

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

AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN PIERCE “PANCHO” HUDDLE, JR.

Interviewed by: David Reuther
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Washington, D.C.—Bureau of Intelligence and Research	1975-1977
Political Analyst for Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan	
Vocal advocate against the “durable Shah and stable Iran” myth	
Special Analyst for Lebanon	
Kathmandu, Nepal—Vice Consul	1978-1981
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Officer at Consulate Cebu	
Human rights issues with the church, centered on rightwing killing of the clergy, who were sometimes American citizens	
Mainly worked on visas	
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INTERVIEW

Q: Okay so let me start off. This is the first of July; this is a Foreign Affairs Oral History program interview with Franklin P. Huddle, Jr. This interview is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am David Reuther. Now Pancho let's start off you were born in 1943. Let's start with some background on your parents and your family. What was your father doing?

HUDDLE: In 1943, my father was a graduate student at Brown University and in charge of the Brown News Bureau, a position he used to recommend a new football coach there, a guy named Rick Engle who later had an assistant Joe Paterno -- both later famous at Penn State. Thereafter, my parents moved to Northern Virginia, with papa working for the Munitions Board during the war and then working for various magazines including Kiplinger's, the Atlantic and the New Yorker. Finally, with five children (three sisters followed me by 1949 and son David in 1951), he needed rock-solid income. This meant

working at the Pentagon at a senior civil service position that came out of nowhere when DOD desperately needed a writer literate in science

Q: How did he know something about science?

HUDDLE: Papa had a PhD in Political Science, but was a polymath who became a well-known scientist with a dozen books. He had started out in chemistry at Brown University before dropping out during the Depression. Even now, I now and then get a letter out of the blue saying, "I do so admire your work, it's absolutely visionary." Then I realize the letter has to be re-sent to Franklin Pierce Huddle the elder who died in 1980.

Q: Oh right you are a junior so he's senior.

HUDDLE: Indeed. Franklin Pierce Huddle, Jr. Pancho came about because my mother's family lived part-time in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s. Pancho is the Mexican nickname for Francisco or Frank. It was convenient in that English lacks a nickname for Frank or Franklin.

Q: Now what was your father's background?

HUDDLE: My father came from classic Puritan stock, with one branch (Geer/Griswold) settling in the 1630s in Connecticut and the other branch Mayflowers including allegedly the pilgrim who was drinking and/blaspheming God and fell overboard. Family names run the gamut from Winthrop to Howland, Pierce, and Fenner. None was of particular account other than getting to the United States early. My father's father, David Huddle was an engineer who worked for the celebrated GE genius Steinmetz around 1910. Typhoid took him away in 1919, leaving behind a six-year old son and Eleanor Geer, a widow surviving as a professional musician who wrote the Connecticut State March. Huddle is a German-Swiss name and they came to the U.S. in the 18th Century and settled in the Shenandoah Valley area.

Q: Hum.

HUDDLE: The other side of the family bears out the dictum of French historian Marc Bloch who famously said, "Fields without lords are fields without history and the converse" This part of the family had lords, money and history including even daguerreotypes from the 1840s-1850s. My mother's grandparents were Prussian barons who dropped the Von when they came to the U.S. My great grandfather Von Hotopp reached the States in the 1850s and thereafter literally stirred pots of chemicals in the backyard of a Hoboken NJ house Ultimately, he invented a standard varnish and made millions and sired by one indefatigable spouse, nee Von Kumla, 15 children. After the Civil War he bought Confederate General Jubal Early's house in Charlottesville which came with 600 acres of land. Now it's the city park cum golf course. Next to the 6th hole remains our family graveyard. Sic transit gloria.

One of the Von Hotopp daughters was my adventurous grandmother who traveled around the world solo from about 1900 to 1913 when she met my grandfather George Winfield Scott in Europe where he was a visiting law professor. A half century later, aged 70, she came to live in our new Annandale house and soon thereafter chopped down four oak trees in our front yard to a most impressed group of neighbors. Later, in 1950, she squired little Pancho around the U.S. in style with a chauffeured glass-topped Cadillac and fancy railway Pullman cars. But two years later I, aged nine in 1952, overheard papa hitting her up for a tiny TV to watch Friday night fights which my grandmother adored and the World Series which my father adored to the point of using one week of his annual leave every year to watch some.

She resisted and even as an innocent kid I realized that perhaps the money had finally dwindled to nil. As an avid baseball fan I taught grandma how to score games and two years later came home to a World Series game from school and asked after she said it was a 'shut out', "Well how many hits did the Dodgers get?" She was by then a little vague and mumbled, "there weren't any." "Well how many people got on base?" I asked. Grandma, "No one I think." There was no ESPN, of course, in those days and the next day's newspaper covered the story; the first perfect game in over 30 years and the first ever in a World Series by Yankee pitcher Don Larson.

Her husband George Winfield Scott, my grandfather, came from upstate New York and with adventure DNA as well went out to Stanford in 1893, the year after it opened. He was successful at law and in politics, becoming President Woodrow Wilson's legal advisor in 1917. (Grandpa had headed an advocacy group of Republicans in California for Wilson in 1916. Thereafter, Wilson barely carried California and it was, if you will, the Florida of its day, and as a reward my grandfather was given a White House position.) He had chaired the law schools at the University of Chicago and Penn and taught various other places. Eventually, late in life, he was a pro bono lawyer for Japanese Americans who were put into the infamous camps. This is etched into my cerebral cortex as the Huddle family used to get by railway express crates of exotic fruits including pomegranates from grateful Japanese families in about 1947. Apparently, my grandfather had saved their businesses during World War Two by putting them into various trusts.

Q: Oh, so he was helping the Japanese-Americans...

HUDDLE: That's right.

Q: ...save their property when they were all evacuated.

HUDDLE: He was in his sunset and died before the crates of fruit came on the railway express.

My grandparents in California had two offspring: one, a Naval Officer was on the Nevada at Pearl Harbor but survived; the other, my mother, won a full scholarship to Stanford for the best 12th grader IQ in California. (The state decided one year to test all

high school seniors using the then newly-developed Stanford-Benet IQ test). In the end, because of a misdiagnosed medical condition, she was told to go to the desert for her health.

Q: Well how did they meet then?

HUDDLE: They met at the University of Arizona when my father was in his first of three junior years; he had dropped out of Brown. He had been a track star but gotten injured and lost interest in school. Thereafter, he borrowed his mother's Model T and ran away to Arizona where the car broke down. It was the height of the Depression and he survived day to day, literally being supported by three rich students who needed a fourth player for bridge and editing a humor magazine.

After one of his articles saying that Arizona University female students had short and crooked legs, my mother, irate, stormed into his office and said 'these are not short and crooked". He surveyed her and said, "Well how about a date?" They went out on a date and he only had ten cents which was not enough for both their drinks. In the end, he got a ten cent gin and drank it himself, six months later they went out again, became inseparable, and were secretly married for three years -- in those days you couldn't be married in college.

Eventually they had five offspring and were exceedingly happy together -- save for the fact that they were to die in the wrong order. My father was a workaholic and my mother sort of lived for his work; she was a fantastic editor and could ask all the genius questions when he came home from work but didn't bug him so that was near perfect. Unfortunately, he died early, possibly from beryllium poisoning acquired while working in a chemistry laboratory. She lived on for many years but was never quite the same person after that.

Q: So you were born in Rhode Island so they were up in...

