States, that you could gather, and Jordan when you got there?

HOUGHTON: Well, very close, much closer than Lebanon. The American mission overall had extremely close ties at every level with the Jordanian government. The question of who represented the United States in the eyes of the King must have been an interesting one, because he probably saw the CIA station chief more than he did the ambassador. The CIA for its part, I think, had no question about who really ran the relationship. Those of us who were in the State Department kept stumbling over our friends and colleagues in the Agency in terms of what they did. I very much recall an interesting point when I was conducting an interview with a Jordanian in a particular labor union. He looked at me after I'd made the appointment and had been with him for a few minutes, and he said, "Mr. Houghton, why are you here? Mr. So-and-so normally pays me." That kind of thing went on from time to time. We had a military mission there. We had a police training mission. We had a very substantial AID mission active all over

the country, a substantial AID program, and he obviously was engaged across the board.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

HOUGHTON: Harry Symmes was the ambassador at that point.

Q: What was your job?

HOUGHTON: I was the number-two person in the economic function, and I did basic sort of bread-and-butter economic work, but I did at least as much – let me see. I was the embassy officer in charge of the translation section. I was the most recently arrived with Arabic, so they felt that would be useful. I was the labor reporting officer at one point. I was protocol officer, which gave me the worst problems of all. I could never get anything right. It was one of those jobs where every time I did something to fulfill a protocol responsibility, whether it was to issue the protocol book and distribute it to those people in the diplomatic corps, I'd get phone calls from people saying, "Why didn't you give one to me?" Excellent question because it contained all the information important to people to function, but I was ordered to do it that way. I didn't say that. I decided that, "Well, don't ask the next question. I'll send you one right now." And I did a little bit of, I guess you'd have to call it, political reporting too from time to time.

Q: Well, at that time the Palestinians – I'm not sure what they were called; were they the Palestine Liberation Organization...?

HOUGHTON: The PLO was active. Fatah was active. There were numerous smaller groups: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Jibril faction, and so forth. And they were in increasing evidence all over Amman, not only within the refugee camps but outside. Finally in the second year of my stay there – not second year, 1969 – we began to see them set up outposts and housing and finally roadblocks in various areas around town. I had my automobile taken from me while I was still in it by one of these groups, but that's another story.

Q: What happened?

HOUGHTON: I was stopped in front of my house by a Land Rover. I had a Land Rover and they wanted it, and a couple of guys got out, and one came over to me and said, "We want your car," and I said, "I don't think I'm going to give it to you," and he began arming a hand grenade that he had and he said, "Now, will you please step out?" I said, "No, you step in." He said, "Move over," and I moved over, and another fellow got in back and put a Kalashnikov to the back of my head, and at that point they said once again, "We'd like your car." I said, "Okay, you've got it."

Q: Was this part of an organization?

HOUGHTON: No, these were members of a ragtag small group of Palestinians who held

control over a few-block area, a small area involving a few blocks, near the so-called First Circle, between the First and Second Circles of Jabal Amman where I lived. I had to go through that area in order to get to my house, and they had obviously targeted the car as something that they wanted and they set out to get it.

Q: I assume the embassy made the due protest and all that, or did anything happen?

HOUGHTON: I don't think the embassy did anything official about it. But by that time things moved very rapidly. An internal convulsion got involved and within a week general fighting broke out in Amman and elsewhere in Jordan involving the army on one side, armed Palestinian groups on the other, and it continued probably for the next six or seven days before it died down, the end of which saw a major evacuation of both American dependents and most Americans attached to the embassy out of Jordan, which included me at a later point. So what happened to my car, where my car was, was of less importance and got sort of absorbed by other events taking place.

Q: Had there been sort of a period before this fighting broke where you were wondering when was the army going to step in?

HOUGHTON: This was the sense of others in the embassy about when was the Jordanian government going to establish or exert control. The king, to the minds of many, had been extremely weak in terms of his response at that point with regard to the enormous challenge that had been put before him by the Palestinian groups. He'd been reluctant to take any strong action against them. It was precipitated actually by an event that involved two officers in our own embassy, actually one officer in our embassy, Morris Draper, head of the political section, who was taken....

Q: Morris Draper?

HOUGHTON: You know Morris?

Q: Yes, I've interviewed him.

HOUGHTON: He was taken captive by a Palestinian group and brought into a refugee camp and became the subject of a negotiation, extremely difficult negotiation, between the group in the refugee camp and the Jordanian government, which was intent on getting him out. Morris was no more than a political officer; in other words, he didn't belong to any other agency; but they were concerned and we were concerned, and in the end after three days – I recall three days – he was released. But the town, the city, was in an extraordinary state of tension, and for whatever reason the palace was inclined to move on that camp immediately afterwards, but it became sort of a general move involving the rest of the army within a very short period of time. Within hours, within half a day, of Morris' return, fighting became generalized across town.

Q: Was it too dangerous to have all but a small cadre of Americans there?

HOUGHTON: Well, we had very specific threats. Our number two in the military attaché section, Bob Perry, was shot at his doorway in the head in front of his family. There were clear indications that certain groups of Palestinians were targeting particular individuals in the embassy staff. The Air Force officer who was the defense attaché in particular was informed that he should not come home because there was a group that was waiting to take him – kill him, I think he was told. The number two in the consular section at the time went home from the embassy where he'd been for two or three days in a row to find his cleaning woman saying, "I'm glad you're alive." He said, "Why?" and she said, "Because those young fellows were looking for you, they were going to kill you." He said, "Well, whatever became of them?" and she said, "They've gone away for a few minutes. They'll be right back." He got out. There was a decision, a pretty quick decision, to evacuate and get people out as fast as we possibly could to reduce the exposure level of Americans, particularly official Americans, working there. With non-official Americans, I don't know what happened there. Many non-official Americans sort of worked for international agencies or were missionaries, and they were assured that there was not going to be a problem, and I think they mostly stayed and there was not a problem. They didn't run into any particular problems. There was a small number of American wives of Jordanians who were integrated into Jordanian society, and they didn't have a problem either.

Q: While you were the economic officer, was there much of an economy?

HOUGHTON: Well, there was enough of an economy to report on, yes. There was enough of an economy to make it important that the embassy had a reporting function and an analytical function, most of which was performed by my economic section chief, a very able guy called Art Ballon. We had to keep Washington informed of what balance of payments and other issues were of concern to the embassy and to try to place a no-spin story on what the Jordanian economy looked like to the extent that it could be understood by high-level Jordanians who were involved in it and therefore by us because we were concerned. We frequently ran afoul of the AID mission, which had a different view as to what the economy should be in order to be able to make a decent presentation for continued funding for their project there.

Q: Did you feel you were reporting on an enemy? Was the AID effort something that you looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion?

HOUGHTON: No. They looked on us with a certain amount of suspicion. The poor AID people, I'm sure they suffered. First of all, they always felt themselves to be second-class citizens after the embassy staff. Only the director and deputy director were on the diplomatic list and therefore received either the invitations or the protection, depending which was considered to be the most important, or the customs exemption, while the rest of the AID mission was further down the totem pole. Those of us who were in the embassy were obviously sort of from the AID perspective not necessarily on the same team. AID put out a report every so often that would be glowingly and unrealistically

optimistic about how the economy was doing in Jordan, which the embassy then would be paralleling with the report on how the economy in Jordan was doing. It looked rather different. There would be no attempt to reconcile this – I think that's fair – so that there was no unified reporting between AID and the embassy on what was going on in Jordan, and I think that's the way it should have been. I think a lowest-common-denominator approach would have divested Washington of sort of an important unvarnished viewpoint.

Q: Was there much trade with Iraq at that time?

HOUGHTON: Oh, there was a great deal of stuff that went through Aqaba en route to Iraq. Let me think about this for a second. But the trade with Iraq was hardly trade that was generated in Jordan. I'm sure Jordanian merchants, to the extent they could sell to Iraq, did sell, but in the end it was mostly a transit trail that went through, Beirut to Damascus, down to Mafraq, and over to Iraq was their main route, or Aqaba and up to Mafraq and over to Iraq, one way or the other, two main channels. But in fact Iraq had a port that was open, a big port, Basra, as well as the normal routes going through eastern Turkey, but they would have been rougher. The easier one was using the Jordanian highway, desert highway.

Q: I thought this might be a good place to stop now. So we'll pick it up in 1970 after you were evacuated from Jordan. Where'd you go? We'll just put this at the end of the tape so we'll know where to pick it up next time.

HOUGHTON: I was evacuated to Athens and then returned to the United States and given an assignment to INR as the Egyptian analyst.

Q: All right. So we'll pick it up in 1970 when you're in INR as the Egyptian analyst.

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Today is the 16th of May 2001. In 1970 you all were removed from Jordan. We were talking off the mike. Did you cover the Sisco visit? I don't think you did.

HOUGHTON: Well, it was an episode. There were lots and lots....

Q: Would you mention that.

HOUGHTON: Let's do that.

Q: Could you explain.... basically the King asked that Harry Symmes be removed as ambassador, and it was precipitated by the aborted Sisco visit, and I was wondering if you could explain what the situation was.

HOUGHTON: Well, it was an episode among many episodes at a very troubled moment

in Middle Eastern history, US-Middle Eastern relations, and US-Jordanian relations. It involved an area visit by then Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco in early 1970, to the best of my recollection – I don't recall the exact month – that involved a visit to, among other places, Israel then Jordan in that order. The visit, when it was announced, was one that engendered a certain amount of political resistance, particularly among Palestinian groups in Amman and elsewhere in Jordan, most of which were fairly mild with the exception of some street demonstrations. But as Sisco arrived in Israel and during the course of his several days of talks there, the temperature, political temperature, in Amman clearly mounted. It was known that his visit would take him across from Jerusalem to Amman, Jordan, by car to the Allenby Bridge across the Jordan River then up to Amman. We'd learned that a large number of buses had been rented, maybe 50 or more buses, which would be filled with people who would want to meet him at the bridge and let him know their views on American policy toward the Middle East. That sounded fairly threatening, but I was informed that it wouldn't be threatening to Sisco since a helicopter had been arranged to take him from the bridge up to the palace, leaving one embassy officer in charge of the baggage, and I was identified as that embassy officer. I felt uncomfortable about this, but I'm not certain I was in much of a position to do anything. In fact, demonstrations broke out in Amman and across the town preceding his arrival. So the day before, there was a certain amount of chaos that caused a conversation to take place between the then US ambassador to Jordan, Harry Symmes, and Joseph Sisco by secure line between Amman and Jerusalem, during which it was decided that Sisco should not come to Jordan. It was too critical a moment and the conflagration could have gotten considerably worse. Therefore, Sisco announced that he would not be going to Amman. This was an enormous blow to the King of Jordan, who had expected him, to all of those other people who had wanted to see him there and, most importantly, to the sense by the Jordanian government that it could control its own environment. They objected and protested very strongly and felt that Harry Symmes was the cause of that, and in time it was my recollection that he was asked to leave and did, leaving the embassy in the hands of the then deputy chief of mission. That's that particular incident.

Q: You came back in 1970 to the Egyptian desk in INR?

HOUGHTON: I must have returned in the summer, late summer, July or August, or 1970 to the Department of State. A position had opened up in INR, which I then was asked to fill, and that was the position of intelligence analyst of Egyptian affairs at a fairly exciting moment. It was the moment when the Nasser government had prevailed upon the Soviets to put increasing numbers of air defense forces as well as ground forces into Egypt, and there was this constant buildup that was going on.

Q: You were there from '70 to when?

HOUGHTON: I was there for only four months. Let me think about this a second. I must have been there from '70 into early 1971; that's my recollection.

Q: You were there for a relatively short time, but did you get any feel about how INR at

that time was being used by either Policy Planning or by the Egyptian desk and all? What sort of use were they putting you to?

HOUGHTON: There were lots of things that we did in INR. INR, as you know, was intended, originally set up, to provide a separate and independent source of intelligence analysis to the Secretary of State and policy makers and so did not require them to rely entirely upon what the CIA or Defense Intelligence Agency or other intelligence and analysis groups within Washington or the Washington area provided them. We were supposed to be a group that could add value to intelligence reports from the field, from the Intelligence Agency, as well as to diplomat reports that came in through the State Department channel. We provided daily spot analysis for the Secretary and to others that were distributed through the building. We provided an occasional more lengthy analysis of issues that we believed or had been tasked to write about from one bureau or another within the Department of State. We also served a coordinating function for intelligence issues between the Department of State and other agencies within the constellation of foreign intelligence agencies operating in the Washington area. That's what we were supposed to do, and we did it. Everybody there usually had considerable background. They had years of experience or had taught in the field in academics or had considerable knowledge of the area that they were supposed to cover. There were no novices there. I had come there after, let me see, two years of Arabic training, a year in Beirut, another year to a year and a half in Amman, Jordan. I was new to Egyptian issues but nevertheless had some experience in the area that was relevant to what I was doing.

Q: In this '70 to '71 period, what was Egypt going to be doing, and Nasser?

HOUGHTON: This was the last moment of Nasser as leader of Egypt. It wasn't foreseeable at the time that I left Jordan and came to INR, but within a matter of a month or perhaps a maximum of two, he died. But his legacy was enormous, not only in the Arab world but in Egypt as well. The Egyptians moved to nominate what everybody saw to be an interim candidate, interim president, Anwar Sadat. Everybody recognized him as a compromise between competing factions within the group of Egyptians who ran the country but functionally as, for example, minister of defense or minister of the interior or from the political perspective as the leading luminaries within the Arab Socialist Union itself, each one of whom had their own view as to just who should run Egypt if not them personally and how it should be run. Sadat, as Nasser's vice president, was an easy candidate to put forward, but everybody recognized that it would be temporary. There was another situation looming above it all, which was a new relationship that the Egyptian government had entered into with the Soviet Union for the provision of very, very large amounts of their defense materiel including Sam 2 missiles, air defense experts, new anti-aircraft artillery batteries, and mechanized equipment to help the Egyptians counter what was going on routinely and normally, which were Israeli overflights over the country for reconnaissance purposes and occasional clashes with Egyptian MIGs over near the Sinai area, or the canal area in any event. And finally there was, of course, the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) in the Middle East as a major power among Arab states and the principal Arab state confronting Israel at that

particular moment.

Q: Did you or your colleagues see Egypt becoming more of a client state of the Soviet Union, or was it really the Soviets were helping but they were pursuing their own course?

HOUGHTON: Well, I think it was a very subtle, very complicated relationship. The Soviets for their part saw in Egypt an important associate country, but in providing Egypt with certain types of equipment specialized personnel, they were extremely careful not to provide, to the extent that they could, Egypt with an offensive capability. That would then drive them to launch an attack against the Israelis, which they, the Soviets, felt would result in a disaster of the same nature as had occurred in 1967.

Q: Did you get any feel for the role of the intelligence analysis, INR analysis, of computers or supplementors or how it worked?