HUDDLE: My father was at Brown for graduate work in '43. Right after my birth they came down to the Washington, D.C. area.

Q: Is Washington where you grew up?

HUDDLE: Northern Virginia was home from 1944 to 1962. At first, we lived in Parkfairfax just down the street from then Congressman Nixon. About 1951, we built our own house out in Annandale, Virginia, with a couple acres of land and serious swimming pool. Cost: \$29,000 all in. It was a glorious place which we sold for no profit in 1960 when I went off to college and my father went out to work for Hughes in Malibu as ultimately the head of Lunar Surveyor Satellite Project.

Q: Then what high school did you go to then?

HUDDLE: Annandale. "The Annandale Atoms, founded in the nuclear age (1953).

Q: So if you worked your way up what elementary school, junior high...

HUDDLE: You didn't have junior high in those days. I went to a private grammar school for four years called Burgundy Farms Country Day School. The one student remembered well is Ambassador Gibson Lanpher who not only went to Brown University as well, but was also my first personnel advisor at State.

Q: So that was a private school?

HUDDLE: That was a private school. In fifth grade, when I was transferred to Annandale public school, they dumped me in fourth grade because the public schools hated the private schools. The segregated public schools in Virginia ran at a much lower standard. Case in point: the first day in class featured a 20-question arithmetic test that the teacher, who had to be called Ma'am, wrote out on the blackboard. Five minutes in, the preacher's son started yelling, "I'm first, I'm first" and dashed to the front of the classroom to hand in his paper. Meanwhile, I had answered the questions as she wrote them but didn't know the bragging drill.

So the next day she again spooled out the questions on the blackboard. As she chalked the last question, I walked up and Humphrey Bogart style said, "I guess I'm first." The day following came my transfer to fifth grade which again, day one, featured a math quiz. This time, it was the monthly contest between the teacher and the students. The students would compete a la King of the Hill to remain at the blackboard. With my better background, I knocked out the students and then the teacher who traditionally would defeat the best student. She cancelled the monthly contest forever.

Ironically though I won a State math prize in high school and had two joint patents (rocket coatings), my only talent was arithmetic/remembering numbers. Enrolled originally in Applied Math, a celebrated department at Brown, I bailed day one after a quick dorm bull session confirmed that my fellow students were harder working, better prepared and smarter. I jumped to liberal arts and never looked back -- and only graduated from Brown with a special waiver because I had failed to take any science courses whatsoever.

Q: Well then after this private Burgundy Farms then you did public school...

HUDDLE: Annandale Elementary School, which was a rough 'n tumble Southern school with the "N" word everywhere and no Blacks. Annandale High School featured fistfights in Wood Shop class, cornholing and rough stuff otherwise. I have one discolored tooth from trying to integrate the high school. Us so-called jocks were using a star Black athlete as bait to integrate the school. I got punched in the mouth by another jock and chipped his teeth on the water cooler. Note: Virginia was, in those days, a poll tax State, with segregated schools and oodles of prejudice against Blacks, Jews, dark foreigners etc.

I went out with a Jewish dancer and didn't realize she was Jewish until people made fun of me. It was that kind of a place.

Q: What were some of your reading interests at seventh, eighth and ninth grade?

HUDDLE: Oh, chemistry. My father took a spare room and turned it into a sizable chemistry laboratory replete with an experimental gas chamber where one could manufacture chemical compounds (salts) and test them for ductility. Out of this came a paper published by the National Bureau of Standards on the Ductility of Halogen Salts. (Note: so-called chemical salts, when in solid form, are not supposed to be ductile. Instead, they are supposed to crack in your hand. In fact, the research showed that photo-sensitive salts like silver nitrate or to a lesser extent bromine nitrate are ductile. Inorganic chemistry was my overwhelming passion till age seventeen when I took up classical piano and gave it the same focus. To this day, I play a couple of hours a day.

When I went to Brown, the music department looked at me as a (second-rate) adult prodigy and suggested playing a Chopin Piano Concerto with the university orchestra. Then and now, my technique has never been good enough. The high point was probably that I taught piano lessons to the dean of discipline's daughter for two bucks an hour (after meeting him for a disciplinary session for having an unloaded World War Two hand grenade in my dorm room).

Q: Well there you go self awareness is part of the game.

HUDDLE: Musical self-awareness can be sobering. Years later I was asked to perform with the Toronto symphony with less than perfect results. (See the Toronto Section for details).

Q: Okay. Hey, let me go back to high school and segregation in Virginia. Had they started that or you were in the middle of that or...?

HUDDLE: No. Annandale High in those days was probably 80 percent the sons and daughters of army lieutenant colonels who worked at Ft. Belvoir or occasionally at the Pentagon. Everyone had done a tour in Germany memorialized with a beer stein on the mantelpiece. Maybe 15 or 20 percent of the students would be described then as Southern Crackers who lived hard and tough. Sign at our nearby gas station: "You Calls We Hauls, Day Or Night, Black Or White. Two decades later, the new Annandale featured a beat up VW microbus parked along Edsall road, with a sign saying, "Gas, Grass, Or Ass, Nobody Rides Free."

Q: Did you have any particularly favorite teachers in high school?

HUDDLE: Mrs. Auerbach in seventh grade and Mrs. Covell in sixth grade. In high school, we bounced around so we didn't have the same closeness after only an hour a day per teacher.

The teacher I probably remember the best was the football and track coach Ed Henry because I ran track and helped keep his star halfback eligible. (Annandale was the State powerhouse in those days -- white players against white players with the Michael Vicks in black schools). The star player, who went on to the Dallas Cowboys, would sit behind me whereupon I would tilt my shoulders to give him a clear shot at my answers. The drill was for him to answer two of the inevitable ten questions differently from my answers so he always got an 80 on the test. Thus passed Algebra II which he needed to attend Virginia Tech as a football star. Again, it was that kind of a place.

Q: You ran track what distance were you running?

HUDDLE: I ran mile and half mile as well as cross country. My father who had been a track star used to take the Chevy out and drive it at a four-minute-mile pace for me to run along behind till I would drop off after a minute or so. No talent.

At Brown I swam in college meets. Initially, I walked on as a soccer goalie to learn that the player ahead of me was locked in -- later he was to be two-time first team all American Division One who carried Brown to the Final Four in the NCAA tournament. Coach Stevenson promised soccer shoes to whomever won the daily wind sprints which I did as a reserve goalie glued to the bench. Seeing my size 13 shoes, he reneged. I headed off to try crew before the swimming season started.

Q: Now you were starting your senior year when the Kennedy-Nixon campaign was in progress. How did people look at that?

HUDDLE: That one is interesting in that papa was one of Adlai Stevenson's speech writers in '52 and wrote speeches for Kefauver who regularly came out to the house until 1956. Yet, papa was a New England Republican and no fan of the Boston political machine including the Kennedys. I was a nominal liberal though as an Eagle Scout I had marched in Eisenhower's 1957 Inaugural Parade. For me, a far greater issue than the Kennedy-Nixon election was actually the Berlin crisis because of my summer job in a high tech lab where the scientists were talking about nuclear war and being sent to Berlin as Army reservists.

Q: Out of high school I guess you had pretty good grades, you had an athlete career.

HUDDLE: I was about 12th in a class of 350 -- and couldn't get into Brown with my record these days. Episodically lazy and fun loving, I'd come home to shoot hoops or play touch football, catch My Little Margie, entomb myself in my boy cave to listen to the Washington Senators game (invariably a loss), watch Sergeant Bilko, and wrap up with a bit more basketball at sunset. Never did a lick of homework till Brown where I got serious and became a top student.