HOUGHTON: My sources of information were principally the following: first, what was available in the open press, and some extremely good reporting was being put out by the *New York Times* and AP and other correspondents who worked and lived in Cairo. There was a very able *New York Times* correspondent called Roy Anderson who had a Russian wife, who had very special insights as to what was going on in Egypt. He wrote very fine reports as to what was taking place within Egypt itself that the Egyptians allowed to go out, principally because in the end it didn't bother them as long as it didn't come back into the internal news distribution network. Another source of reporting obviously was diplomatic reporting from the Department of State from the embassy, which was in charge of a minister, Donald Bergus, who had himself been in Egypt for some considerable period of time and knew the area very well and wrote short, pungent statements of view that were pretty accurate overall in their assessment of what was going on. He was supported by his number two, Marshall Wiley, who later was the ambassador to Oman. Marshall was somebody who dug in and liked to write long, thoughtful, analytical pieces that were useful indeed in terms of helping us understand what was going on in Egypt. Then outside of that we had standard intelligence reporting, some of which were Egyptian and some of which not, and which appeared to focus on certain collection requirements, most particularly, for example, what was going on in the military field, order of battle information, the nature of Egyptian military capability in different services and fields as well as leadership issues involving, at an earlier point, Nasser's relationship with his principals, his view of the situation vis-à-vis Israel, and his view of the diplomatic issues involving the United States and others.

Q: Was there the feeling that with the death of Nasser the pan-Arab movement, the Nasser movement, was going to go downhill?

HOUGHTON: The pan-Arab movement had run out of a great deal of steam every year since Nasser himself had decided that it was a major political initiative on his part to promote within the Arab world. By the early 1970s it became pretty clear that most Arab countries were functioning pretty much on their own and independently of each other.

They were concerned about Nasser's influence within their own country and over the foreign policies of other states that affected them, but in the end not much interested in listening to what Egypt wanted them to do. Exceptions were countries such as Syria, and Jordan to an extent, where Nasser's influence, because of the extraordinarily heavy role of Egypt as a confrontation state, affected them as well. There was nothing to suggest that there was an enormous resonance to the idea of Arab unity except among certain political groups and individuals, particularly younger Arabs, who wanted to feel that there was a cohesiveness that could provide them with a sense of unity. Governments didn't follow that for the most part. They seemed to believe that they could operate independently, separately, and did so. The Saudis are a good example of a country who paid everybody off in order to maintain their independence, and they weren't about to cotton to Egypt's and Nasser's particular brand of Arab nationalism.

Q: Was Egypt at that time exerting its influence in – I was thinking – the Yemen type thing? Did they have any sort of operations going on?

HOUGHTON: Well, they were out of Yemen by a long distance. They had gotten a terrible bloody nose in Yemen during the period of hostilities there. They were out of Yemen. They all recognized that Yemen was their own Vietnam. They felt badly about Yemen. They had, to my recollection, no substantial operations of a military nature overseas, but they continued to have a major presence in other Arab capitals as well as world capitals of importance to them, including the United States – there was a diplomatic mission here – and the Soviet Union, of course.

Q: With the death of Nasser, was there a feeling that maybe we could start doing more business with Egypt?

HOUGHTON: No, there was nothing to suggest that the death of Nasser, in my view, would have anything more than a positive effect by removing an obstacle to what we hoped would occur; which was that the Egyptians and Arabs would wake up and understand reality meaning an almighty Israel unable to be budged or dislodged and a United States that would continue to stand by Israel and effectively insure that the Arabs could not exercise either military or substantial political influence within the context of the strategic balance within the Middle East between the Israelis and Arabs themselves. The United States, I think, saw an opportunity in Nasser's death in having somebody who had been, at least over the past number of years prior to that point, highly hostile to the United States replaced by a weaker government that might be more compliant and one that might listen up more carefully to what we were interested in and perhaps even what the Israelis were interested in.

Q: While you were on the Egyptian desk, was there much interchange with what was going on with the Israeli desk, or were you working in two separate...?

HOUGHTON: We all worked on it. INR is a very small group, and there were those of us who worked on the Middle East as opposed to South Asia. There were only three or four

of us, and we all saw each other. We were in the same office every single day and conferred with each other routinely and normally. We were friends. We had lunch together. We exchanged views and frequently wrote joint items if it involved both Israelis and, for example, Egyptians or otherwise. We would all sit down and collaborate on a piece of paper that would then move out of the Bureau to other bureaus such as the Near Eastern Bureau itself.

Q: Who was the Middle Eastern boss in INR?

HOUGHTON: Phil Stoddard. He was a civil servant, not a Foreign Service Officer but somebody who knew the area very well, had been there for years.

Q: Well, you were there for a relatively short period of time, and then where'd you go?

HOUGHTON: Four months, and then I was asked if I would like to go to Egypt as a political-econ officer, and I then said, "Sure, I'd be happy to do that."

Q: So you were in Egypt from '71 to when?

HOUGHTON: I was in Egypt from '71 to '74, effectively three and a half years.

Q: What was your impression of Egypt politically and economically when you arrived there in '71?

HOUGHTON: Well, I'd been to Egypt before on a number of occasions. Physically and geographically it was very much the same. It was a country, surely an undeveloped country, with a two-tier system, two-tier social and economic system, whereby one group lived well and another group didn't live as well. Overall the Egyptians seemed to be able to manage their own society: at the lower end, feed their people, provide them with electricity, provide them with the wherewithal of a reasonably comfortable life even though it was fairly rudimentary when you got into the countryside. And there were Egyptians who wielded enormous privilege in Cairo itself and who had the freedom to travel and dollars, dollar accounts, and so forth. I was basically reintroducing myself to Egypt after having been there on numerous occasions before going back 10 years.

Q: Who was your ambassador when you were there?

HOUGHTON: We didn't have an ambassador, we didn't have an embassy. The Egyptians had broken relations with us in 1967. The downgrading of status from embassy to mission meant that we and the Egyptians separately had different protecting powers, so to speak. Our protecting power agent was the government of Spain, the Spanish embassy, and in Washington the Egyptians had the Indians, the Indian government, as theirs. We flew a Spanish flag over our embassy. All of our embassy staff were members of the Spanish embassy in the first instance, attached to the Spanish embassy. I was the second secretary in the embassy of Spain, and then at the same time it was made perfectly clear

on my card that I was in something called the US Interests Section. And similarly Egyptians conducted themselves the same way here. We had a minister in charge, whose name was Donald Bergus.

Q: How'd you operate?

HOUGHTON: Well, first of all, let's start with how many. There were 16 individuals, Americans, in Cairo when I arrived; I was the 17th. We did what we did in an almost routine and normal manner in the same manner that other embassies of that size might run themselves. We had a standard set-up of an executive section made up of Don Bergus plus a secretary. There was a political-econ section overseen by a counselor, Marshall Wiley, plus administrative, consular, communications, a commercial officer, a budget and fiscal officer within the administrative section. It was a fairly standard set-up that carried out most of its functions pretty efficiently.

Q: You were doing what, political and economic work?

HOUGHTON: Political and economic work to the extent that I could.

Q: What were you looking at?

HOUGHTON: It was never clearly defined what I should be doing. Virtually everything that came along was something that I looked at and asked myself whether I could participate in or could not or should not. I conferred everyday with Marshall Wiley and frequently with Donald Bergus about what they were doing in a manner that would allow me to figure out what my role could be. There were some days you had to make a decision. There was a great deal of work to do, and you had to make a decision early in a particular day as to how much time you could allocate to meeting and talking to people, how much time to writing reports to the Department of State, which we knew wanted to hear from us, and how much time you could spend reading cable traffic or newspapers or whatever it was in order to keep yourself informed about what was going on. Sometimes it was difficult to do. In the end a sort of a system of triage set itself up. There was a series of things that you absolutely had to do, you could not avoid; there were those things that you wanted to do and, if you had the time, you could do it; and then there were things you simply couldn't pay attention to: innumerable Department messages, airgrams and so forth requesting information on one aspect or another of Egyptian economic production: how many bicycles did they turn out in a particular year, what was the labor situation like with respect to, for example, the relationship between Egyptian labor unions and the AFL-CIO, that kind of thing; and you simply put it in the bottom of the in box and, if it ever migrated to the top, then you could get around to it, but frequently it just never got there.

Q: Did the Spanish intrude at all?

HOUGHTON: No, we were very careful to brief to Spanish at the ambassadorial level.

Don Bergus would go over routinely every Friday and have a luncheon discussion with the Spanish ambassador to keep him up to date as to what we were doing. That was the principal channel of communication. If there was an emergency situation or something that required urgent attention, they'd simply pick up the phone and call or make a nonroutine visit over to the Spanish embassy. We never saw a Spaniard in our embassy at all. Maybe the Spanish ambassador came over and visited once or twice, but to my recollection I never saw it. No Spanish embassy officer cared about what we did, and we functioned essentially as an American embassy might, even though we were technically or diplomatically operating under another power.

Q: How about its social functions, diplomatic receptions and things of that nature? Did you have to sort of stand below the salt or something like that?

HOUGHTON: No, I was the US second secretary, and I was given whatever respect or not came with that particular title. I was normally invited. People wanted to know what we were doing and, therefore, we were the subject of some interest. We were much more interested in finding out what was going on in Egypt, and there wasn't a great role for American diplomacy that was going on within the Egyptian embassy itself. There was some but it was a very slow period.

Q: Really you were looking....

HOUGHTON: That changed when we resumed formal relations years later after the conclusion of the 1973 war, but that was a different period.

Q: But you were there during the '73 war.

HOUGHTON: I was.

Q: How was the build-up to that? Were we seeing this? Did we have a military attaché there?

HOUGHTON: No, we had no military in Egypt at all.

Q: Looking at it at the time, were there warning signals or were you hearing from others, as apparently the Israelis did and everyone else, sort of discounting the fact that the Egyptians wouldn't be so stupid as to try this?

HOUGHTON: Well, that was part of the background noise. Let me go back to the period after the death of Nasser. Three to four months after Nasser's death there was a major internal shake-up of government. That followed a decision by Sadat to move people out of government: the minister of interior, the head of the Arab Socialist Union, and a bunch of other people who were viewed as either being strongly pro-Nasserite or strongly pro-themselves, in a move that essentially consolidated Sadat's power as principal ruler within Egypt. Sadat continued to make clear that, with respect to the issue of war and

peace with Israel, if Israel was not willing to return to Egypt Egyptian territories it had taken during the 1967 war, then there would be another conflict. The idea that he conveyed to both Egyptians and others was a sense of determination and resolve that, if we cannot resolve this other than by war, that is what we're going to have to do. The sense that most of us had was that Egypt surely could not do it alone. We thought that the likelihood of a cohesive military association with Syria that would bring both of them in it together in a coordinated attack was extremely unlikely, and in the end the military unbalance so heavily favored the Israelis they wouldn't be dumb enough to pursue it in that manner. Egyptians thought differently, but that is how we saw it. And the Israelis tended to see it that way, and it was perfectly convenient to the United States, because in the end it was what you'd call a regional conflict that had shrunk to three or four states only and it was principally contained. Nothing was likely to happen. The principal troublesome issue was the nature of the Egyptian-Soviet military relationship. This saw a considerable volume of, as I mentioned before, of Soviet military equipment move into Egypt as well as Syria. There were also large numbers of Soviet advisors as well as East Germans and others who play specific roles within the different areas of functional activity that the Egyptian military and intelligence services were interested in. Yet at the same time it seemed perfectly clear that they were not interested in providing Egypt with an offensive capability. We had continuing reports of Egyptian military training. There was a training cycle that ran through their spring exercises and then more major fall exercises that occurred every year. Occasionally Sadat would give a talk in which once again he would express frustration or rage about this political situation and the determination to break out of it. Every now and then there was some other kind of report that crept in. I do remember an intelligence report suggesting that Arafat had told Palestinians very close to him that he knew or understood that by the end of 1973 Egypt and Syria had decided to proceed to make war on Israel. In the absence of any other indicator, there was nothing that suggested that this had much substance to it. The Egyptians wanted one major thing from the Soviets which the Soviets didn't give them. They wanted the Soviets to get their hands off the trigger. The Soviets ran the air defense system. They ran basically through an interlock system of advisors much of the decision making of the Egyptian military, and the Egyptians were clearly anxious to get out from under that particular degree of control. The result was nevertheless a sense that there was nothing much that was going on. There was a critical visit that the Egyptians made. They sent off a delegation to Moscow to resolve the equipment issue. They wanted, again, large volumes of equipment that would allow them to upscale and upgrade their military and give them the offensive capability that they believed they wanted. That delegation returned to Cairo with an absolute negative. The answer was no. The Soviets were not about to give them that opportunity. By July, I think it was – we're now in 1973, June or July but I believe it was July – the Egyptians had decided, Sadat had decided, that in the end if we're not going to get what we need from the Soviets, then we're going to invite them out. In one of the most dramatic developments of that year, tens of thousands of Soviets, military people, were invited to leave the country, which they then did in a matter of a very few days, including their families but not taking their equipment with them. It was Sadat's way of saying, "Thanks for your help in the past, but if you're not prepared to do what we need you to do, then you're no longer welcome here." By that time in the

Egyptian view they had large numbers of trained Egyptians, trained in the air defense system, trained in aircraft and aircraft maintenance, trained in tactics as well as military strategy, in a manner where they felt they could take over, and they had ideas about how to make use of that. From the viewpoint of most other people, it was seen as a prop that was being knocked out from underneath them, that the Soviets' departure voided Egypt of a capability that they otherwise had before. If there were a true conflict, for example, the Soviets were necessary for Egypt's military capability. It was looking at things from a totally different end of the pole. The Egyptian military and Sadat, political leadership, saw themselves as being taken out from under the restraints that the Soviets had placed upon them, and they were now moving toward almost inexorably toward a military conflict of their own initiation without the Soviets there to stop them.

Q: As we saw it, did the Soviet expulsion come as a shock to us?

HOUGHTON: Enormous, a tremendous surprise.

Q: What was the attitude within the embassy? What does this mean? Does it mean a zero sum game? If they're out, are we in?

HOUGHTON: I don't think we reported it in that manner? What we wanted to do was to be sure we understood what was going on from the viewpoint of an embassy in Egypt itself. We had seen some buildup toward this in the days before that point. There had been cryptic sort of notices in the daily paper to the effect that the Soviet ambassador, Pojidaev, had met with Sadat for 45 minutes in one day and came back and saw him once again 15 minutes the following day – very unusual little announcements. There was an enormous sense of nervousness that was going on within the Eastern European community. We and the French and the British definitely were picking up signs that there was some dramatic event that was taking place that none of us could really penetrate very easily. It was more easily picked up, if I understand correctly, by our own military in technical capabilities when we saw the Soviet worldwide air transport command come push their planes back to Moscow and bring them back to the Soviet Union in a manner that was unclear to us what was going on but it looked as if it certainly was preparatory to some major event of one kind or the other. We couldn't liken it to a training exercise nor could we localize it in terms of what country they were interested in directing the next step toward. But then all of a sudden they began to leave the Soviet Union in enormous rush, one after the other after the other, coming into Cairo to pick up their own people to bring them back home.

Q: Did we have any real contact with the Soviets at all?

HOUGHTON: I had contact with the Soviets peripherally a little bit later but not at that point – I'm sorry; let me put it the following way – within Cairo, and with respect to Egypt I don't know the answer to that broadly speaking. It was not a subject that I think was high on other people's agenda with respect to what our and Soviet interests were together except as sort of a diplomatic issue that would occasionally come up in

discussions in Washington and Moscow.

Q: But nobody in the embassy said, "Well, the Egyptians are taking things over, and they're going to try something"?

HOUGHTON: No. We did not read it that way. That would have been an accurate conclusion as to the effect of the move, but we did not read that conclusion and to my knowledge nobody else did either.

Q: I recall it was just plain sort of disagreement with the Egyptians and this was just they were more independent.

HOUGHTON: It didn't suggest that the Egyptians had gotten any stronger and more capable. The basic factors that existed in the military context in terms of Egypt's war-making capability were not affected by this except, in our view, by being weakened by the absence of Soviets, who presumably had a more proficient ability to handle their own equipment. There were other things that were going on I should tell you. This was reported not only by the Israelis but also reported from, if I recall correctly, overhead intelligence. During the 1972-to-'73 period, during those two summers and over the course of the winter, the Egyptians had built huge berms on the Egyptian side of the canal, great big sand berms that rose up 30 or 40 feet. We could see tractors working on them; the Israelis certainly could, and they reported this to us. They were located approximately every kilometer or two along the edge of the canal. Nobody quite recognized what these were for. You know those crazy Egyptians; they're doing something again, moving sand around, perhaps to show, maybe their observation points. What they turned out to be was tank-firing platforms. During the invasion of Sinai the Egyptians used those to run tanks up and fire down at a height upon the Israeli strong points on the Suez Canal. It was never suggested that that might have been one of the purposes of it.

Q: As you got there and as things were moving up towards the '73 war, was there a more positive appraisal of Sadat developing or not?

HOUGHTON: We had very little interaction with Sadat. He was a very difficult person to read. He kept his cards very close to his chest. Remember, he followed in the wake of Nasser, a charismatic leader, but he demonstrated none of the characteristics that Nasser had. He clearly had his own views. He was clearly strong within the Egyptian context, but he wasn't the fire breathing speaker, he wasn't interested in a grand concept like Arab nationalism or Arab unity. During the course of his leadership, early leadership, we began to see adjustments in Egypt with respect to Egyptians believing that they were more Egyptian than Arab. It was under Sadat that the United Arab Republic was renamed the Arab Republic of Egypt. Egypt for the first time as a name appeared. That's got to be intensely symbolic to most Egyptians. For the first time their name came back. Egyptian Copts in particular were heartened by a new freedom that they seemed to have to write books and put on plays and do other things of a cultural nature that took Egyptians back

to a time before Islam, of a period when the Copts could trace their own roots back to instead of being required to pay service to the idea that Egypt was not only an Arab nation but an Islamic nation that had no existence prior to the seventh century. It was interesting to see. It was a period also when the Libyans were sounding out, Qadhafi was sounding out Sadat to try to find out, now, how can we get together and create a great unity here. There was a real coolness and diffidence on the part of Sadat to the idea of associating with another country like Libya. The Egyptians were very good at putting forth ideas that somehow, if there was a viable unity, it really should be between Libya, which would provide the money, and the Sudan, which would provide the agricultural land, and Egypt, which would have the expertise and human capabilities to be able to make it work properly. That was a very Egyptian idea convenient to Egypt, not to the Sudan or Libya particularly. But in any event, life in Cairo didn't seem to change a great deal.

Q: Was the idea of getting back their land in the Sinai and Gaza in the air, Egypt will rise again; in other words, was there a thirst to get back at Israel? This is not exactly the greatest land in the world to lust after, to have it returned to them.

HOUGHTON: To Egyptians the Sinai had enormous significance because it was Egyptian, it had been Egyptian for countless years, centuries even, and the Egyptians didn't look at it as a place of enormous physical wealth or as a financial resource; it was part of their own territory. They made it clear on one hand that they wanted it back and Israel would not be awarded peace absent an agreement to return Sinai, and yet the Egyptians had no apparent way to regain it themselves. The old exhortation of Nasser "What has been taken by force can only be regained by force" was not far absent from the viewpoint of the Egyptian leadership when I was there under Sadat. So in the end the idea of returning it, if necessary by force, never left, never departed. However, it was normally viewed as a hollow threat.

Q: When you were at the embassy, how did the events leading up to the '73 war, the October War?

HOUGHTON: Well, first of all, a number of things happened to us. In 1973, early in the year, our then minister in charge, Jerry Greene – I'd say in May or June, June if I recall correctly – left Cairo to go to the United States not to return. He simply departed. He was hoping for another job. He basically packed up and went home, leaving the embassy in the hands of Marshall Wiley, who was still then counselor. As chargé d'affaires Marshall became more visible, and an AP report came out of Cairo – I remember this very distinctly – that made its circuit that the American mission in Cairo is in the hands of the counselor, Marshall Wiley, and it was a modest Class 2 mission. Class 2 mission is the State Department's administrative language for what type of support can be afforded a particular embassy or diplomatic mission. But this article landed on Sadat's desk, and he, according to reports I heard, was close to being apoplectic by the idea that he was being afforded a second-class US mission and headed by a man who the prior year he had asked be thrown out of Egypt. Marshall knew none of this. None of us knew anything of it. What had happened was that the year-and-a-half before there had been yet another group

of anti-Sadat conspirators or talkers, whoever, some of whom lived in one of the foreign embassy districts in south Cairo called Maadi and at least one of whom knew Marshall. They saw each other at the Maadi Club. They didn't play tennis together but they shared the same swimming pool. Marshall, like a good Foreign Service Officer, would give them, "Oh, you're interested in this subject. Here. Why don't you take a copy of my book *Thomas Paine* and others. They'll show you what we did back in the days." You know, "How do you create liberty?" That's a good Foreign Service Officer idea. Of course, the problem was that his books, with his own bookmark inside them, were then part of the material that the intelligence services brought together after they had discovered the conspiracy, and Marshall was fingered as somebody whom they were in close association with and therefore they felt was personally involved in supporting the conspiracy. This was brought up by the intelligence services to Sadat, who said, "That man must go." But Marshall, who knew many people who liked him a great deal, was totally innocent, had nothing to do with anything involving a conspiracy against the leadership of Egypt, simply never translated the order into action. And so he was there a year later when this new AP report came out saying, "Marshall Wiley's in charge." He was then ordered directly to go. By this time there was no way of avoiding it, and so he was given two weeks to pack up and move out, another PNG, leaving the embassy in charge of an administrative officer, Richard Smith. This then takes us to, let's say, August, late August of '73. So we were a much smaller group than we were before. We had an administrative officer with no political experience in charge. I was the political-econ officer still. We had a staff of seven or eight people at that point. That's it. We were hardly able to know or do a great deal. We were so strict with resources. We were stripped of resources to the point where the political officer, me, had a hard time figuring out day to day "Do I read, do I talk, or do I write?" Dick Smith had a hard time figuring out "Do I administer or somehow do things of a diplomatic nature?" We talked to each other and shared responsibilities and so forth, and read what other people were saying, and to the extent reported what we ourselves heard. I had a number of Egyptian friends, but I only got some little information from them and much more from others who were in Cairo at the time – correspondents and others who would come by and want to know what we knew. Then they would come back and brief us as to what they'd found out from Egyptians they'd spoken to and others. But there was no sense of anything awry until about a week to 10 days before the war of 1973 broke out. I had made my normal rounds, I remember, early in that week or foreign correspondents working in Cairo, and we all knew that something odd was going on. We didn't know what it was. There was a build-up towards something of a political nature even while in the background there was the normal military maneuvers that were beginning to take place. What we were told and everybody believed was they were fall maneuvers of the Egyptian army, the way they had done in 1972, '71, '70, and so forth. There was a funny report that came out of a Middle East news agency from the Middle East news agency's reporter on the canal, with Egyptian forces that, he said, are ready to cross the canal at a moment's notice. It was pretty alarming. That report was out and then there was a recall notice that was sent out by the Middle East news agency immediately afterwards: "That was invalid. That didn't occur." And it never went out on any of the international wires, but it was hitting the local national wires and the wire services picked it up. They couldn't report it but they picked it

up. I remember talking to a very capable head of *DPA*, *Deutsch Pressse-Agentur*, Matias Hart, who scratched his head and said, "It's the funniest thing I've ever seen. Of course, there's nothing to it, although I can't say that for sure. Something's going on," he said. He'd been there long enough that he'd picked up something, but nobody quite knew or could identify what it was. In the meantime we were receiving reports from Washington that were either transmissions broadly circulated or others, some of which reflected military-to-military conversation between ourselves and the Israelis. Our technical side was picking up movement of Egyptian forces and dispositions and types of communications that we thought constituted a potential move toward an offensive posture. The Israelis kept saying, "No, absolutely not. These are normal fall maneuvers. We've had nine of these all along. Don't worry about it. Stay cool." The Israelis were actively involved in discouraging us from getting too excited about this. I remember being asked by my consular officer, Beth Jones, later our ambassador to Kazakhstan, "What do you think about this?" I said, "I just don't think there's much too it. It doesn't make a great deal of sense to me," and my instinct was that, until I saw more going on and more preparations domestically, it would be hard for me to put together the idea that the Egyptians were about to launch themselves into an offensive attack against Israel. So, therefore, I discounted it. Everybody did, the Israelis and, most importantly, US policy makers did. It was inconceivable that the Egyptians would believe themselves able to do something like that without taking terrible and devastating consequences.

What people didn't realize is that there had been an extraordinarily tight degree of cooperation between the Egyptians and Syrians, both at the political as well as military level. They had coordinated what was in fact an extraordinarily sophisticated plan, with the principal compromise that, instead of launching an attack against the Israelis in the Golan and Sinai at dawn or dusk, which would have favored one with the sun behind them and disfavored the other with the sun in front, and compromised that the attack should be launched at noon on Saturday the 6th of October, if I recall correctly, and that's exactly what happened.

Q: Yom Kippur.

HOUGHTON: I remember the day before, Friday, or two days before. I deliberately drove around Cairo to see to the extent I could if there was anything that suggested a heightened state of alert or preparations of any kind in the areas of Cairo which I covered, to which the answer was none. There was one sleepy little guard on the big bridge that went across from....

Q: You go at night and see how many windows are lit up at the Ministry of Defense.

HOUGHTON: They have their windows blacked out, very effectively blacked out. Don't think I haven't done that. But one thing I did not want to get in the habit of was doing this enough so that the Egyptians were already concerned and a little suspicious about me personally. I might seem to know more than they felt comfortable with, would find myself noodling around Cairo looking at the windows of the Ministry of Defense. I also

felt fairly surely that the Egyptians kept an eye on me as on everybody else. They sometimes would watch my movements fairly carefully, sometimes would simply go through the business of making certain my phone calls were properly recorded, and so forth. And I felt I had better things to do than get thrown out for something that I could better do another way. But I reported that there was nothing immediately visible even though there was some heightened event that was going on. Another member of the embassy staff reported that the Friday before the Saturday of the attack, that Friday evening, he'd seen large pieces of bridging equipment moving through Cairo, pontoons and collapsible bridging equipment on mechanized tank bottoms. There was no way to put this together. We had no overall view of the country and no manner to integrate the scraps of information that came together. In the end that was the responsibility of Washington. It was kind of the friendly American side. And the Israelis were constantly telling us, "No problem, nothing going on." I woke up the following morning to be handed a report by the communicator, State Department communicator, who said, "Do you believe the Egyptians are going to attack?" and I looked at him and said, "I can't imagine it." He said, "Well, read this and this." It was a conversation reporting from Kenneth Keating, our ambassador to Israel, reporting a conversation he'd had with Golda Meir. That morning we called him in at four o'clock in the morning and said, "We see absolute confirmation that there is going to be a joint attack on Israel by Syria and Egypt that evening at six." Even then the timing was wrong. But the Israelis, who had everything to suffer in terms of consequences to them by not being on top of this, were in fact buried under and totally unprepared for what then followed, which was an aircraft attack followed by troops coming over the canal at them as well as on the Golan Heights at noon on Saturday.

Q: So what were you all doing when this report came in?

HOUGHTON: Remember, there were very few of us. I immediately took it to Dick Smith, who was in charge, and I said, "This is surely serious enough to pay attention to it. I strongly recommend we pull the staff together, American staff together, very quietly for a little staff meeting in an hour or so, just to be sure that the word doesn't get out among the Egyptians who work at the embassy that there's some issue afoot. But let's pull a staff meeting together and talk about it a little bit," which we then did. There's not much you could do. We were being told that war was about to occur that day and it was going to be cataclysmic and it involved three countries, Syria, Egypt and Israel, and the best you could do is try to stay alert as to what was going on. But, you know, you couldn't leave them properly. You didn't want to do anything that would tip other people off that you were aware of something that you shouldn't be aware of, like going down to the grocery store or the commissary and filling up your car and taking it home. And don't think I wasn't tempted to do so. Then I decided, well, maybe not. When we get word that something's going on, then I can do that, but not until. I debated calling my wife. I think I probably told her I probably wouldn't be home for lunch, that there were things going on. Indeed there were. In any case, that's the way we prepared ourselves, essentially by carrying on business, I hope to the outside eye, as if we were unaware of anything unusual taking place. But the flood of reports began to happen after that, because once Keating

was aware of it, his whole embassy went out and began talking to the Israelis about what they saw, a flock of reports moving back and forth between Washington and Israel, no specific instructions or guidance from Washington to us, and we were beginning to get stuff from other posts around as well.

Q: Your communicators must have been swamped.

HOUGHTON: There was a lot of stuff going on, sure, but they managed it fairly well. There were only two communicators, one State Department and the other a technical communicator. They had to work together, and they were swamped. After a while they were asked please to knock it off and take a couple of hours sleep and shut down and tell people to send no more flash messages for a while. They could sleep as long as there were no more flash messages, but the tendency, the incentive, to send flash messages around was very hot.

Q: Well, then what did you do?

HOUGHTON: There was not much we could do for the first day or so. It was Saturday and it was supposed to be a weekend and so forth. However, we opened up for business on Sunday. Everybody came in. The most pressing concern of the embassy itself was for the safety and welfare of Americans in Egypt. That included large numbers of Americans, some of whom were normally part of the fabric of Egypt – they were married to Egyptians; many of them were Americans of Egyptian origin – but then there was another group which were Americans in hotels, tourists up the Nile, and businesspeople who were in Cairo doing standard business. Of course, once the war had broken out, once the noon deadline had passed, all of a sudden all communications outside of the country, moving out, was brought to a standstill with the exception of overland communications from Alexandria westward into Libya and so forth, or a trickle that moved back and forth from Egypt to the Sudan and back. Aircraft communications were stopped. In fact, the minister of transportation was sacked after the war, or even during the war, because he had on his own the day before the war was to take place, knowing it would take place, decided to spare or save Egypt's aviation fleet and told them to stand down wherever they were, not to fly back to Cairo that night. Well, of course, how do you give the enemy a better signal that something is really odd going on than saying, "Don't come back home, guys." Then he had his other aircraft leave Cairo before the noon deadline. In any event, our concerns were basically, I think, in priority order: one, dealing with the large number of Americans in Cairo – 450 is the number that hits me – and try to put together some means to get them out, to clear them out.

Q: I was at the other end. I was in Athens as consul general there. We were trying to charter a ship, and it's amazing how difficult it is to charter a ship....

HOUGHTON: The Greeks knew how to hold us up.

Q: Oh, absolutely!

HOUGHTON: My recollection is that they quoted one price and the price changed from day to day, and then when they got to Cyprus the boat stopped and decided they weren't going to get any further until, but, of course, money could soften it up a little bit. Well, Athens was the nearest point to Egypt in terms of a major capital to get people to and the Greeks had the boats to be able to do it, but it must have been rather remarkable.