Q: What was Brown like? I mean your father was associated with it but...

HUDDLE: I loved Brown which in those days was the "fallback" school for applicants who couldn't get into Harvard, Yale or Princeton. Since then, a sea change, with Brown a coveted place. Then and now, it melded great teachers with a warm, small city vibe. A celebrated Hungarian musicologist (the Bartok Quartets were dedicated to his father) Ivan Waldbauer and his wife taught me piano and became fantastic mentors who invited me over Friday nights to play bridge.

Q: Now what kind of a program...what was Brown on at that time? Was it a trimester or quarters this time?

HUDDLE: No it was the classic two semesters per year and four courses per semester. I majored in linguistics and took Arabic and went to Wales on a Ford Foundation Grant one summer to study bilingualism.

Q: Where does the interest in linguistics come from?

HUDDLE: Out of left field. I was decent at languages and worked like a Trojan on Greek, Latin and German. I really didn't know what to do. After Brown, I was a University Fellow in Linguistics at Columbia but dropped out after one year for Peace Corps Libya training.

Q: Now while you were in college there were a number of things going on in the real world in '62 during the start of your sophomore year James Meredith went to Ole Miss. This Civil Rights movement in the South was coming to the fore. Did any of that hit the campus or come to your notice?

HUDDLE: Number one would have been Kennedy's assassination which, like Pearl Harbor or 9/11, is an indelible memory for those alive at the time. My peers saw me as hard-on about Civil Rights on occasion. Story: picture this, four students are seated at Brown's dining hall table for dinner and a black friend happened to be busing dishes and cleaning tables. (We most all had jobs if we came from public high schools).

One of the four, a student from Memphis, took his half-finished food plate and dumped it on the floor and said, "Here boy you can clean this up too." My friend was silent but furious, with a solid set of forearms. He stood transfixed. The Memphis guy then turned to us three for approbation and support. We looked at him with daggers in the air, i.e., if he punches you in the mouth, we are just going to be sitting here enjoying the moment. The Black student finally said, "Clean it up, pick it up." The Memphis guy coughed up a laugh, ha ha ha, and turned to us one last time for support and we just gave him more stony silence.

In the end, Mr. Memphis got down there and cleaned it up and then looked around to us and we continued to give him no backing. I remember that story as if it were yesterday. Unfortunately, that was the kind of thing that went on all too much in those days. I was

refused service once as a Virginia teenager because I tanned deeply when running track in the summer.

Q: What were some of the better classes you thought at Brown for teachers perhaps?

HUDDLE: Medieval history stands out as an obscure subject made unbelievably interesting. Musicology with Ivan Waldbauer was great. There are, of course, many others.

Q: Now what were you doing between years in the summers?

HUDDLE: The first summer I came out to California because we had just moved out there. No job because I couldn't find work. Instead, I studied Latin during the day and evenings swam for hours at a local pool. The second, third and fourth years I went to Europe, the first year on my own dime and then on a Ford Foundation grant in Welsh. The last year I cashed out stock in the small high tech company where I had worked in high school and headed off to Europe and almost to the Iranian border. Alas, my mother asked me a year later, "I hope you still have that stock." I said, "Well actually no, I sold it to go to Europe." She said, "Well that's too bad because it went up 35 times last year." It was the greatest single gainer in the whole market.

Q: The Ford Foundation thing was to study Welsh?

HUDDLE: It was to study Welsh-English bilingualism in Wales.

Q: How did you get this opportunity?

HUDDLE: Professor Francis, my linguistics advisor, asked out of the blue one afternoon "can you pronounce the double L like in Lloyd or Lhasa?" I gave it a try. (It is a weird hissing sound). "Hey, you can do it wow." So he wrote me up for a Ford Foundation grant on the spot.

Later, he and another professor put me in for a Rhodes Scholarship. Ultimately, however, the awards went elsewhere. Memorably, the judges were tripping over themselves trying to get an autograph of one of the competitors, a certain Bill Bradley. Bill may not have had the very best grades but he had already been the subject of the New Yorker profile while still in high school and was Mr. College Basketball. In those days especially, Rhodes went to star athletes.

Q: Goodness.

Well you've come to the end of Brown let's see you graduated June '65.

HUDDLE: Yep and then I went to Europe and headed East on a transformational trip to the Orient. A Welsh girl and I hitched a ride to Vienna and then rode the old Oriental

Express to Istanbul. Thereafter, I headed solo to the Iranian border on a Turkish train to Erzurum. En route, I discovered my money stash/traveler checks were missing -- pilfered by a roomie in a group hotel just before I checked out. With only a passport and two bucks I was close to a 1000 miles from Istanbul and the nearest AMEX office. It took 48 hours to get back. The Turks on the train gave me piles of grapes but the water left me sick -- eventually I went from 200 pounds to 158. Of necessity, I hitched back up to Sweden, Wales and London for the flight home.

In those days you could bum rides everywhere. When in Wales in 1964, I wrapped up my studies early and flew back to the East Coast and hitched home to my parents in California. I showed up at one o'clock at night with Armand Brazil, an old dispirited gold miner who had given me a ride all the way from St. Louis, fueled by 38 cups of coffee.

As we careened down the mountains just east of Barstow, California, Armand said, "You know kid I could kill us both if I turned the wheel." I replied with studied calmness, drawing on the so-called 'role of hope' in psychology, "Listen, we're only a half an hour away from a good meal and a hot cup of coffee and maybe a Scotch in Barstow."

Hitching, otherwise, was great in those days -- I never waited longer than an hour in doing about 25,000 miles in Europe and the States. Used to carry signs made in the Brown University sign shop, saying "Home to Mother" or "I Know a Thousand Joke ". The escapism of youth..

Q: What were you satisfying with this?

HUDDLE: Oh wanderlust, escapism and financial sustenance. See the world on a dime.

Q: By '65 and what not Viet Nam is coming to people's attention.

HUDDLE: Fall '65 found me at Columbia and taking music lessons via a Manhattan School of Music teacher. War overtones front and center, with arguments in classrooms and arguments outside. American Nazis also marching near the Campus, with George Lincoln Rockwell leading the way and us protestors on the other side of police lines. (When I reported this to my mother, she responded "well you once danced with him". Turned out that Rockwell was at Brown and attended a party where my graduate father and pregnant wife were chaperones. She had indeed danced with him, carrying me along".

If truth be told, at Columbia probably the most practical impact of the 'Nam War' was that graduate students had to take the so-called War Boards (vice College Boards. If you aced the test, you had a much lower level of eligibility for Vietnam. This only delayed the inevitable -- an immediate induction draft notice came to my parent's house in California on Christmas Eve of '65. (The original notice had gone to an old address and not been answered, leaving the system angry.)

In the meantime, I had taken the test for Peace Corps and entered training in June of 1966 -- Trenton and then Princeton. In Trenton, the Peace Corps physical exam line was melded into Vietnam examinees. An examiner looked at my super flat feet and pulled me out saying, "You're out." I said, "Hey, I'm going to Peace Corps" and he said, "Okay for Peace Corps I guess". Sharpest memory of the test: the guy just in front of me who was built like a brick minaret, 5 feet 8 inches, 200 pounds, rock-solid. Because the person measuring height was simultaneously reading the scale, the guy deftly dipped his knees to come in at 5'6" and 200 pounds. Out on obesity. We were laughing as we walked out of the room. Off to the Peace Corps and eventually off to Camp Leghorn Italy for another draft physical (see later).