Q: It really was. Our administrative officer made the arrangements. I put a consular officer on board the ship and told him, "Take the most substantial looking businesspeople there and form a committee," because a lot of people were pretty annoyed that they didn't have first-class cabins and all that sort of stuff.

HOUGHTON: I think we ought to stop here.

Q: All right. Well, I'll just put at the end here we'll pick this up with what you did. We talked about the initial attack – talking about the October War – and what you were occupied doing. You were saying, but we really hadn't discussed it, getting Americans out and what you did to get the Americans out of Egypt and out of the line of fire, and then on.

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Okay. Today is the third of July, 2001. Arthur, we're in the October War in 1973. You got involved getting Americans out. What did you do?

HOUGHTON: I was involved, as was everybody else in the mission there, to try to get Americans who had no business being in Egypt out, businesspeople, tourists, and so forth, who had other things to do. There was a substantial American community in Cairo that, of course, were resident there or were married to Egyptians, one way or the other. They could take care of themselves fairly well, but those who wanted to get out we tried to make available shipping from Athens that would come and pick them up and take them out of the war zone. That didn't work very well. In fact, if I recall correctly, it hadn't really got a ship....

Q: One ship came.

HOUGHTON: One ship arrived, but it took a long, long time to get it there and....

Q: The insurance rates and the shipping people.

HOUGHTON: We had about 450 who we figured probably wanted to leave, get back home, and Alexandria seemed the easiest route of access. By the time a ship was on its way, the British and French and Europeans had already found their own way out and the war was coming to a close.

Q: During this time what were you observing of the Egyptian reaction and what was happening in Cairo?

HOUGHTON: Well, it was very interesting. There was very little reaction whatsoever in the street within immediate visibility. Now, I have to tell you that it was considered unwise to go toying around to look for Egyptian military equipment or personnel or activities, and so in the end I stayed fairly close to the embassy and on routes that took me in the area of central Cairo itself. I was often over at the Foreign Ministry from time to time, at the Spanish embassy, and in a limited number of other locations. There was a great deal to do, of course. We were in a situation that required a certain amount of reporting from both the press, from people we spoke to, from our own sort of views as to what was taking place within Egypt. One didn't have the luxury of a lot of time to go around and see things. At the same time, it was pretty clear that we were under close scrutiny by the Egyptians themselves. During the later course of the war, while the war was still on, I was informed by a friend of mine at the American University that the Egyptian intelligence service officer at AUC had asked him, who he knew was a friend of mine, to tell me to please slow down because they were having a problem following me in the car that I was driving. So I said, "Sure, fine." I had no reason not to have them know exactly what I was doing. These poor fellows driving a small Egyptian Fiat could barely keep up with my large Buick as it drove with speed through Cairo.

Q: You say you were busy, but I'm trying to capture, for people who don't know what the profession's about or who want to capture the time, what you were busy doing. What were you busy doing?

HOUGHTON: Well, let's describe the country with the embassy overall. First of all, we did have a serious concern about the protection of Americans in Egypt and about getting those out who wanted to be able to get out. That took a lot of activity on the part of the consular section but also all of us were asked to help one way or the other. Secondly, there was the normal business of trying to absorb what the Egyptians themselves were telling the world and themselves through their media, press, wire services, and so forth. That needed to be reported back if it contained important information. Thirdly, I wanted to be sure that, to the extent we could reflect what we honestly saw in terms of either preparations or actual activities related to the war, to be able to ensure that that was reported. I stayed in very close touch with four or five embassies as well as all of the local, in many cases highly knowledgeable, press agency types, including UPI, a fellow who was himself a native Egyptian with very good services; a German who ran Deutsch Press, married to an Egyptian, extremely bright; the French and the AP wire service individual. The *New York Times* correspondent was there but reluctant, understandably so, to be seen to be too close to the American embassy. He wanted to keep himself fairly clear of us, so he wasn't very useful as a source, but nevertheless I felt it important to talk to each of these people several times during the course of each week, maybe even several times during the course of a day. There was an interesting moment when a member of the Soviet community, later identified as an intelligence officer in the GRU, military branch, contacted me and wanted to send a message through me back to Washington, which I

expect was being repeated elsewhere, but nevertheless that took a certain amount of attention as to how to handle it. We met each other for luncheon, a day I won't forget. The war broke out on a Saturday, and he called me Monday morning about 11 o'clock and suggested we have lunch, and I said, "Leo, I don't think we should have lunch yet." Luncheon in Egypt isn't until two o'clock in the afternoon. He said, "No, I think we ought to have lunch now." Well, fine, we compromised at 12:00 or 12:30 and saw each other. He then gave me a seven-point personal view, message, that was perfectly clear that he had coordinated with the Soviet embassy. It was the only contact any of the Soviets had with the US interest section at that point, so this is the one they wanted to get across. For whatever reason, no one else seemed to be suitable for that particular message, so I was the person who caught it and then sent it back to Washington. I had [inaudible] a number of times. I have no idea whatever became of it. There were innumerable messages and pieces of information flying back and forth, even as a dynamic situation evolved, so that what happened the day before was not necessarily validated further on the day that followed. It changed very rapidly.

Q: In your contact particularly with Egyptian sources at the Foreign Ministry, new media and all, were they going through sort of an up and down, first almost euphoria when the Egyptian troops got through the Bar-Lev line.

HOUGHTON: Impossible to tell. Remember, we did not have warm and close and friendly relations of a diplomatic nature with the Egyptian government. At the time we were an interests section under the Spanish flag. The Egyptians wanted us to be there because we were important as a channel of communication to Washington when they wanted to use it, but at the same time they behaved toward us in a totally professional manner and hardly were going to emote greatly in front of us one way or the other. The several times I went over to the Foreign Ministry basically involved the transmission of a message or two back and forth from Washington to them. In one case the press had become increasingly, shall we say, overly vituperative about the role of the United States in support of Israel. I made an appointment and then, with my principal officer, who was admin officer at the post, went over to see the head of the American section at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to let them know that we were concerned about the nature and role of the press in adding fuel to the fire and that we would like very much to have it abated. We were told, of course, that the press is a free press in Egypt and the government had no control over it whatsoever. We took note of that and said, "Thank you," and the next day it all calmed down, so we felt we had some effect.

Q: Were you getting at all from any source a feel for the course of the war?

HOUGHTON: No, we had a very, very narrow vision as to what was going on. We were full of information from other sources, diplomatic reporting from other posts, certain types of intelligence reports that would come in from the side, press and others, so we had, generally speaking, a composite picture of what was taking place. We could get a broader picture of the regional effect of what was going on, but when it came down to what was taking place on the ground, it was extremely murky. The Egyptian press, you

knew, would not be giving it straight, and the Israelis weren't giving it particularly straight either, except it was perfectly clear that the war was going through several phases. The Egyptians and Syrians were on the offensive for at least four days, to the surprise of the Israelis, before the Egyptians dug in in the middle of Sinai with the hope of withstanding an Israeli assault, which they more or less did with the exception of a major breakthrough that occurred about 10 days into the war, if I recall correctly, when Ariel Sharon with a combat force moved into and across the canal and then encircled the Egyptians near Suez.

Q: Was there any time when people were sort of talking about Cairo being under threat of actual Israeli invasion?

HOUGHTON: When the second or third day of the Israeli penetration of Egypt had occurred and it was unclear what they intended – they didn't make themselves clear, deliberately for operational purposes. They could have seen that they could move directly toward Cairo if they wanted to and if they had the force to do it, recognizing that they had punched through the Egyptian line and that Egyptian defense forces in the area of Cairo might not be enough to stop them. That was a thought, or did what they did, which was to move in another direction, in this case toward the south over the main Suez-Cairo road and circle and cut the city of Suez off. But there was about 12 hours to 24 hours of ambiguity there as to what was going on, and we had no better information as to what was taking place except there was a large force moving into Egypt in some direction.

Q: Was the knowledge that the United States was organizing a major airlift of supplies to Israel and all, was this a problem for you?

HOUGHTON: I don't think it was a problem in a sense. Egyptians had no particular reason to take any action or allow any action of any kind to occur against the American community in Egypt whatsoever. They behaved overall courteously to the extent that they could in a friendly manner. Many Egyptians I talked to – I didn't talk to many Egyptians, but those I did talk to – were euphoric that they appeared to have been successful in the first wave of their own assault. There was no problem as such, and even though we did undertake a major airlift, as you know, and had constant flights which you could hear overhead – you could hear the double sonic boom of the SR71s as they went overhead....

Q: SR71, called the Blackbird.

HOUGHTON: It was high altitude and flew at very high speed. We could hear them overhead. There was no inward direction. If the war had gone so badly that the Egyptian army had found itself lurching back in retreat, we would have probably asked Americans for their own safety not to go out of their houses a lot, not to conduct normal business and be careful about what they did. Well, it did not come to that. The Egyptians were able to hold onto their four positions in northern Sinai, and only the city of Suez was being threatened by the Israelis internally. Toward the end of the war the Egyptians tried to make a point by launching a few scud missiles at Israeli positions on the canal.

Q: Was the Foreign Ministry sort of using us as a line of communication with the Israelis or anything like that, sending warning?

HOUGHTON: [Inaudible?]

Q: No, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, they weren't using us as a...?

HOUGHTON: Well, the Foreign Ministry did not. The Presidency did use our facilities as a means of communication to the White House, and that was all back-channel stuff that was carried on principally through the agency that was centered in Cairo.

Q: At the end when there was a cease-fire and all, what happened as far as you all were concerned?

HOUGHTON: The cease-fire occurred and within a very short period of time it became very clear that diplomacy in the Middle East had changed dramatically. We found ourselves in the midst of a new phase of Arab-Israeli discussions; that is, the United States did. The Secretary of State, Kissinger, made plans to come to Egypt within a matter of weeks, no more than a month, if I recall correctly, from the end of the war. Interestingly, we received a visit of a National War College delegation to Egypt within a week or so after the war had ended. It was quite unusual to see an American C141 land at the Cairo airport and disgorge 30 or 40 passengers, almost all of whom, to my recollection, with the exception of one were members of the US military. The Egyptians wanted them there. They hosted them royally. They had their own National War College people put them up, not in terms of putting them as residents but hosted a series of meetings, took them around. They were thrilled with the idea that the US should want to see what happened in Egypt in a manner that in their view they had succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, even at the same time Suez was totally surrounded by an Israeli force.

Q: Well, you had the third Egyptian army which was cut off.

HOUGHTON: That was the third army in the Suez area. But that was interesting. They stayed in power for several days, and at the end of it Sadat asked to see them to talk about his vision of what the war had been, why it had occurred, what it meant, where it should go. So that was interesting. And within a matter of weeks or so after that Henry Kissinger arrived as part of a first stage of shuttle diplomacy that went back and forth.

Q: I realize things were happening so fast, but in your view – and I'm using the collective you all – was Sadat going up in the estimation by this time?

HOUGHTON: Oh, sure. Nobody knew Sadat very well. We had had contact with Sadat over a period of time but relatively little. Don Bergus, when he was in Cairo, saw Sadat occasionally, but I mean really occasionally, every three months or so. Occasionally a US

correspondent like Arnaud de Borchgrave would come by in order to collect a story on Sadat, and he'd stay in Cairo until he got his interview, and then he'd normally routinely debrief us on it afterwards. But Sadat was not held high in the estimation of people. In part, they were bemused by his reputation of being sort of bumbler in the past. Historically he was late in being given notice that the revolution was going on back in 1952. Prior to that point he'd been in jail because of associations with Egyptian Arabs who supported the Germans. He was believed to be an interim candidate between two very powerful factions when he came to power as President after Nasser's death in 1971. He was not seen to be extraordinarily or particularly astute or wise except in fending off the Libyans and perhaps the Syrians too in terms of what they wanted to do. The fact that the Egyptians had achieved any success whatsoever suggested that things were different in Egypt. There was a new sort of political appreciation on the part of the United States for the nature of what occurred. The Israelis, who had lost 1600 people during the war, were bruised and feeling extremely ill at east about themselves and their own capabilities. They had been totally fooled. The first sure notice that there was going to be a war as opposed to the maneuver had occurred early in the morning. Golda Meir reported to Kenneth Keating that it was only in the early morning hours of the day of the attack that they realized that it was serious, there would be a war, and it would break out that day on the 6th of October. So something was different, and Sadat appeared to be more different from what he had seemed earlier on. Looking back on some of the things he said publicly, it was clear as a bell that he had intended this for a long period of time, absent any fruitful discussions that moved the political situation forward. There was no escape from this particular trap that he was in except by commitment to a military action for political purposes. Kissinger, I know, came away from his first meeting with Sadat with a very different impression than the way he'd gone in, as somebody he felt he could deal with and, most importantly, somebody far brighter and far more visionary in terms of strategic thinking than he had been led to believe. So, yes, sure, there was a change.

Q: When Kissinger was there, were you involved at all? Was this sort of logistics and that sort of thing?

HOUGHTON: There were seven or eight of us in the mission at the time the war broke out. By the time Kissinger was on his way we'd already had 20 or 30 advance people arrive, communications and everybody else, land on us one way or the other. All of us were involved at every level with one or another aspect of not only that one but every successive Kissinger visit that took place.

Q: A question I meant to ask: During the war you were talking about, everybody in the area was sending, I'm sure, NIACT (night action) or top-priority messages and all this, this happens, and there you are in a very small little thing. How about your communications and your communications people? They must have really been under the gun.

HOUGHTON: They were enormously overworked, but they're very capable. There were two groups of them: technical communications and State Department communications. I

shouldn't say two groups; there were really three people but two principal ones. They put in long hours. They brought in a cot, and they slept in the communications area. Finally after about five or six or eight days, we kind of made sure that we timed our outgoing messages so that they would have had a nap at least one way or the other and some food. They were terribly important to us. We tried to bring other communications people in, and that didn't work for a long period of time. Let me see. The problem was that at a certain priority of message incoming bells go off, warnings go off, whatever it is, and they couldn't stay asleep. They'd have to process the message, then deliver it. There were some that you could do nothing about, that didn't have any action requirements for information purposes. They were between one post and State or State and another post, and they involved us as an information addressee, but still it would come in by very high priority in one nature or the other. The communications people were kept awake as a result of that. It calmed down after a while, seven or eight days, I think.

Q: The war ended by the end of October, didn't it, essentially a cease-fire?

HOUGHTON: Yes, about three weeks after it began, three or three and a half weeks.

Q: By the way, were Israeli planes flying over Cairo and all?

HOUGHTON: Not visibly, to the south of Cairo; further to the south near Helwan, yes, but we didn't see any directly over Cairo. There were no air raids that I was aware of. No particular sound went off. The only sounds you could see were the hyperactive civil defense contingent that painted all the windows of the major buildings blue so that they would not be visible in theory, although Cairo was lit up every night.

Q: I don't imagine you really ever went back to normal did you?

HOUGHTON: We were never at normal when I was there. It was always an evolving situation. Any particular period, year or whatever it was, was not like the year before. The war was a division, of course. Those of us who lived in the embassy, and I think me in particular because I was the political officer and the only political officer there. Instead of having to go out and find and develop sources of information, I found that I knew, by virtue of the change of the diplomacy that fell into the hands of the United States to be central to process, that I was being called by other embassies and correspondents and others who wanted to know things from me. I was no longer being shunned. I was invited to more parties than you could shake a stick at and, best of all, I could pick and choose and basically spend more time with my family as part of the result. I didn't have to work so hard to develop information. It was in my lap, and people were in the process of contacting me to try to find out what I knew. Sometimes this would be a problem. For example, we were, of course, required to be very careful about what we said with respect to negotiating positions or strategy or developments of a nature like that. A colleague from the German embassy called on me and then finally after about 20 minutes he said, "You know, you're not telling me anything." I said, "I'm sure that's true. I'll do the best I can, but you're not asking the questions that allow me to give you full responses." He

said, "Well, this is very unusual. We are NATO partners and we should be sharing more fully. Why aren't you doing that, Mr. Houghton?" I said, "I think you should contact your foreign ministry and ask them to consult our embassy in Bonn, or, better yet, Washington and your embassy there can go chase the State Department on this because I'm not at liberty to do so.

Q: Did the Kissinger's crew that would appear, did they sort of leave a residual staff there?

HOUGHTON: No. When Kissinger arrived, he had been preceded by advance and communication people including White House communication people who were in the act. There was a substantive crew who arrived with him on his own aircraft, and they all picked up and left after that. Nobody was left behind, but we were authorized to have an increase of staff of a significant number after that point. We began to add personnel. We took on a military attaché fairly soon. The military attaché can't function without at least one officer by his side and maybe somebody else.

Q: A master sergeant.

HOUGHTON: In time we had an ambassador, Hermann Eilts, and a DCM, and there was another political officer that was added. There were other people who came in over the course of the next three to four months.

Q: Was this official change, but were you still under the Spanish?

HOUGHTON: No, we had at that point resumed relations. We had a full ambassador and we had a new relationship with Egypt and we were now an embassy.

Q: When the Kissinger crew first arrived, as you say, you're the person on the ground. Were you at all involved in the process of people asking what's going on by this crew? Obviously you'd been sending stuff back. But did they tap you as a resource?

HOUGHTON: Yes and no. Yes to the extent I could give them logistic information, but they already had the sort of substantive sense of it. They had a purpose for being there, a discussion between Kissinger and Anwar Sadat and others in the Egyptian establishment that Sadat had designated. And that meant what they were truly interested in was where do we have to be at what time and how do we get there, what are the arrangements, and if it goes on for three hours, what does this mean, and if it goes on for six hours, what does that mean, and what other arrangements are being made in the process. It was purely an operational logistical matter that generated the questions. But in terms of what's the situation on the ground, the situation on the ground was what they could see. Egypt at the end of the war was intact and feeling very good about itself. It still had this problem with Israel and the city of Suez being surrounded by the Israelis, but they wanted serious conversation. They wanted to translate the military action that had taken place into a political process, and that's what we were supposed to be doing too. So it was really a

matter of what the local situation was was less important than what the strategic negotiating was. Events were going to be that would lead into whatever the next phase would come out of that.

Q: How long were you there after the war?

HOUGHTON: I left almost eight or nine months later in June, almost immediately after the Nixon visit, June '74.

Q: I assume the Nixon visit was a major event.

HOUGHTON: It was of enormous significance, and an enormous amount of work and effort went into it. Everybody expected a highly successful visit even though it was moving rapidly toward the end of Nixon's own period of office. He left office about three months later.

Q: From the perspective of Washington, the Nixon trip to Egypt and elsewhere was really what do you do when you're under pressure. You go off and....

HOUGHTON: For the Egyptians it was an enormously important event. It was the prestige and power of the United States that had come to their doorstep. It's what Sadat had hoped for in terms of delivery by the United States of a political event that really was a capstone of his own efforts to get us to wake up and recognize that the Egyptians had a serious issue that needed to be resolved with respect to the Israelis, and we were the people who had to work at it.

Q: When you look at it, unlike so many other wars, this war had a limited but very definite goal, which was achieved by the Egyptians, wasn't it?

HOUGHTON: They believed so, yes. It was not a military objective. It was a political objective to get the United States to act and act urgently to initiate a process that would resolve the outstanding issues between at least Egypt and Israel.

Q: While you were involved in this process, where you were, was there a concern, during the war or at that time, about a Soviet reaction or not?

HOUGHTON: Oh, at every level, sure. The Soviets were Egyptians' best supporters, and you will recall perhaps there was a moment when some of the technical equipment and monitoring equipment that we had had now begun to pick up nuclear emanations from one or two of the ships passing through in the direction of Egypt. That was alarming. It looked sinister. It sort of recalled the days when the Soviets had armed many countries, Cuba for example. It seemed to pose the thought of a higher level of military escalation that was possible. The Soviets were in a pickle, because immediately before the war began they had been asked to leave, they had been effectively thrown out in numbers. Their military contingent, the residual military contingent, must have been extremely

small and no longer in the position of advice or even control that they felt they had previously during the period when they had basically put into place the Egyptian air defense system including multiple layers of missile plus anti-aircraft artillery defense. The Egyptians could handle it themselves. The Soviets were mostly moved aside, but they were desperate not to be seen to have their gifts to the Egyptians, Soviet weapons, shown to be hollow in terms of their effectiveness and were very concerned that they continue to be seen as a supporter of Egyptian political interests in a sense. But their influence was dramatically reduced. In many cases they knew less of what was going on in Egypt than they had before. They certainly knew less about what the situation was in the area because their levels of representation in other countries of the Arab world were less with the exception of Syria and very small in Israel. So we had the better sources. Also, since we were the object of the attention of Anwar Sadat and, one presumes, Hafez Assad – I can't speak to that, but I assume that was part of his design as well – we were the people receiving the messages from the countries most directly concerned. The Egyptian presidency was involved in contacting us and talking to us about where we went from there.

Q: The Soviets have always made a big play about being a participant in negotiations, various peace negotiations, with Israel but never have been really.

HOUGHTON: Nobody wants to have them around.

Q: They were not as interesting.

HOUGHTON: When things are going badly, one Arab country or another will suggest that maybe the Soviets ought to be involved. When they're going well, nobody wants to see them.

Q: A Presidential visit to a country is equivalent to a major earthquake. From what you were doing, how did that go?

HOUGHTON: Well, it was a great ceremonial affair and involved events that went on in Egypt, which are mostly a blur to me at the moment, and then a sort of a final great series of discussions and events including a wonderful dinner that occurred in Alexandria. Everybody stayed at one of the palaces or castles along the seacoast in Alexandria, and it was sort of a remarkable event. The Egyptians, as I saw, went all out. They went flat out to make it clear that the President of the United States really was an earthquake to them, the most important thing that had happened for years. They went out of their way to make it clear that this was important to them, that the United States was a partner and they wanted us to be a partner in the future. Nixon was – I don't know what Nixon was. I'm sure that behind it all the background noise to his visit was the events of Watergate that were going along in the United States. But nevertheless he served the role that he needed to serve. It was a great ceremonial occasion.

Q: Did you find, after the war and before you left and we had established diplomatic

relations and all, it was a different milieu for you to work in?

HOUGHTON: Oh, in every possible way, sure. First of all, the embassy had grown. I was no longer the only political officer in the embassy; there were others. And, guess what, we had an ambassador who was extraordinarily able in terms of his own background and experience.

Q: Hermann Eilts.

HOUGHTON: Hermann Eilts. He had a DCM who had no experience in the Middle East, but that's whom he wanted to have.

Q: Who was that?

HOUGHTON: John Kormann, whom he had met at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania when he was there. Let me see. Somewhere along the line we were going to get a head of the political section, but we didn't have it then; we had a new political officer. As people came in, a lot of the work that I had been doing or I had on my table was being moved off onto somebody else's table. Our relations with the diplomatic community were fundamentally different because they looked to us to provide them with advice as to what we were doing. We became the sources of information rather than the supplicants for information. To the Egyptians we were it. We were besieged by people looking for visas day in and day out. Every kind of request under the sun the Egyptians could think of in terms of servicing themselves under the umbrella of the United States as opposed to the Soviet Union, they came to us for. The embassy was under lots of new demands and requirements. There was even a question as to whether the embassy should be moved to some degree, but that didn't go very far. The ambassador's residence: Sadat woke up one day and said, "I want the ambassador's residence" – the old residence that we had on the other side of the Nile – "for myself; therefore, we'll trade properties." [Inaudible.] There were some very complicated issues that came along as well. At some point it was perfectly clear that somebody was going to lay claim to my living quarters. That got very personal. When I arrived in Cairo, I was a second secretary level, FSO 5, and I was given a villa with a garden and a gardener, all paid for by the embassy.

Q: The rules were in those days – I know because I became counselor of embassy – as counselor of embassy you got a gardener.

HOUGHTON: I was low down on the rung. As long as we were very small, no problem, but the larger we got, the clearer it became that USIA's representative was going to come in and want the house back. Then I was going to be in much restricted living quarters in an apartment that was a quarter of the size in terms of floor space with no garden at all. That made it more distasteful to me. At one point the ambassador made it clear that he wanted me there but if I wanted to move on given the new circumstances, he would not only not stop me but he would try to find a place where he could recommend that I go. In the end I accepted that, and that's how in part his advice and support and

recommendation allowed me to come back to Washington and get into the NSC. That was my next job.

Q: You came back in the summer of...?

HOUGHTON: I came back in June immediately after the Nixon visit in 1974. I had spent a couple of months here on home leave, burned that up, and had an interview with Brent Scowcroft, who was then Deputy NSC Advisor to Henry Kissinger. It was a perfectly good interview. He had a lot of other things to do, stacks of work running up two and three feet on his desk in terms of documents and so on and so forth, but he said he would get back to me by the end of the summer. I had not heard anything and was feeling rather discouraged that I had not, that there had been no movement. I finally called him, and he said, "Oh, yes, thank you for reminding me. I'll be back to you immediately." Well, immediately turned out to be another month, during which I went back to Cairo and then was notified that I had been accepted for the number-two NSC Middle East position and then went back to Washington. I think I must have moved into that job in September or October.

Q: And you were there from '74 to when?

HOUGHTON: '76.

Q: Could you talk about the NSC at that time. Henry Kissinger by this time was fully Secretary of State.

HOUGHTON: No, when I arrived, he was both NSC Advisor and Secretary of State together, and in October, late October, or early November – I forget which – of 1974 he was informed by then Chief of Staff to the White House Donald Rumsfeld that he was going to be offered a choice: Which did he want, to be NSC Advisor or Secretary of State? There were too many complaints about conflict of interest in the NSC position, particularly since it sat on top of all the foreign policy process. If you had conflicting views or views that needed to be sorted out between any of the three major agencies involved, CIA, Defense, and State, you couldn't have the State Department Secretary sitting on top as NSC Advisor as well, so which did he want? Henry chose the State Department, and that made Brent NSC Advisor at the time. So I worked for Brent Scowcroft through my office director, Bob Oakley.

Q: In '74 to '76, in the first place, Bob Oakley and you, did you come from different perspectives? What were his strengths?

HOUGHTON: Bob had eight to 10 years more service. He had served at the United Nations. He had different Middle East experience, not dramatically Middle East experience but some Middle East experience. I was probably deeper immersed in Arabic and, therefore, had more sort of street-level contact than Bob, but Bob knew his stuff, he knew people, and he had an outstanding reputation when I arrived. I was delighted to

work with him. He was a good office director, stayed close to Henry, and continuing ensuing negotiations, discussions, that went on. Brent Scowcroft valued him. We had one other person in the office, Rosemary Neher, who had been there for a number of years and took on much of the ground work of preparing NSC papers at one point or the other that Bob and I didn't have time to deal with. But it was a good office. There were only three of us there and normally overworked.

Q: During this '74 to '76 period, what were your major concerns?

HOUGHTON: The major, principal concern was a political resolution between the Arabs broadly speaking and Israel. That involved Egypt and Syria, Jordan, disengagement agreements in Sinai and on the Golan, interim arrangements of one kind or the other looking toward a change of status in territories that were held by the Israelis. There was a financial crisis that occurred at the time that involved the oil-producing countries. We also covered other areas of the Middle East including Iran, right on over toward Pakistan, and North Africa. Every visit by every head of state or government from our area that came to Washington that involved the White House, we were involved in at one level or another. There was a lot of servicing to do in terms of not only the needs of the President's office but also the Vice President. I have to go through sort of a calendar of the period, but it was a very active period in the post-war months and years with respect to the Arabs and Israel, and there were other things that were normally going on as well.

Q: One of the things, particularly the way things were constituted in those days, you had NEA which included not only the Egyptian/Syrian/Israeli/Jordanian/Saudia Arabian situation but you had almost a completely different one of Iraq, Iran, and then India and Pakistan.

HOUGHTON: Sure, but we were almost a mirror image of NEA in terms of coverage, in terms of geographic coverage, and it was designed that way. Kissinger's NSC was designed so that the geographic offices covered the same geographic region virtually identically that the State Department did. There were functional offices, for example, for economic affairs or for arms transfers and so forth that mirror-imaged counterpart offices in State and/or the complex of Agency offices that covered those functions as well. For example, economic affairs reflected interests of not only the State Department EB (Economic) Bureau but also Treasury and other financial agencies of governments. Arms transfers were just a classic PM (political military). But, yes, these involved different issues, most of which could be serviced because the State Department was able to provide, and the other agencies, enough material so that we could at least honorably advise, keep Brent Scowcroft advised, and through Brent the President, as to what was going on. We were their principal source of information as to what the bureaucracy was doing and thought, and if there were special types of information or intelligence that were necessary to transmit, we'd be a channel for that as well.

Q: They have now reconstructed the State Department by act of Congress to have a South Asia Bureau which deals with India and Pakistan, but it would seem as though Iraq, Iran

and then South Asia sort of got lost in the shuffle as far as our concerns, because everything was centered on essentially Israel.

HOUGHTON: Wasn't it fortunate there were no crises of a major nature in the area at the time? Yes, I think that's basically true. Most of the government's, most of the administration's, interests and concerns within the entire area were focused in the first instance on the Arab-Israel problem and others then sort of took on a different character, were on the second tier.

Q: The war between India and Pakistan over Bangladesh, that had already taken place.

HOUGHTON: That was '71.

Q: Say an issue, maybe nothing earthshaking but sort of an issue, came up on India/Pakistan. Could you call on somebody and say, "What the hell is this all about?"

HOUGHTON: Oh, sure, absolutely. Because Bob and I in particular were still Foreign Service Officers of the Department of State, we could call over to our colleagues over there and ask for information or help or assistance, and they always said yes. There was never a division of view as to how to make the information, and in areas where we didn't have special expertise, there was no division of view as to what the information meant or what the procedure should be. Frequently the State Department wanted to know how to be of help. They wanted to make themselves be useful. Bob normally stayed in touch with whoever the Assistant Secretary was and perhaps a deputy or two, and my normal high level of communication was with one of the deputies. That was at one level. I was an FSO 5/4 now; I think I had been promoted, horsing around with deputies, to which the answer was that was what I was supposed to do, that was what I was paid to do. I never ran into a situation that I recall where I had to ask myself whether I was personally in terms of my own views or professional views about a situation at odds or great difference with the Department of State or any of the other agencies. Usually if I found myself asking whether they were right or whether I was right, I'd usually hash it out over the phone. I'd call them up and say, "I need to know more about this because I have to be skeptical about this, and you will understand if I put a countervailing idea in, just as long as you give me the best shot you can so that I can represent it fairly." What they wanted to do was to be represented fairly. As I say, there was never a major disagreement of any particular kind. Every now and then, actually routinely, State would send over substandard Presidential papers, not the substantive stuff but usually the ceremonial stuff where they provide talking points and talking point number one would be "Good morning." Well, thank you, you don't have to tell the President how to say good morning, so we'd go onto that and change it. Rosemary often simply rewrote the talking points to reflect a style which would be in a terse or succinct NSC style and leave out a lot of the fluff. The poor State Department officer having no experience in Presidential process, he couldn't know, so therefore we had to change it around but without changing the substance of it.