Q: But now let me get this straight. So you graduated from Brown, you took this European trip so what are you doing...

HUDDLE: After Brown, I did a year at Columbia starting in 1965 fall.

Q: Okay.

HUDDLE: To recap, after a year at Columbia, in '66 June I joined Peace Corps Training at Harvard for a program in Ethiopia. A week in, they sought volunteers for the first Arab world program (Libya) and grabbed me because I had studied Egyptian Arabic at Brown. Ultimately, Libya cut back the program and four of us trainees were transferred to Tunisia. The other three spoke fluent French, the language of Tunisia's school system; my Arabic was deemed good enough to conduct classes (teaching English) in Arabic.

The Tunisian Peace Corps Director had a tin ear for language politics. Despite warnings, he assigned me to Medenine, a hotbed of anti-government/pro-Egyptian/Libyan sentiments where my Egyptian-Libyan Arabic accent literally confirmed me as an Egyptian spy. Moreover, it was against Tunisian government rules to teach in Arabic rather than French. For good measure, the week I arrived, Egypt and Tunisia broke relations over Nassir's meddling in Medenine.

It was surreal. Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, dozens and even hundreds of people would follow me downtown. Never could pay for a meal. (Pomegranates and camel head soup brought my weight from 195 to 155). Soon thereafter, the principal took away my classes saying in Arabic -- "you are a spy from the spies of Egypt". He was a Francophile and I was the Arabist enemy. Cue the laugh track.

Peace Corps was apologetic. I was ready to try something else, with \$25 in my pocket and a ticket back to DC. For two months, I job-hunted while sleeping on a coach in a lower east-side apartment of a lead rock guitarist, the son of my father's best friend. The fly in the ointment was his active social life that forced me onto NYC subways to sleep every time a girl came over.

Eventually, in November of '66, I landed a job teaching English in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Thirteen months of fanaticism hell. We used to say it was like being in a Mexican prison except there were no drugs or women; The first week we arrived, we were told to watch a public execution downtown where they poked the misfortunate in the back with a broomstick so he straightened up as the executioner swung a double-edged sword.

Q: What kind of an English teaching gig was this? This wasn't Peace Corps then it was some private arrangement?

HUDDLE: It was a Raytheon subcontractor called the Institute of Modern Languages. The students were Bedouins dragooned off the oases to become mechanics for a Hawk missile project. The students had vintage village charm but low aptitude.

Q: So you were there from...

HUDDLE: 1966-1967. We had a second-row seat for the Six Day War with Israel where the Egyptians were driven back to the Suez. Americans on the economy were the nearest target for Arab anger. For several weeks, I had 50 feet of heavy-duty clothesline tied to the toilet pipe in my fourth floor room as an emergency escape from mobs.

Q: So when did you leave Jeddah?

HUDDLE: December 19, 1967 as one of five passengers on a 707 going to Beirut. I was shell-shocked as evidenced by my deflection of the stewardess's suggestion that we go out for a night on the town in Beirut. In fact, I hadn't talked to a local woman for a year other than one beggar who asked for baksheesh.

The only other woman with whom I had had an encounter with walked past me in an isolated backstreet at dusk. In passing, she had pulled up her robes. She was full-bore nude. She walked on. My eyes bugged out. Jeddah was a wild place in those days. There were stacks of thousand dollar bills in the markets, bills you never saw anywhere else in the world.

Q: You were exiting through Beirut.

HUDDLE: From Jeddah, in December of 1967, I headed off to Europe to pick up a VW Beetle in Munich. Ultimately, I drove to Ankara and then flew PanAm One to Teheran, Kabul, Rangoon and Bangkok. The trip had a rocky start when I overslept in a downtown Tehran hotel and woke up with only 35 minutes before a 0415 flight to Kabul Racing out of the German Hotel (three bucks a night), I flagged a sleek black Mercedes and said in Farsi "airport, step on it. " As we neared Tehran Airport, I checked the meter while opening my wallet. No meter. "Where's your meter", I asked. He answered, "I'm not a taxi, I was just out for a joy ride." He wouldn't take money. I sprinted inside to the PanAm counter where the check-in woman barked, "Gate Two, run, carry your suitcase." I sprinted up the gangway and the door shut behind me.

Kabul on February 1, 1968 was one below zero. A quick trip to the bazaar got me \$700 in Indian Rupees, at a far better rate than India's official exchange offered. Flew east to Amritsar where it was 61 degrees. The sallow lanky Sikh at customs queried, "Well you will need some money, you don't have any money." I said, "Oh no, my friends will help me out." "No, I think you need to change some money." Well the third time he asked, I realized the message was "change some money directly with the Sikh at the inflated legal rate or bend over for the bullet-nose flashlight." My \$10 became 70 Rupees instead of 110 one got unofficially in the market. Welcome to India.

Q: Where did you go from India? How long did you stay in India?

HUDDLE: In Amritsar, my Indian friends from the plane and I stayed in the Deluxe Hotel at 4 Rupees a night. There was a bird nesting in the room and in the morning somebody walked into the room to hawk the Indian Express. I bought a copy.

From Amritsar I went down to Delhi for about a week and then went up to then ultra-exotic, fairy-land beautiful Kathmandu. After a short trek into the Himalayas, I flew via Calcutta and Rangoon, just short stops, to Bangkok which was paradise filled with Saudis trying to live the life their country forbade. I was world-class naïve. I remember there were all these absolutely beautiful looking girls with these ordinary GIs on R&R from the 'Nam. I couldn't for the life of me figure out why they were with these American dogfaces. I was quite naïve.

Q: Yes, by then this would be '68?

HUDDLE: '68, February 16. I'm guessing but I'm pretty sure of the date. At that time of my life I can remember dates day after day almost exactly. Now, if you ask me what I had for breakfast I'm not sure.

Q: So what did you do after February '68?

HUDDLE: Well,

Q: Let some other events in here. By then Tet was going on in Vietnam were you in your travels aware of this kind of event?

HUDDLE: Sure, I read the Herald Tribune and Bangkok had tides of GIs. We Peace Corps types stayed in the Viang Thai Hotel, in its no-AC annex for bucks-down civilians. Nice hardwood floors, spic-and-span clean. Talking to the military in the main AC'd lobby was a revelation -- one story that I loved involved their getting stoned every Friday night and then shooting 50 caliber machine gun rounds at the moon. I shared my draft exam story and they shared theirs.

Flashback: In summer of 1967, while in Saudi, I'd been summoned for a draft physical in Livorno, Italy. Billed as an extensive mental and moral exam, it comprised 50 questions: sometimes I look at my pee, sometimes my urine is green, I love my mother, I love my father. You get the picture.

A doctor's exam followed and I was in prime failure mode. My feet were hurting because I had been jumping up and down in the hotel room to make sure they were really flat. Dr. Holmes looked at my feet and said, "Third degree plus plenus, you're out." "You are missing a chance of a lifetime...people are dying to go to Vietnam". The capstone came the next day at the ophthalmologists who began by asking "How did you do yesterday?" I responded, "failed." He said, "good because I'm an Italian Communist. I don't know why the Americans hire me but I fail everyone I can." Another MASH excerpt.