Q: How about Brent Scowcroft? He's been sort of running national security things since forever almost. How did you find his sway in there?

HOUGHTON: Brent had enormous influence. He had the absolute confidence of the President, Jerry Ford, as well as Henry Kissinger, who sometimes would rant and rave at him but would always listen to him very carefully and frequently take his advice as opposed to his own counsel. Brent was not there to manage the staff. There were other people who managed staff. Brent was there to be an advisor to the President and a communication link between the President and NSC staff as well as other agencies of government. He did that job superbly. I never felt there was any particular issue or problem there. He also had a very able close-in staff including Peter Rodman and one or two other people who worked for him. Bud McFarland was in his office at the time. He had a good touch and a good feel for the play and flow of politics international. I have great, enormous respect for Brent Scowcroft. He played his cards very close to the chest, as he should have, appropriately. He didn't talk a lot about what he thought, but that wasn't what he was supposed to do.

Q: What about the media? The media's always sniffing around the NSC. How did you find that you were dealing with them in how you were instructed and how you actually did and that sort of thing?

HOUGHTON: Well, if we didn't know them, we'd ask them to talk to the public relations person – there was an NSC public relations person – or to go to the appropriate agency. Sometimes people would call up and ask very specific questions about what the NSC view was, and I would say, "There's no NSC view. Go to the agencies if you're interested in information and figure it out for yourself." If we knew them – and Bob and I both knew a number of members of the press corps in Washington because they'd come from overseas in posts we had or we'd run into them – and if we felt we could count on them to obey the first rule of journalism, which is to not blow your sources wide apart, then we would be perfectly willing to have them in for a little bit and chat with them and give them some background, and they universally respected that. But it wasn't a routine thing; it was irregular and unwanted and, generally speaking, uncomfortable because you always felt that your first loyalty was to the privacy of political and diplomatic process and that's what Henry Kissinger expected. We had other people who would call on us occasionally, business people, but usually business people who knew government service. They were now working for corporations but knew that you could call the NSC, you might find a friendly voice, and you'd come over and pull on the lapels of whoever the NSC staff members was in order to be able to write your report for Corporation X. You always had to be careful about diplomats, because even though they were in your area and they might feel they wanted to call on you, one of the problems was that there were some countries whose traffic we were reading, not only me but other people too, and the most embarrassing thing in the world is to have a member of the diplomatic staff of that country have a conversation with you and then the following day read your words reported from him usually misreported.

Q: And, of course, other people were reading it too, within our own government.

HOUGHTON: Absolutely, and who knows where else.

Q: How about Congress? Did you keep away from Congress or staff?

HOUGHTON: We had a Congressional office on staff that would provide advice to Brent on how to deal with Congress or Congressional issues. Usually they involved Congressional inquiries with respect to some aspect of US policy or information, and they could almost always be diverted to one of the agencies or the other. Sometimes they wanted Presidential papers; at that point it would go straight to the legal counsel's office.

Q: You left in '76?

HOUGHTON: That's right. In '76 I was given a Congressional fellowship, the Pearson Fellowship. I went up to the Hill and served in two offices, one of Senator McC. Mathias of Maryland, and the other of Senator Dick Clark of Iowa, Mack having been there for a long period of time and Dick Clark being a one-termer. After that I was assigned as Deputy Director for Arab-Israel Affairs in NEA, and the year after that I went up to the Secretary's office.

Q: Let's just touch on this time in Congress. Mathias was the Senate ranking man at that time, wasn't he?

HOUGHTON: Yes, he had a ranking position on the Judiciary Committee, but he was interested in foreign affairs and he actually was looking for a foreign affairs officer to provide support to his office at the time he was trying to figure out what he wanted to do with that aspect of his own interest. I was delighted when a member of his staff, I think his administrative officer, came in and talked to our class of Pearson Fellows and said, "We're looking for somebody in the foreign affairs area." It was only a matter of a day before I found myself in Mathias' own office talking first to his principal legislative aide and then to Mathias himself. He asked me no questions at all about background or about foreign affairs or any aspect of what I thought he would be interested in. We just chatted. He wanted to know what I thought of some of the art work that he had in his office and a couple of other things. He had some knickknacks of an archeological nature. After about half an hour of that, I left his office and turned to his legislative aide and said, "What's that about?" He said, "Oh, he just wants to be sure he's comfortable with you. When can you report for duty?" That was the way that interview was conducted.

Q: What sort of work were you doing for Mathias?

HOUGHTON: Anything that involved his interest in any aspect of foreign affairs. He was interested in US-Soviet relations, but he was also interested in probing into areas that we didn't know much about. He was interested in Cuban influence in Latin America. He asked me if I could put together for him a trip to Cuba that would include Cuba and

Mexico and some other countries in Latin America, and I did. I went along on that trip. We never got to Cuba, because the invitation to Cuba had come from the Foreign Minister and the Foreign Minister then found himself in Libya at the time that we otherwise would have been in Havana, so that was called off. But we had very good visits in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, if I recall correctly, and came back. There were other things that I kept him informed of. The Middle East he was interested in. Bob Fenton was a cousin of his, and he was a correspondent for CBS in Jerusalem. After I left, he filled a position with a permanent staff member who covered foreign affairs for him.

Q: With Clark what sort of work...?

HOUGHTON: I was taken on for one particular purpose, which was to try to help develop Clark and his principal LA for foreign affairs develop a position on strategic weapons. That was interesting. I knew very little about strategic weapons issues up to that point, but I became the person who could pick the phone and say I was the Foreign Service Officer calling from Clark's staff to try to find information. I was the guy who could develop a relationship with the Department of State and other members of the bureaucracy as principal LA for this topic.

Q: LA is legislative assistant.

HOUGHTON: That's correct, legislative assistant. His principal legislative assistant was a former correspondent, and their ability to work in sort of the fringes is maybe more limited and more difficult, so I may have helped a little bit there, but that was only a three-to-four-month assignment.

Q: Then you went over in '77 to the Arab-Israeli desk?

HOUGHTON: As deputy director in the Office of Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs.

Q: And you were there from '77 to...?

HOUGHTON: To '78.

Q: Well, this was a pretty exciting time, wasn't it?

HOUGHTON: Yes, it was. There was a lot going on. As number two I really – well, I don't know what number one and number two does in an office. They work it out between themselves. I had an office director who was preoccupied with lots of things including some things in his personal life, but for the most part left me running the office and managing some of the things that I really did feel were up to him, but it was an interesting time. For example, he came up to me and said, "Do you know of the Baltimore Democratic Rabbinical Congress:" or a name very close to that, and I said, "Well, yes. In fact, they're supposed to be here meeting with you in about 10 minutes. In fact, they're probably assembling down the hall in the conference room." He said, "No, wrong. I have

an appointment with my psychoanalyst, so you're going to have to take the meeting." Well, I said, "What's the subject of the meeting, Walter?" He said, "They're really pissed off at the Department of State" – my language – "and they think that we're part of the foreign policy establishment in Washington that is somehow filled with Arabists, and they want to know what the United States is doing for Israel that will ease their concerns and fears, and that's what I was going to talk to them about." I said, "Thank you for letting me know what I'm supposed to say." We had a very good meeting for an hour and a half. It was perfectly fine. But in the end I found myself dealing with weapons transfers and nuclear issues of one kind or the other, the visits of Begin when Begin was elected Prime Minister, and the whole array of things that went on. Walter was there but in the end less there than I was. I felt myself fortunate in this great job. In any case, it was a wonderful job with lots of stuff to do and very, very busy offices, busy as any of the other offices.

Q: Was Begin elected while you were there?

HOUGHTON: Yes.

Q: That must have come as sort of a shock...

HOUGHTON: It did.

Q: ...as far as the whole outlook, because essentially the Likud Party was considered sort of way off in right field.

HOUGHTON: And all of a sudden there they were. Now they were in the center of the Israeli stage and Begin was now Prime Minister and he had a very different outlook from Peres or any of the others on the labor side. There was still an awful lot of business to do with respect to how you got work done both on the ground and in terms of the politics of the Arab-Israeli problem. It was a state-to-state issue. The Palestinians were nowhere in center stage at that point. It was Egypt and Syria principally. During that period I was – let me think about this – I went with a team to Israel to set up some aspect of the US-Israeli military relationship, if I recall correctly. There were Defense people who were there too. I remember being asked by an Israeli colonel if I really thought that Anwar Sadat was going to come to Israel – they had picked up a story – and I said, "I don't think so; it seems very unlikely to me," and of course he arrived the next day.

Q: You know, they keep talking about it in Japanese affairs the Nixon shokku. Well, you were right in the place where you were getting the Begin shokku and then the Sadat shokku. What was the initial reading you were getting on Begin as a new man? Were we seeing, well, there goes all our work; he's a hard-line guy and we're not going to get anywhere?

HOUGHTON: No, I don't think so. I think there was just sort of a sense that it was going to be much more difficult to find in Begin the willingness to make concessions and to

reach an agreement with either Sadat or Assad or indeed any Arab than it had been with Peres, who had long experience dealing directly with Arabs. His personal association with Hussein had gone back years, decades, whereas Begin came out of a totally different matrix. He was willfully ignorant of the nature of what Arabs hoped for or expected in a discussion with Israel that might lead to a resolution of the outstanding issues that flowed out of the '67 war, a totally different background. Begin, we all felt, was going to be much more difficult, much more intractable.

Q: Did you feel our embassy in Tel Aviv was having problems switching gears, making contact, talking, because we'd had such an intimate relationship before? Was there a perceptible...?

HOUGHTON: No, not really. Let me see. My recollection is that very shortly after Begin came in – I'm a little blurred as to when this occurred, but I believe it occurred after Begin came in –Sam Lewis came in, and Sam appeared to have the view that his most important job was to accommodate himself to the needs of communication with Begin and anybody else at the highest level of authority in Israel. He wanted to learn about them, his ears were open, and he appeared to everyone to be sympathetic to what they wanted to say in a manner that allowed him to report intimately and continuously from his own contacts there. He became sort of in a sense the most important source of high-level views from the Israelis and was in their viewpoint a highly effective ambassador as well as from us.

Q: Were you getting at that time the feeling – and I've talked to other people; I had a very long interview with Sam Lewis, by the way – from sort of our embassies in Egypt, Syria, Jordan, maybe Lebanon and all that we were paying too much attention to the Israeli point of view and not enough to...?

HOUGHTON: I'm sorry. Is there a difference in what we had been perceived to be doing...?

Q: No, no, but under Sam Lewis I sense, since he was there for so long, and of course there were early days, but a feeling that the Arab side wasn't getting fair representation, or was it still the same game?

HOUGHTON: Some people felt that Sam, in time, maybe a very short period of time, adopted too quickly a position of advocacy for the views of the Israelis that he saw, but that isn't something that the Arabs knew about. This is not one of those things where it gets into the circuit, diplomatic circuit, that somehow the American ambassador to Israel has developed a bad case of localitis and everybody else is going to suffer as a result of it. That's not what happened. What happened is what normally happens: In a situation where the intimacy and depth of the relationship between the United States and Israel is such that, no matter what Israeli government is in place, somehow the relationship gets dragged along with it. That is, if it's somebody whom the United States feels comfortable with, such as Peres or later Rabin, then everything seems to be working together; and if

it's somebody the United States feels uncomfortable with, like Begin or Netanyahu or Sharon, I think, today, the relationship follows, still goes along with it, and in a manner where the degree to which the hardness of negotiating position on the Israelis then spills over into the view that the United States has also adopted that position. That is not untrue. We tend to take our lead from the Israelis.

Q: How about AIPAC, American Israeli...?

HOUGHTON: Public Affairs Committee. Omnipresent, visible, active, highly effective.

Q: Were they sort of monitoring you or working with you all the time?

HOUGHTON: Well, they weren't working with me all the time. They may have been monitoring me, but my visibility was not that high. I didn't go out and give a lot of talks. My job was not to go up and talk to people in Congress, although I think I was invited up there by Steve Solarz at one point to give a talk. In the end I was not what you would call an important figure within their constellation of targets or friends within the Department of State or the American government.

Q: The visit of Anwar Sadat to Tel Aviv was one of these real major events. How did that come about from your perspective? How did you hear about it?

HOUGHTON: Well, I was in Israel at the time that it was about to occur and on my way out. I think I was leaving on the day immediately before he arrived or the day – I forget which – and so I heard it when I was there in Israel. The Israelis themselves were astounded at the idea that Sadat should come and visit them, and I think it astounded a lot of Egyptians. It certainly astounded a lot of other Arabs. Never did quite understand it. You had to take sort of a long look at it and figure out that here's Anwar Sadat doing the unexpected again and doing it in a manner that he gave very little warning, very little sort of build-up to this particular point. Sadat was a person who tended to take dramatic moves after some period of intense frustration and anxiety about whatever position he happened to be in at the time. That was surely the case with the war, and it was also the case with the political situation, where he felt there was no movement going on, nothing was going to take place, and he had to create new circumstances, which he then did.

Q: When Ford left, you left too, didn't you, more or less?

HOUGHTON: No. Well, let me think about this.

Q: Oh, excuse me. You were there in the Carter period.

HOUGHTON: I was there during the Carter period. Just a second now – that's not true. At the NSC I arrived virtually as Nixon was leaving office in 1974 and stayed at the NSC until 1976. That was the Ford presidency. Then Ford was elected out of office later that year in 1976, but I'd already left the NSC at that time.

Q: So, when you were doing Arab-Israeli Affairs in '77-'78...

HOUGHTON: '77, '77 to early 1978, if I recall correctly.

Q: ...were you aware, was it apparent, that President Carter was taking considerable interest in the Arab-Israeli problem.

HOUGHTON: He did.

Q: I mean right from the beginning.

HOUGHTON: Yes, personally, more so than, I think, Ford had, and I think Nixon had many, many other things on his mind. But, yes, I think Carter definitely saw a role for himself in the Middle East. He wanted to create a new event, and in the end it was he who invited to the two parties, Begin and Sadat, to come up to Camp David, which they did.

Q: But even, say, while you were there, did you find yourself feeding the NSC and [inaudible] to the President information and all?

HOUGHTON: No, I was a mid-level government official within a bureau, and everything got funneled through the head of the bureau. If the White House was interested, if the NSC was interested, they would not come to the desk; they would go to the front office, and the front office would figure out how to service that particular thing. I had no special interface with the NSC or any of my successors even though I knew them and met them from time to time, but there was no particular relationship. I had left that job and gone back to State.

Q: With this job how did you deal with, say, the Syrian or Egyptian or Jordan desk, or were those your desks too?

HOUGHTON: Well, there were other desks within the bureau, and these were colleagues, these friends, some of whom I'd served with. There was no separation between desks. Sure, we were dealing with Israel and the other desks were dealing with the Arab countries, but if we had an issue or problem that involved more than one desk, we would be able to sit down and talk together. We were all professional colleagues. Many of us had come from the same background. It may have helped, for example, that I had gone through Arabic training and so forth and had circuited through the Arab world, so people knew that I was at least exposed to some of the issues that they were involved in. But there was no big deal here. We all worked as part of a team that was sort of harnessed in place by the NEA front office deputies as well as Assistant Secretary.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up next time in 1978. You were off to Israel?

HOUGHTON: No, in 1978 I went to the Office of the Secretary of State.

Q: Okay, so we'll pick it up at that point.

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Today is December 13th, 2001. There's been a bit of a hiatus here. Arthur, in 1978 you went up to the Office of the Secretary of State. How long were you there?

HOUGHTON: I was there for a year.

Q: What were you doing?

HOUGHTON: I was his principal staff assistant. I was the special assistant in charge of his immediate office, which involved two other Foreign Service Officers, three secretaries nominally, and involved principally the sort of preparation of appointments and papers for the Secretary. It was a non-substantive job. It did involve a great deal of travel. I wasn't with him always when he left the United States.

Q: This was Vance?

HOUGHTON: This was Cyrus Vance. I was with him a substantial amount of the time on many of his trips that took us at various times to – let me see – South Africa; to East Africa; to London, Geneva, Russia on a single trip; with the President on a trip that went down to Latin American and then over to West Africa, to Nigeria, and then came back home; but he took other trips. There were three FSO's that were working in that particular office. One or sometimes both of the other two accompanied him on those.

Q: Who were they?

HOUGHTON: Bill Twaddell and the second one's name escapes me at the moment.

Q: Often with the Secretary of State or somebody of that rank, they bring a secretary, more sort of an executive assistant, somebody who's been with him for years. Did Vance do this too, somebody who acted as his secretary?

HOUGHTON: You mean me?

Q: No. Did he have a woman, usually a woman...?

HOUGHTON: Yes, he did, Elba who had been with him, Elba whose last name escapes me again at the moment – I'll come around to it – who had been with him for a long, long period of time and continued to be with him after he left the Department of State. She and I had to work out sort of an accommodation. In the end she did certain things, and she was protective of those things, and I did certain things. Sometimes there was a little bit of

overlap, but we worked it out mostly. She had been around for a long time, and she'd been with Vance in different capacities. There were things that she was designated to do, and she handled them quite well.

Q: What was your impression of Cyrus Vance as an executive?

HOUGHTON: I found Cy Vance to be, first of all, an easy decision maker. It came very naturally to him. He was open as a Cabinet Secretary in the sense of wanting to be inclusive in terms of bringing people into a particular issue if it concerned them. He had a very strong set of Assistant Secretaries whom he would depend on to provide him with the necessary information and recommendations, but in the end he was perfectly happy to either go along or override them as he saw fit and necessary. But whenever there was an issue in the discussion, he would always in an ordered manner bring in whoever the principals were who were necessarily involved. He did not like to exclude people. He felt they were important and necessary and that they needed to be involved in whatever discussion was taking place at a particular moment. He didn't have an inner-core operating group. He had a principal assistant who'd been with him for some years, Peter Tarnoff, who was also Executive Secretary of the Department, who also was his personal assistant. Peter ran the Department mostly and did certain things for Cy Vance of a nature that they'd done for many, many years. But that's not an inner-core group in terms of substantive issues.

Q: He didn't have, as with Jim Baker and some others a coterie – that's the wrong term to use – but...?

HOUGHTON: If you wanted to talk about Africa, he brought in the Africans. If you wanted to talk about the Soviet Union, he brought in Marshal Shulman and the Assistant Secretary. If you wanted to discuss issues that related to, for example, the Middle East or East Asia, it would have been Hal Saunders or Dick Holbrooke. I don't think it was Saunders at the time; I forget who was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, but Dick Holbrooke was certainly East Asia, and I guess they all were part of it. And they'd all worked with....

Q: Dick Murphy?

HOUGHTON: No, it wasn't Murphy. I will run into it at some point. But they'd all worked with him in many cases and felt comfortable with him, and he was clearly comfortable with them.

Q: Did you have any feel for the role of the President with Cyrus Vance?

HOUGHTON: Well, the best I can say is from my observation it was formal role. Cy Vance is not the kind of person to be close, warm and chummy with anybody, nor did I sense that Jimmy Carter was that way. They both maintained a formal and professional distance from each, and at the same time they worked fairly closely. He clearly had the

President's ear. He was concerned over the period I was there with the potential intervention of Zbig Brzezinski, who was National Security Advisor, on whatever issue might appear. Zbig had his own particular interest in East-West relations, strategic issues with the Soviet Union. Those were areas in which he got involved to a point sometimes where Vance himself had to compete for the President's attention on a number of those issues. His strongest preference was to be as closely coordinated with other cabinet members as he could be, including the National Security Advisor, Zbig Brzezinski, but in some instances, some cases, it simply didn't happen that way. He would have a regular weekly luncheon meeting with Stan Turner from CIA. He'd do the same thing if he could with Harold Brown, who was Secretary of Defense. There were regularized things that went on, and there would be a breakfast meeting that would involve on a regular basis the so-called national security team at the top, which would involve Turner and Vance and Brzezinski and Brown. But these were fairly formal affairs. These were set pieces where you had an agenda to begin with. It was a meeting of professionals of different perspectives and with different interests at issue to talk over other, broadly speaking, events that affected the world and world issues or global issues, or met to discuss a particular issue from time to time.

Q: Roy Atherton, wasn't he the...?

HOUGHTON: I'm sorry it slips my mind. I think it must have been Roy because immediately before that point I was in NEA and Roy was there, and I was on the Israel desk and I was brought up to the Secretary's office, so it would have been Roy. That's correct. Thank you very much for reminding me. In any case, I didn't sense that Cy's relationships were more than sort of warmly cordial. They never sort of went way beyond that. I don't recall he had strong personal associations either within the cabinet or really within his own Department.

Q: While you were there, when American ambassadors were coming back from their posts, did he, on specific places, talk to them?

HOUGHTON: Yes, but always it was at their request. I don't recall an instance where he said, "I would like to see the American ambassador." American ambassadors that came back normally and routinely would ask to see the Secretary or the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, whether it was Phil Habib or David Newsom, and would then have a chance to chat. I don't recall if he ever asked to see one of the ambassadors or another; I just can't recall, but it may have happened, but I don't recall it having happened that way.

Q: Had the Camp David process taken place?

HOUGHTON: Oh, very much so, sure.

Q: On Vance's part, was he looking elsewhere at this point? Was Israel with the Palestinian problem a particular focus of his?

HOUGHTON: Oh, sure, absolutely. It was continually and then simply wouldn't go away. Much of the reason was because there was – you know, when you're a Secretary of State, as you know, you receive visitor after visitor after visitor, and the number of visitors from the Middle East, whether it was an Arab leader or any of the multiple Israeli leaders who might come, whether it was Foreign Minister or Begin or whoever, would necessarily involve him. So he was constantly engaged with that and the issue and the problem of Israeli-Palestinian issues as well as monitoring and insuring the effectiveness of the disengagement agreements with Syria, Egypt, and so forth. Yes, sure, it just wouldn't want to go away. As you know, with the Arab-Israel or Palestine issue – the Palestine-Israel issue continued to be one of those – if you ignore it for a period of time, it's going to come back to bite you. I think that was generally understood and accepted, so you had to pay attention to it all the way along.

Q: Speaking about issues that would come back and bite, was Iran high on his agenda that you could see?

HOUGHTON: Oh, sure, absolutely. You could see the development of the Iranian problem during the course of 1978 as the crisis sort of mounted up toward 1979. I was not there in 1979. I was there in '78; '79 was a different year. It was clearly a bothersome problem. I would like to remember the details at this point of what happened that particular year. They're buried among some of the other things that were going. I think the most important focus of his attention, I would say, really was the East-West strategic relationship that kept coming up again and repeatedly again. It was also one that was troublesome in the sense that there was no real consensus within the American bureaucracy as to how it should be handled. That is, there were competing views with respect to the manner in which the United States should deal with the Soviet Union. And there were competing views between Zbig Brzezinski and Cy Vance over how the Soviets should be handled, even to the point where Vance himself felt it necessary to try to develop a separate line to the President, separate and independent from Brzezinski, that would allow him to get his views across clear and unfettered without NSC intervention. The African thing also, the problems of southwest Africa and negotiations over that particular issue occupied a great deal of his time. It could be handled at the assistant level up to a point, but he'd already set up a mechanism that involved him and David Owen and others...

Q: David Owen being the British....

HOUGHTON: ...that's right, British Prime Minister – as well as others to...

Q: Foreign Secretary.

HOUGHTON: ...Foreign Secretary – as well as others to try to insure that the politics moved along toward a resolution. That occupied a lot of his time, and he took, to my recollection, two trips to South Africa during the year that I was there, to southern Africa.

Q: During the time there, were there any foreign ambassadors assigned to the United States or areas that seemed to have a particular closer connection to Vance?

HOUGHTON: Personally no, however, Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to the United States, had access to the Secretary directly anytime he wanted to use it. That was understood. He was the only ambassador who was allowed to use the Secretary's private elevator. I think that had been standing policy for a long time; I suspect it had been there since Henry Kissinger was there, where "Anatoly, come on over any time," and that developed into a relationship with Vance as well. It was rarely used, I should say, barely used, but when Dobrynin came over to see the Secretary and he wanted to do it in a manner that was quiet, he'd have a chauffeur simply drive him into the bottom of the Department of State and walk into the Secretary's elevator and come straight on up.

Q: Did the Secretary focus at all on the administration of the State Department?

HOUGHTON: Not much. I think he chose to leave that to others. I forget who was in charge of administration at that time. I'm trying to recall if there were any serious administrative issues other than the ones that normally come up, and I can't think of any at the moment. I don't recall that there was an administration issue.

Q: Did he get involved at all in ambassadorial appointments?

HOUGHTON: Yes, of course he did. He had to clear off on ambassadorial appointments, most of which were routine, at least routine in terms of bureaus recommending whom they felt would be appropriate and he either choosing or approving or whatever. There may have been issues and discussions and so forth of which I was not aware. I did not sit with him in the same office. I was in an outer office and, therefore, when somebody would come in with one of those highly classified personnel folders involving ambassadors, it was not normally the kind of thing I would talk to him about and it was not normally the kind of thing I would have known what the content was.

Q: Did you get any feel during this time for Vance's relationship to Congress?

HOUGHTON: It's interesting. I am trying to recall whether there was any particular issue involving the administration in Congress other than normal agreement and/or disagreement that went on over one foreign affairs issue or the other. People respected Vance. The Congress certainly regarded him as somebody who did not have Henry Kissinger's peculiar sense of integrity and appeared to trust him more. The Carter administration wanted at least to demonstrate that it was an open, much less clandestine decision-making apparatus than had been the case before that. He testified on a number of occasions on various issues. I don't recall any specific occasion of issues that was particularly troublesome or involved an enormous amount of time or focus

Q: Did he have anybody from Congress who would come and sit down and they'd have bourbon and branch water or the equivalent?

HOUGHTON: No. A close-in, chummy lunch with somebody in the classical manner where what you're trying to do is to pull their teeth or get them to "understand" what you're doing and, therefore, talk less about it publicly wasn't the style.

Q: You left there in the spring of '79 or something like that?

HOUGHTON: I left Vance's office at the end of 1978, and I left the Department in the spring of 1979. I basically submitted my resignation in the spring of 1979. I took a few months' leave and then submitted it in the spring of 1979 basically with the statement that I enjoyed it immensely but I wanted to go and do other things, which I then did.

Q: Here you'd sort of I don't what to say reached the heights because you were just an assistant, but this is pretty heavy stuff which usually leads to something else.

HOUGHTON: Well, I didn't leave for negative reasons. I didn't leave for any reason that involved either concern about foreign policy, which I generally agreed or at least understood there was a rational basis for it. I was increasingly taken and interested in academic subjects in my area of concern, particularly archeology involving the archeology of the Hellenistic period, and so I decided that I really needed to take a long look at that. I went up to Harvard and asked them what programs might be available. They were not terribly welcoming to somebody who was in his late 30s at that time, but in time I managed to persuade them that they would do the wrong thing if they were to turn me down if I applied. So I applied and they accepted me in the Department of Fine Arts, and that's where I stayed for three years and was after that I was hired away by the Getty Museum in California. That was about what I wanted to do at the time. It was a totally new learning experience, a very high learning curve in subjects that I'd never had any long exposure to before and very far distant from the business of foreign affairs that I was fairly familiar with at the time.

Q: Did you find sort of the turmoil over the hostage taking and all in Iran, did that spill over into the academic world at all?

HOUGHTON: Well, it spilled over everywhere, if I recall correctly, 444 days of hostages. The Carter administration, having never faced something like this before and being pounded on to talk about it, found itself immersed in it at every level. I think it affected everything the Carter administration did from day one right on through to the end, into the advent of the Reagan administration. Did it affect the academic world? Yes, I'm sure it did, but I was at that point doing other things and not closely involved with, for example, foreign affairs. I had no particular relation to the foreign affairs circus at Harvard that might be involved in that. But there were discussions and lectures and so on and so forth. It was not relevant to what I was doing, and what I was doing required a great deal of focus and concentration.

Q: Working on the Hellenistic period, were you looking at any particular country?

HOUGHTON: The entire area. The Hellenistic period really flowed after the anabasis of Alexander the Great, his great trek up to the borders of India. He crossed the Hellespont in 334 BC and ended up dying in Babylon in 323, but between those years, 11 years, he went all the way to the borders of India, to the Indus River Valley, over into the Kabul Valley and then further into the areas of the headwaters of the Indus and then was forced to turn back by his own army. But that introduced a new era where Macedonian garrisons and Greek settlements and others became the sort of new administrative authority in the ancient Near East extending really from European Thrace over to what is today Afghanistan and later on into modern-day Pakistan down to the Persian Gulf, and a huge area across north Africa.

Q: Although we've been focused now on your Foreign Service experience, I try to pick up some other sociology history. What did you do? You say you went with the Getty Museum?

HOUGHTON: I was at Harvard for three years and then I was asked to join the staff of the Getty Museum in California first as an associate curator for antiquities in the Antiquities Department, and then after about eight or 10 months the curator was asked to leave and that made me acting curator while they went on a search for someone new. I was there for four years.

Q: Was this the old museum?

HOUGHTON: The same museum. There was only one Getty Museum. There were different divisions and different branches, and the physical location is where it was since it was designed and constructed in 1975, which is in Malibu in a sort of canyon in Malibu. If you've ever been there, it's a very pretty environment.

Q: You went to the newer?