Q: So what happens after this trip through February?

HUDDLE: Well, that trip proved an epiphany. I returned through India to Kabul and flew off with another American to Soviet Central Asia, Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and ultimately to Georgia and Armenia. A world-class inoculation against the USSR and communism. Case in point: in Tbilisi, my friend and I wanted to go to the opera for La Traviata. The Intourist agent discouraged this, saying "You can't get a seat to the opera. It is all full; we love culture in the Soviet Union." So we went there real early, the place was empty. No one asked for tickets. We plumped ourselves down front and center. Within five or ten minutes two beautiful English-speaking young ladies sat down right behind us. The KGB knew its stuff.

The next night we wanted to go to a basketball game and the Intourist woman said, "Americanskaya igra, American game, you won't have any trouble getting tickets." So we went to the arena. In fact, totally sold out. With my friend 6'4 and me 6'2", we strode through the players entrance, walked onto the court in front of 12,000 spectators, and clambered up into the stands where there were three empty special padded seats on either side of a uniformed USSR General (Big red star right out of Dr. Zhivago). We, in jeans, bracketed him and started, sort Belushi/Aykroyd style, Blues Brothers, talking back and forth to each other as if the general weren't there... "Well general how are you treating the proletariat these days?" After about 30 seconds the usher came up and with gestures indicated that we could sit anywhere, even in the fire exit, but NOT next to the general."

We headed for Yerevan Armenia and then via a sealed on the outside train to Julfa on the Iranian border. Iran was a breath of fresh air; likewise Turkey, where I picked up my car at the airport and drove back to Bremen to ship the VW to Baltimore.

Thereafter, I helped direct an Arabic Program for Peace Corps Libya (second iteration) before heading off to graduate school in History and Near Eastern Studies

Q: Cool. So then September '68 you started an MA/PHD program at Harvard?

HUDDLE: Yes. Thanks to Richard Pipes and Joseph Fletcher who liked my midterm exam, I got a six-year full fellowship. For a couple of years, I was on their fast track to be a professor but came a cropper over politics. Around 1970 I briefly headed the Graduate Student Teachers Union which struck Harvard for higher wages. Alas, Pipes was visible one evening on the other side of the barricades. He glared at me. Thereafter, instead of a future at Harvard, he would allude to opportunities in the world outside of academia.

To buff up my scholarship, I taught Frosh English. One student was Bill Gates. No, I didn't buy the stock.

In the end I never applied to anywhere to teach except for a phone call to UH Hilo as a goof. The administrator laughed and said, "We don't have any vacancies but you're the kind of guy that we want."

Q: I'm sure. Now the MA program is in Middle East studies. How did you decide on that?

HUDDLE: Well I'd been in the Middle East and had Arabic. I applied to Princeton, Chicago and Harvard doctoral programs that formally start out with an MA in Middle Eastern Studies. Unless you were a bad student, one slid into the doctorate program. In my case I didn't even realize I had an MA for two years because the Arabic teacher had failed me over a technicality. Two years later Harvard phoned to ask, "Are you going to pick up your degree or not?" I said, "What degree?" And they said, "Well you passed in Persian." I said, "I don't remember taking a Persian exam." They said, "Yeah but the guy passed you, he dislikes the Arabic teacher." Welcome to academics.

Q: So you start out in this program in '68 that next summer then did you do anything particular? I mean you have a full fellowship."

HUDDLE: The summer of 1969 I went back to Peace Corps Libya training, for another round as Arabic coordinator..

Q: For the Peace Corps in Libya?

HUDDLE: Yes. The summer following, 1970, a friend and I flew to Europe and then overland to Kathmandu on the hashish trail swarming with world travelers. We hitchhiked or local bussed all the way to Kathmandu and back. Thereafter, I took off the better part of a year to write Let's Go Europe, work for National Geographic on spec, and do various writing jobs. Seventeen Magazine -- "Your first trip to Europe". "Youth Hostels, Surly to Bed and Surly to rise." Stuff like that.

Q: Excellent. So now you are doing all these other things and trying to think of a PhD thesis?

HUDDLE: Yes. Ultimately it was on "Cotton and the Economic Transformation of Russian Central Asia" where over a half century, the region went from a traditional village economy, to a classic large-farm cotton belt growing for the cloth mills of St. Petersburg to collective farming. The key was showing how this changed the life and the economy of individual villages and farmers.

Q: Well let's get to that point of 1974. You joined the Foreign Service then but what I want to ask is when did you take the Foreign Service exam?

HUDDLE: If allowed, the three-minute answer instead of one minute.

Q: Absolutely.

HUDDLE: I took the exam in Jeddah way back in '66 December at the end of a grueling work day. It ran from four in the afternoon to eleven at night, with a break for a memorable spaghetti dinner prepared by the FSO's wife. (The exam was at his house). I passed and took the oral in 1968 when finally back in the States. The oral went fine till they asked for comments on Vietnam. I ventured, "we should just declare victory, wrap it up and move on." Alas, one of the three examiners had been Consul General Hue.

It was as if a snake had been thrown on the table. The conversation juttered to a halt and the next question was, "What do you think about the concept of liquid gold in reference to Yugoslavia and the International Monetary Fund policy?" Thereafter, the questions got harder. At the end, one examiner observed, "You are very articulate Mr. Huddle but we think you need more seasoning." In other words, Pancho wasn't deemed Cords material or whatever. The feeling was mutual.

Under pressure from my girl friend who wanted me to get a straight job, I retook the exams. My oral was in '73, a time when State thirsted for junior Arabists because after the '67 war, we lacked relations with almost all Arab countries. State literally had no junior officers with Arabic, my best language at the time. The fix was in. Sample questions: "What do you think about Weimar Germany? Tell us a little bit about the Peace Corps and your experiences". Questions started soft and got easier. They left the room for about two minutes and reappeared with three right hands extended saying, "Congratulations you passed."

So I was a grad student in utopia Cambridge, with a full scholarship, a girlfriend, soft life and minimal readiness for a nine-to-five life. Hence, time to stall the Foreign Service till my exam eligibility ran out. Finally in June of 1974 came the A 100 course.

At the end of A100, personnel offered three jobs -- Damascus as the sole political officer, long-term Arabic training to get a 4/4 or Iraq desk officer. I said, "how about six months more to finish off my PhD thesis." I got the six months; I drove out across the U.S. almost non-stop, running away from the bureaucratic world. I was Foreign Serviced out, it wasn't my style (I work now for Special Forces and prefer that), and there was a certain

kind of stuffiness about it for which I wasn't ready. First names that sounded like last names; absorption with placement of specialized forks etc.

I remember day one at State. Lunch time. As I paid the cashier, a swatch of leftover food stamps from Harvard (grad students got them by income level) fell out of my suit pocket. Not one of the Foreign Servicemen nearby recognized what they were but both Black cashiers laughed and said, "Hey Honkey, what are you doing with food stamps?"

With six months of leave without pay, I was now to enter the Foreign Service world again, with personnel counselor Gibson (Gib) Lanpher having artfully arranged an Izmir assignment via an abbreviated course in Turkish. The deal was that Huddle could catch up because of a perfect score on the language aptitude test.

Flash ahead. Two weeks before the six months were up, I phoned Gib and asked for six more months." I was a head case. Gib got tough, "Make up your mind either you are in or you are not." I said, "okay. I'm out as the PhD needs to be finished." A week later he called back and said, "Hey listen I have another job for you six months from now. You will be Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan analyst in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. They like the Harvard PhD with an Iran/Afghanistan background, it's a GS-15 slot. Are you in?" "Yes". He saved my career and in I came summer of '75.