HOUGHTON: No, that building is still there and it's given to the display of antiquities still today. It still is undergoing renovation. During my first year there they had already begun to consider moving the rest of the collection along with the Getty Trust, the mechanism that controlled and ran and operated the museum among other entities, up to another location which they in time established in the hills above Brentwood, just above the 405 highway. I then proceeded with plans to move every department of the museum with the exception of antiquities there. But my job there at the Getty Museum was to oversee a department that was very active in terms of acquiring material, cataloging, making certain it was properly exhibited if it could be exhibited or at least put into the collection properly, published, all the things that museum work involves, with the exception that with the amount of money that the Getty had at its disposal for purchases, we did a great deal of the buying. Other museums don't have that capability. There was also a sort of anxiety, while the window for acquisition of good material was still open, to go ahead and buy what we could that would make the Getty collection rank among the

best in the world if we could.

Q: You must have found yourself the object of envy or maybe even hate by some of the other museums, people involved with this.

HOUGHTON: Yes, but you've got to know your colleagues in other museums. You always, at least I did, maintained a relationship with other museum curators and, to the extent you could, with academics and others, who might not like the idea of collecting – many of them don't – but nevertheless saw the Getty Museum as an important and potentially, even for their own disciplines, useful means of improving their own scholarship. Many of them wanted to come and work with us, both at the museum and at the research center. Many were given scholarships and fellowships to come and work at the research center itself. Over time the early debate about Getty has died down. Getty was assiduous in paying attention to the needs of scholars in the area of the history of art across the board including scholarly education, dissemination of information, conservation, exhibition in terms of the museum, explanation of what we had, and publication and so forth, and over time enough of that kind of application has an effect. So the potentially hostile voices were over time, I think, stilled. Of course, there is certain envy and I think correctly so. Some people felt that we had the ability to affect the market in a manner that would make it difficult for other museums to acquire material. We tended to go to the head of the line in terms of getting what we wanted. But that tended to also add to other inflationary pressures that were going on with respect to art material.

Q: After four years there, whither?

HOUGHTON: After four years I decided to come back to Washington, back into public service again, or least look for a job in public service again, but I wanted to complete my PhD dissertation. I spent a year here doing that. Then I was invited then into a task force, a sort of interdepartmental task force, dealing with issues related to control of the US borders, specifically involving a close investigation of how protective we were against the access that terrorists might have coming into the United States. It started out as a task force with a very simple mandate to investigate ways to close the gaps in the technical communication that existed between agencies that had been identified in a report that the NSC had summoned up a short time before – we're now in 1984 – the Holloway report, 1984-85 – it was 1986, I guess. By 1987 a task force was summoned up to deal with that particular aspect. We looked at everything. We didn't look at our mandate as a simple one of trying to fix a problem of communication between, for example, Customs and Coast Guard and DEA and so forth. We went much broader than that into the whole business of how vulnerable you were to access by foreigners who could either come across the border by overland, sometimes by air, or by fraudulently acquiring visas or by some other means, and did so and provided a report after the end of six months. The executive director was a former rear admiral who'd been the head of the intelligence community staff, and the head of the task force, the nominal head of the task force, was later President George Bush, then Vice President, so that gave us a lot of clout. At the end of that period, after Bush himself was elected President, the group as a whole was asked if any members of it

or as a whole, wanted to come in and join one of the new offices in government, particularly one that needed our expertise, which was the drug policy office, the Office of National Drug Control Policy. I was among those who said, "Yes, I'd like to," so I joined up then again.

Q: You did that from when to when?

HOUGHTON: Well, it must have been '89 to '95. The election was in '88, and the inauguration would have been '89. I would have been brought in in '89, and in '95 I left.

Q: What was this policy group doing?

HOUGHTON: Which group?

Q: You said in '89 you joined this drug....

HOUGHTON: The Office of National Drug Control Policy, simply abbreviated as ONDCP, a White House function was set up by law to oversee the activities of well over 50 US government agencies, with the authority to certify budgets and try to bring this sprawling mechanism of agencies that deal with illicit drug flow into the United States and treatment and prevention into sharper focus and into closer coordination. I'm trying to recall how many people were involved, well over 80 to 100 at one point, but it tended to get loaded up with people who were asked to come over for reasons that tended to look political, like they needed to put somebody somewhere and this looked like a good office. In the beginning we were fairly small – my guess is around 30 to 40 – and with unknown, unknowable authority, except the head of the office, Bill Bennett, had the respect of the President, who listened to him on other issues including policy issues, and the fact that he could walk into the Oval Office anytime he felt it important to do so, made sure that other agencies listened up. We did not do operations or programs. We funded programs and operations, tried to make certain that funding was adequate, and then monitored what went on, and then asked agencies to give an accounting of what they did. We were not appreciated. Agencies knew what they wanted to do, and darn it all if they wanted anybody else looking over their shoulders. Even though we held out the benefit of being able to improve their budget sometimes, we also held out the advantage of holding them to account in a manner that they were unused to.

Q: This whole battle against drugs seems to be a losing one.

HOUGHTON: Well, I don't think so. I think it's like crime. If you choose to decide that crime has won and withdraw your enforcement, then what do you think is going to happen? If you decide it's a losing one and you shouldn't prevent the inflow of drugs to the United States and shouldn't keep the Coast Guard and Customs at work or DEA at the border and other things of a nature like that, yes, it's going to happen. So I wouldn't declare the loss until you decide what the alternative is.

Q: Did you find that as time went on it got easier or more difficult to coordinate?

HOUGHTON: Easier to coordinate. You know, the effect of it is surely not marginal in terms of the Federal Government's behavior and its ability to function. But it's not necessarily everything you would want, in great part because the drug problem really begins with consumption and how to get at that is not a simple matter. Some people think education will do the job; it won't. You need to have other mechanisms at work too, but the closer you get to the communities, to community activities that deal with it, I think the more effective you're likely to be. In short, it's another area where the federal government has some effect but not as much as you'd like to have, and it's not equipped to handle community responses to an issue as pervasive as drug use and trafficking.

Q: Did sort of the arteries of your group get sort of clogged up as they added more people to it?

HOUGHTON: No, I don't think so. Any White House entity or federal government entity in time will accumulate people who may have no particular effect, but nevertheless they're hired for other reasons. They're hired for political reasons in order to honor a campaign commitment or to make sure that young people who were part of a campaign can come in and feel at home and do things. We did this in the State Department too. We took interns of various kinds and other people. There are all sorts of programs to bring people outside the State Department in. It was a little more difficult in the State Department's case simply because you needed to get a security classification in order to be able to sit there, but at ONDCP we didn't require a security classification except for a limited number of jobs.

Q: You did this until '95, and then what?

HOUGHTON: And then I left. I left to set up my own consulting firm to deal with American businesses in the Middle East that were interested in particular countries. I was interested in Egypt and in Lebanon and potentially Syria, although Syria turned out to be a bad place to do business. It's just too difficult and too corrupt.

Q: With Syria was it the corruption or the socialist system or both?

HOUGHTON: No, it wasn't the socialist system. Everybody wanted something; everybody had their hand out. In addition to the fact that there's a US law that creates problems for US companies dealing in environments like that. Also, in the end it takes so much effort to actually succeed in getting a business running and working even with a business partner on the other side that you ask yourself isn't there a better way of doing this. Syrians are too clever; in many cases by organizing themselves in a manner that any foreign company that wants to come in and get something done is going to have to ask itself in time whether the marginal reward for whatever the effort they put in isn't too low for what their costs are and the amount of attention they have to give. I was the head of a very small firm. I had two employees, three at one point, and, therefore, I was the person

who had to do all the work at the top. I finally decided, no, I've got better things to do.

Q: What about Lebanon? Were they recovering by this point from the civil war?

HOUGHTON: By the time I went into Lebanon in 1995, they were certainly recovering from the civil war and have continued to do so. They were beginning to build Beirut back up again in a magnificent manner. A company that was built in the new city of Beirut was one of my clients for a period, and so I went over there quite frequently to see how they were doing. To show how secure they were, lots of new glass buildings were being put up, most of it in private areas rather than in the municipal district in downtown Beirut, but the downtown was being cleaned up. The problem was the Lebanese were busily in the process of anticipating as bright a future as they've had in the past in the 1960s when 80,000 foreigners lived in and near Beirut itself and where Arabs came from the moneyed Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia to spend time there and enjoy themselves, and they overbuilt. They overbuilt and overpriced, and in the end it didn't turn out that way. Regrettably very few Europeans and only a handful of Americans are there even today. Arabs know what to do if they want to have fun; they buy a ticket and go to London or Paris.

Q: Did you find yourself increasingly moving over towards Egypt?

HOUGHTON: No, I went to Egypt to take a look at what was going on and did some work there in Egypt, but my best shot continued to be Lebanon because there were very few Americans who were working with Lebanon except for some Lebanese Americans and they were interested in doing different things. I was interested in working with government of Lebanon entities, and I was successful in getting a number to use my services in the United States. The Minister of Finance, for example, said, "I've got to come to the United States with my entourage and go to four major cities," and he turned to me at one point and said, "Where do you think I ought to go?" I said, "This doesn't involve a lot of brains. How long do you have?" "Three weeks," he said, so I said, "New York surely, that's where the financial institutions are; Washington DC, again for financial institution discussion as well as with the business community there; and then on to Houston and then on to Detroit, where your Arab American community is and will want to hear from you. If you have time to go to Los Angeles, I'd counsel that too, but three weeks will get you through those four cities – two weeks, I guess it was – and won't leave you much time." So he contracted me to do the set-ups all the way along. That was fun and interesting.

Q: Egypt seems to be deluged with AID money and all that. Did you sort of get a piece of that pie?

HOUGHTON: I didn't get a piece of the AID pie at all. I had long opportunity to work in and with Egypt with an Egyptian partner and got some business done but it was very difficult there, in part because the way the Egyptians operate is rather different from the way we do. Their standards of, for example, production and service are different from our

standards of production and service. To give an example, there is a certain type of work that I was doing that depended on early and reliable information from Egypt about business opportunities that might be of interest to American corporations. But getting early and reliable information, either of those, was extremely difficult, in part because the firms I was working with, as good as they were, was simply not geared to providing that kind of information. I'd go back and forth and talk to them a great deal, and in terms of reliability it was substandard. You needed a great deal of information in order to be able to interest an American company in doing something before it decided to move, and then it would want more. You needed to have a 24-hour turnaround, no more than that under any circumstance, in terms of an information response. That was difficult to do. The other thing is that Egyptian production standards and service standards overall are still in the process of evolving from a period when they could afford to be substandard because they serviced the Soviet Bloc. The Soviets tended to work very closely with the Egyptians acquiring things from Egypt which, however bad they might be in an international standard, were probably a little better than they could do for themselves. The Egyptian cotton crop paid for military deliveries to Egypt which were of a higher standard than the Egyptians could acquire from anywhere else. It all worked out very well, but what it did was it stultified Egyptian industry. There was nothing that required it to meet standards that made it internationally competitive. And once the Soviets gave way in Egypt and sort of the new era of international business came in, the Egyptians found themselves substantially unprepared to meet standards, quality standards, that were then acceptable outside Egypt itself or sometimes the old Soviet Bloc. I remember talking to a factory manager who made very high-quality kitchen and household equipment of various kinds, cabinetry, metal work, furniture of all kinds, that was of every standard that you would want it to be. I told him that I thought he must be very competitive in Europe, which was his principal destination market. He said he was having difficulty. I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Because our unit price is not much different from those of our main competitors in Italy or Spain." I said, "Why would that be? Labor costs are so inexpensive here." He looked at me and said, "Well, this is Egypt," which is a way of sort of saying broadly without having to get into specifics that in order to make certain that what got shipped as a quality product involved an enormous amount of rejects at lower levels of finish production. Through three levels of finishing, at each level you have to destroy half of what you produced in order to assure that the next level is of the quality that you want. All the unit prices go up, and in the end you come out with something that's barely competitive in Europe. And there were other standard issues with respect to the United States. We have agreements, binational agreements, that facilitate trade with Latin America and other areas, and we have none of a nature that are very helpful to Egypt. Therefore, getting Egyptian products into the American market is awkward, unless they're agricultural products and even then there are usually restrictions of one kind or the other. If you have anything to do with, for example, a mechanical or electrical nature, they use the European standards and they're not going to have their factories convert over to American standards unless it's worth their while; therefore, there would have to be a substantial order for whatever the equipment is. Hypothetically, if somebody made coffee makers, brand new, different design, absolutely wonderful coffee makers, you'd have to assure them of a sale of 10,000 to 20,000 before they would convert to US electrical

standards for it to be sure those coffee makers work. That's a hypothetical example; I didn't have to deal with that, but I had other production issues of a nature that would be the same.

Q: Did you find yourself turning to other countries?

HOUGHTON: No, I was interested in the Middle East and I wanted to stay in the Middle East. It kept me involved in the Middle East both political and business circuit here in Washington and maintained my friendships in the Department of State and other US government agencies, and it was a very comfortable, easy thing to do while I was at the same time doing things that nobody else that I knew was doing in the same manner. I felt I had sort of a competitive edge in this. It was helpful in a sense.

Q: You kept up with your curator experience?

HOUGHTON: Well, I write for publication in academic journals, drawing to a great extent on experience that I've had over the course of my academic study at Harvard and also when I was at the Getty Museum. I know how to write an article that will be accepted in an academic journal on a archeological subject, and I can do it fairly quickly and easily. It doesn't matter where the journal is. I just completed one with a colleague that will be included in an Israeli journal that will come out sometime in the next year, and I'm completing a book that will be broadly used in my field of interest, numismatic, ancient numismatic. So I've held onto that, and that's my own particular sort of avocational interest. I'm trying to get the book done. I expect the first part will be actually published – it's under design now – published in about four months, and part two the following year.

Q: While you're on the business side, did you get involved with Israel?

HOUGHTON: No, the Israelis have their own circuit, and I had no special competitive edge in Israel. The Israelis know how to get business done in the United States and are perfectly happy to work with their own preferred channels. It would have been a waste of time for me to go to look into business issues in Israel. The Israelis are very quick on the uptake, and they also are very closely attuned to what quality of standards are and American standards require, so I suppose it would have been interesting to me, all other things being equal, to take a long look at Israel and talk to people there. However, it would have done two things which I would rather have avoided. One is there would have been too much exposure within Israel in a manner that it might have compromised business I was doing outside; and, two, it would have taken more time away from those areas I was interested in.

Q: In the Middle East circuit there's really nowhere. When you're looking at it, Lebanon and Egypt were almost the only production areas, weren't they, the only areas where things could be produced? When you think of Saudi Arabia, they get oil out.

HOUGHTON: Jordan produces certain types of things that might have been compatible

in the United States, but really it was doing more not taking production from those countries and trying to introduce them to the United States as much as trying to find partners that would work with American firms that would potentially improve or increase American markets in that area of the world, Lebanon being a natural sort of jump-off point. Ideally what you'd like to get is an American firm of moderate size looking for an international partner in the Arab Middle East that would have access to Arab markets, Arab Middle Eastern markets, and then work with them to set up, if necessary, production and service facilities in that country from which they could then expand their market share. That's what you'd like to see, and in some cases you could find those kind of things. The Lebanese had a funny way of doing business sometimes that made it difficult to be sure that everything got done the way the prospective American partner firm would want it, but in time you could get people together if you applied yourself.

Q: You stopped doing that when?

HOUGHTON: I stopped doing that a year ago to focus on the book that I'm in the process of completion at the moment. Once I finish that, I've got a very simple decision: Do I write another book or do I go back into business again?

Q: Another chapter. Well, thank you.

End of interview