Q: So that was when you started with INR in '75? Okay because the biographic register has some different dates but obviously they...

HUDDLE: They mis-list as June of '74. The confusion comes from the fact that I took almost four years of leave without pay, including a year at the beginning. No one else got this pass which came about partly because of a genius boss in Kathmandu, DCM, later Ambassador, Richard Boehm. He said, "ask for leave With pay". Personnel will deny this request but it will make a leave without pay application far more credible. (Only about ten percent were approved).

Q: Let me go back to the A100 class because that's the start of the process and what I want to ask you about is your impression...given all the travel you've done and whatnot I want to talk about your impression of the other people in this room, the other people in the A100? Does anybody particularly stand out to you or well you are saying they all looked kind of stuffy?

HUDDLE: Actually our class was low on stuffed shirts and high on adventure. Four or five of us had been in the Peace Corps including later Ambassadors Wiedemann and Hull. Charles Redman had gone to the AF Academy and risen to Captain so he was far better prepared to do serious government work right away. He and I were the captains of Team A and Team B when we did war games. He nuked us -- the liberals who had disarmed prematurely. (The strategy called for the winner to be whoever had the fewest weapons at the end UNLESS one side preempted with a nuclear strike).

Q: Uh huh.

HUDDLE: I decided early on not to care about winning or losing. The key to make a better impression with my A 100 fellows rather than play Dr. Strangelove. Redman was much more savvy than I was said, "Naw, hell I'll just nuke them because I know how Huddle's mind works."

One element was State's hypocrisy re drugs which were the bread and butter of university life after about 1968. We were talking about marijuana one day and sharing our answers to the security interviewers vetting our clearances. The Blacks and women had all told the truth; pale males lied as needed.

Q: How many Blacks and women did you have in your class?

HUDDLE: Half dozen or so.

Q: In general sort of the off hours did the group get together, socialize?

HUDDLE: Yes, we would meet socially, go out for lunches and stuff. I dated one woman from the USIS class, a wonderful person who later became Ambassador to Nicaragua and died tragically of pancreatic cancer. They melded our class with the USIS class about four-fifths through and then we did an off-site at Harper's Ferry and that certainly ratcheted up the bonding. Before that we sat in classrooms from nine-to-five and went our separate ways after work.

Q: Also, at the time that you joined people had to declare a cone. You declared the political...

HUDDLE: Yes, I had come in as the political cone and to be honest with you I hadn't paid much attention to it but the political cone in those days was a bit Orwellian. All diplomats are equal but political officers are more equal, the more so for those with ambassadorial dreams.

Q: Would you say that somebody particularly stood out in the class where everybody thought hum that guy is going to go and do well?

HUDDLE: Chuck Redman stood out for polish, brains, and poise. We weren't on the same wavelength but I knew he was going to do well no matter where he was. Our class actually had six or seven future ambassadors but some seemed luck of the draw. In any case, as an outlier, the skills one needed in government (Process before Substance!) were beyond me.

Our training included the first, trial stage in-box test. We guinea pigs got about two-thirds through the in-box only to come upon a piece of paper that said the vice president of the

concerned company is ripping the company off and screwing his secretary or whatever. Anyway, it undid all the work that you had done up to that point. The upshot: low scores.

In fact, it was a less than realistic exercise. One seldom comes into a job so cold as to need first to leaf through mammoth in-boxes for a time-bomb buried near the bottom. Someone will brief on key pending issues. We saw the test makers as gigantic dwarfs -- however clever, their exam poorly replicated the real world.

Q: Well along those lines what did you think of the A100 instruction?

HUDDLE: Our course and our lead instructor were first rate. But I was cynical and almost ready from day one to move on to something else. My publishing contacts might have paid for one of those CIA kiss-and-tell books about the Farm. Yet, the quality A 100 course altered my perspective. The magic moment was when the Junior Officer Personnel Advisor Gibson Lanpher came in for a world-class talk.

He made one observation that was pure gold. Light bulbs went on around the room when he said, "You know this is an organization where you change languages, locations, houses, duties and above all BOSSES every two or three years and yet you get credit for working towards that gold watch for 20 years in the same company. There are precious few jobs like this." And the light bulb went on to stay on

Q: That's a good observation, yes.

HUDDLE: Pure gold. Encapsulated my youthful sense of escapism with my middle-age desire for deferred reward. In those days, over 90 percent of FSOs did 20 years or more -- an astounding figure, the more so given their high talent levels and the fact that they really don't really know what their job is about until they start.

Q: Ah ha, ah ha. Let's see. Were your parents alive when you joined the Foreign Service and what did they think of this?

HUDDLE: Yes. They liked the career and the stability it implied. They were not privy to the bad sides of the Foreign Service, such as its infamous, ever changing but seldom improving evaluation systems.

Q: Right.

HUDDLE: As a WAE Senior Inspector for five years, I have seen lots of Inspector Efficiency Reports (IERs) and view them as incomparably better than our regular State reports which many senior officers draft themselves for their overburdened bosses to sign. My last three promotions came directly from IERs written by visiting Ambassadors who inspected my posts. Conversely, my two so-so State reports came from bosses who never rose to the top and were disgruntled. One even pitched me 20 years later for help in getting an Ambassadorship.

Alas, the IG has discarded IERs because the personnel system at State demanded unrealistic documentation for faults. There are no metrics to sort out poor management styles and no way to both 'legally' document abuses while fully protecting vulnerable sources.

Q: Hum. What makes a good boss? What makes a boss that doesn't work well in these environments?

HUDDLE: Well, I have worked for Special Forces for the last four years and now view their promotion system as superior to State's. One reason is that the military system requires bosses to rank only so many subordinates above center mass and only so many below -- and pull no punches. Also they know how to lead and to manage down while FSOs favor managing up and eschewing leadership which always leaves those below vulnerable to critics. We inspectors routinely saw incompetent managers who always shucked off the blame on others. All too often, they had served as Special Assistants to DC big shots and then were levered into DCM or Ambassador assignments. Had they been in military they wouldn't have gotten from second to first lieutenant.

Q: Did you go through the consular training that they give in the A100 course?

HUDDLE: You know I think we had some kind of Cliff Notes Consular Introduction during the A 100 course. Later, I had about three weeks of consular training before going to Nepal as Vice Consul in 1978.

Q: When did you actually start work at State?

HUDDLE: July 1975 on the Department's top-brass 7th floor where the name plates on the doors suggested that most everybody's first names were last names, i.e. Outerbridge, Welles, Winston. Franklin Pierce Huddle Jr. fit right in. The Pancho was then a liability -- sometimes on the phone, officers would compliment my English.

We were housed on the top floor so as to assure security for our sensitive documents. Later, we were shunted to the fifth floor after a bureaucratic duel and decades later to a more secure area in State's bowels.

Month one's highlight (and lowlight) was an invite for lunch from Kissinger's right hand man Winston Lord. The guest list featured seven Assistant Secretaries and green FSO Huddle. A chance for discovery or ruin. In the end, a high fever from one of State's overseas infections felled me that week and Med sent me home in a wheelchair.

Besumingly, my boss who managed hard up the ladder had spotted the invite on my desk and grumped "You know I should be going to this instead of you. I don't know why you would get this sort of invite." I said, "Well o.k., I don't really want to go to this social event. I'll feel out of place." Years later I surmised that my father had stage-managed the

invitation because he knew Lord and Kissinger through fights over my father's legislation mandating a Science Cone for State. (At a gala reception that year, Kissinger toasted Dr. Huddle for his vision and his having outfoxed him on the Hill.)

Boss aside, the job was rewarding in that I had unparalleled files on three volatile countries that now likely have 25 analysts. Bhutto in Pakistan was in charge but to be hanged within two years. Daoud in Afghanistan lasted longer only to be shot after all of his family was executed in front of him. The Shah (whose cancer was documented in our files but not acknowledged to be sick by our policymakers) was close to the end.

While Afghanistan and Pakistan were then third and second tier countries, Iran was front and center buying immense amounts of arms/planes from Grumman etc. that effectively balanced off our oil purchases. Both the Ford and Carter administrations averted their eyes from the sources of instability in Iran and disliked the reporting from the Agency and from our shop, INR, (Intelligence and Research), which again and again warned Iran was unstable and likely to fall apart in a couple of years.

Early on, I drafted a memo on this time bomb to then INR jefe Hyland, supposedly to pass to Kissinger. The first four and a half pages dilated on why (and when) Iran would fall apart. The final half page was a tad of optimism as a sweetener for the hire-ups. A day later, Hyland sent it back with a thick blue line slashing out all but the last half page. A big blue felt-tip arrow said "Start here".

Heads up above were ever down in the sand. I had a 1976 letter from Richard Helms that said, "While I do not want to nitpick Dr. Huddle I would like to know why he thinks Iran is likely to fall apart in two years. " In that case, my sense of humor prompted a non-starter draft response to Helms via Assistant Secretary Saunders (replaced Hyland when Carter came in) saying "Dear Ambassador, some idiot has written to me in your name and I thought for security reasons, you should know about it". Saunders laughed and had me do the needful.

The durable Shah and stable Iran myth went on and on. It started with our military sales office in Tehran and the embassy itself was in almost a conspiracy mode with the Ambassador and DCM leading the way. Exceptions were Political Officer Escudero (later an Ambassador) and Vic Tomseth in Shiraz (later an Ambassador). Most everybody got great efficiency reports from the Front Officer as a quasi-payoff.

When I went for a TDY visit, the DCM reportedly ordered up the "soviet visitor" treatment. My appointments dribbled me all over sprawling Teheran -- an hour to the military base where the slide deck started "Iran is vast" and went on in dingdong school mode. I was carefully walled off from most anything of substance because they didn't want INR in the game. Said otherwise, INR and the CIA were well aware of the problems in Iran and both of them were muzzled by a very effective ambassador Helms who knew how to play the game.

The job was a real eye opener. I would get memos that said so and so died subsequent to the effects of his interrogation by SAVAK (CIA-trained) and so on. Eventually I compiled a clumpette of these and sent them up to a higher floor saying, "I think you ought to know about these lest you be caught in an embarrassing denial of their existence." The point was to undercut their deniability of what was going on.

On a personal note, I had a returned junior consular officer who came in in tears to tell a shocking story about a junior Agency case officer who could pass for Iranian by appearance. One morning, he and our best consular local employee (known as FSNs) were getting into a car together to go to a meeting in downtown Tehran. Suddenly, members of the terrorist Mujahideen e-Khalq (who has already killed three Air force personnel) started to shoot the Iranian FSN who shouted in Farsi, "No, no it's the other guy, the CIA officer, you are supposed to kill, not me. I'm your man on the inside." Ergo: the senior, most respected FSN was actually a Muslim terrorist on the inside. I have story after story like that and could fill your tape with Embassy Teheran missteps. (The pol/mil officer in the sack with a Foreign Ministry employee, etc.) I used to say I'm a second rater but this is a third rate operation so I stand out as a decent employee.

There simply wasn't any honor in the reporting process. Everything that was not what they wanted was muzzled. No star at process I didn't understand the game well enough to devise work-arounds to get papers read by those who counted. Of course, when you are at the bottom, the layers above have to carry the ball effectively. Ultimately, in 1980, there was the major flap about the intelligence failure and why otherwise we lost Iran. In classic USSR style, outsiders came to INR and took away (never to be seen again) our files that documented well the 'muzzling' by those at the very top of the USG. I had tried to save my letter from Helms, but it was confidential and I played by the rules.

Speaking of lack of honor, let me digress to my three month break as Special Analyst for Lebanon, closeted in a small room with all the secret squirrel reporting. While in INR as analyst for Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (one person in those semi-somnolent days), I was seconded as Lebanon Analyst for several months in the summer of 1976. I had Arabic and PhD credentials soon-to-be in the area and was happy for the overtime as a poor junior officer -- I worked from 8am to 8pm every day, mostly reading NSA materials and digesting the same for Assistant Secretary Atherton each evening.

One fine mid-June 1976 day, an EXDIS (limited distribution) cable went out from Kissinger to our Ambassador in Beirut, Meloy, two months on the job. It was a paragraph or two at most. It said "we gave you an armored car so go cross the Green Line and do your job etc. etc.". The next morning, Beirut time, Meloy and emboff and driver crossed the Green Line to be captured and killed.

OK. So what, just bad luck for Kissinger and Company who drafted the message. But the worst part came that afternoon when staffers from S came down to the NEA bureau to collect all copies of the EXDIS message in question. As it turns out, a coworker decided to keep his and/or forward the gist to the Washington Post's celebrated columnist Jack

Anderson. A day or two later Jack Anderson ran the story, albeit without the damning fact that State's Front Office had tried to claw back all copies of the message.

Some weeks later, I actually spied Anderson at a social and asked why he had cut out the most damning part of the story -- the effort to recall all copies of the damning EXDIS cable leading to the assassination of Ambassador Meloy. He smiled and said "oh, Larry Eagleberger, (Kissinger's right-hand man) begged me to bury that part of the story and we did so, in exchange for a leak on another story that we were then working on.

And still in digression mode, my Lebanon job was flavored with an accidental meeting with Prime Minister Begin just inside the diplomatic entrance to the Department of State on C Street. Inexplicably, he was alone and surveying the scene with darting eyes and intense energy (from a small body). For whatever reason, I struck up a brief conversation and in the context of Lebanon goings-on asked how he handled his background as a terrorist operative (Stern-Irgun etc.). Begin shot back, "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" and continued the conversation on Lebanon without missing a beat.

Q: Going back to the Agency in Iran. They would have good relations with SAVAK as that's our liaison.

HUDDLE: The intel world is byzantine. While agency employees trained SAVAK, many top officers like George Cave rued the fact that they had trained what turned out to be a monster.

Q: Now how long were you in that chair?

HUDDLE: I had that job for two years but took off two months in spring of 1977 to put the final touches on my PhD dissertation. While I was away, incoming Ambassador to Teheran, Wild Bill Sullivan, came by my office and noticed the nameplate. He asked "Is that Franklin Pierce Huddle's son?" He had taken English at Brown with my father, in a class that included Ambassador Pickering (not the Undersecretary Pickering), the famous Sovietologist Adam Ulam, journalist Irving R. Levine among others.

Q: Were you gone by the time Bhutto was overthrown

HUDDLE: Oh no I was still there but already clearing out the desk. His execution came later. While TDY in Pakistan (right after Teheran), I dined at the manse of a politically prominent Lahore family whose son had been murdered at Bhutto's instance and served as the casus for his trial.

You got one orientation tour trip out of this tour?

HUDDLE: Yes

Q: Do you recall when that was?

HUDDLE: I flew out to Teheran in early fall of 1976. For financial reasons, I bought a one-way discount ticket to New Delhi (not Teheran) and had only hand luggage with me. I then abandoned the rest of the ticket, going overland to Kabul, Islamabad (where Ambassador Byroade used his cane to pull a fetching American secretary into the office) and Lahore before doing some light climbing in Nepal on my dime.

Q: Today is the 21st of July and we are returning to our conversation with Ambassador Huddle.

HUDDLE: After INR, I started Nepali language training which ended with a month in an isolated Nepali village (no electricity and two days walk from the nearest road). In May of 1978, Pancho became Vice Consul in Kathmandu, then one of the great jobs in the Foreign Service.

Above all, Kathmandu was perhaps the world's richest lode of bizarre welfare and whereabouts cases involving American citizens in country -- a key part of a Consul's portfolio. We had nude, deranged Peace Corps volunteers reading tax forms in the consulate's outer office, rape entrapments, imprisoned Vietnam war heroes (for watch smuggling), and a jailed diplomat engaged to our Burma Ambassador's daughter...etc.

Yet, the consulate was a stepchild in the sense that we operated out of a separate small building with no air conditioning whenever city power went off. The visa load was modest but Embassy Officers would pressure me on every refusal beyond all reason. One was a fetching twenty-ish Thai friend of the head spook whose wife and five kids were not at post. Her bad heart required treatment in Vegas.

The Kathmandu consulate stood out in terms of Hill interest. Once, during a staff meeting, I lost my cool when the political officer said, "Well consular work is nothing, the important stuff is political." A political cone officer myself, I parried "actually the only time we've ever had any Congressional interest or any interest whatsoever of significance it's always on consular issues." One Congressman even came to Nepal to try to spring his war hero constituent from Tihar Jail.

In this context, let me dilate on the so-called Grove Case. Since the father and son are long gone but richly deserve memory, we can talk about it by name. Grove junior had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Afghanistan and en route home went trekking in Nepal. While hiking east from east from Kathmandu, he met a fellow walker, a north Indian, and the pair continued on for several hours. As night fell, the Indian suggested stopping in a village which had a so-called butti (an informal lodgement where for a quarter, one got rice, lentils and floor space to sleep). When Grove dozed off, the owners of the house conspired with the Indian to rob him. They beheaded him with a kukri and buried his body out back.

The murder happened in 1976 and I was present in Washington when the Department of State and ultimately our Ambassador in Kathmandu got a burner directly from President Ford. How? By chance, Grove's father, a widower, lived alone in Rockville Maryland literally next door to the head of the State's Delegation to the 1976 Republican Convention. Soon thereafter, President Ford came to Rockville seeking support from the Maryland delegation during his hot fight for the nomination against Reagan. As the President did so, the head of the delegation handed Ford a letter from Mr. Grove saying, "Where is my son? Can you do something about it?"

President Ford called the Secretary of State who made Deputy Assistant Secretary Dubs (killed in Afghanistan) the action officer. I don't mean just the formal one, I mean the real action officer overseeing all the pick 'n shovel work.

The ambassador in Kathmandu got urgent instructions, a so-called NIACT, ordering her "to go in and see the King today". A week later after no progress came a second NIACT instructing the Ambassador to revisit the King and inform him that the \$12 million AID budget was at serious risk. The palace raced 386 policemen to the village to conduct robust interrogations with railroad spikes or similar implements. They "scarraped" the village, found the body, and jailed the butti owners for life. Alas, the wandering Indian got away. This is the classic high-level consular case which were a monthly staple of life for the Vice Consuls in Kathmandu where sons and daughters of famous Americans hung out amongst the yogis and Tibetan monks.

My favorite welfare and whereabouts case was of the man bites dog variety. Instead of the mother who is worried about the daughter, one daughter went through the White House to get action from me after her aged mother dropped out in Kathmandu. The message came in NIACT at 5 a.m. and off I went to the temple area knocking on doors with guard dogs barking and crawling up through a maze of corridors to deliver a message.

Q: A consular officer may have a wider range of experiences than the political officer or the economic officer.

HUDDLE: Yet another case in point. I wrote few cables but one was on the Kathmandu smugglers strike. Smugglers, who brought in hundreds of thousands watches from Hong Kong for the vast Indian market, would prepay customs officials to look the other way. Well, one day, a temporary supervisor seconded from another department didn't know the drill. He confiscated the watches and dug his heels in.

"Well" the smugglers said, "we are going to go on strike and customs will not be getting its traditional revenue stream. Remember, everyone is rotated out of the airport after one year. In short, you have 12 months to make your nut before transferring to a less lucrative post." So with tears in their eyes the customs people begged the smugglers to restart shipments of watches. A cameo of how Nepal of 1978 operated.

Q: Now after Nepal you took a leave of absence?

HUDDLE: My last two weeks in Nepal came after my father had died. Mama needed help and I needed a break. I went home and then on the road in photography mode working in the far-flung Marquesas Islands where Paul Gauguin and Jacques Brel learned the final secret. In fact, Brel's wife was on the plane into Hiva Oa as the only other passenger. The Marquesas had only a couple of docks and I had to swim ashore with my camera equipment including a 4x5 in a waterproof bag. Held it over my head as the waves rolled through.

Q: When you came back and walked in the door of the State Department how did you go about getting this assignment?

HUDDLE: Well, the system had tentatively tapped me for Portugal before papa died. While away on leave, it suggested Bangkok as a junior political officer who does internal politics and biographics via Thai language training. I said, "Sure." Thai language training was a challenge as the other three students had a background in tonal languages.

Q: Who was in language training with you?

HUDDLE: John (?) who went out as Principal Officer in Udorn, incoming PAO Frank Scotton, and fellow political officer Don Coleman who never took anything too seriously but was probably the smartest of all of us. I had tears in my eyes because the tones meant nothing for the first few months.

Q: Hum, okay. So you survived the full ten months of Thai?

HUDDLE: Yeah, 44 weeks. The Ambassador pushed me to go out to steamy Bangkok to finish training there. I pointed out that a nuclear laboratory study done by papa for Congress showed that memory works best at lower temperatures. In fact, the ideal is the lowest temperature one can tolerate without being fidgety and restless. For most, that's around 65.

Q: Hum.

HUDDLE: FSI ignored this and summer classrooms would be above 80 at times. Students probably lost 30 percent of their potential memory gain.

Q: Now you then go out to Bangkok I the summer of '82?

HUDDLE: Right.

Q: And first let's set the scene by saying you were the junior officer in the political section who was the political counselor and some of the others and how was the office organized?

HUDDLE: The office was run by the late Jim Wilkinson, a brilliant CalTech dropout who rose to Ambassador without a college degree. With near native Thai, Jim was a great model who pushed me to reach his level. His deputies were Dick Gibson stewarding the internal section and (later Ambassador) Tim Carney running the external section. Don Coleman did the external section's scut work.

Now and then I translated for visiting US dignitaries. The high hurdle came when they talked down to Thai counterparts and I wanted to tone their words down. Once, when Secretary of Veteran's Affairs Derwinski met the leader of Parliament, my head was handed to me as he interjected (in Thai), "Don't try to soften his rudeness, my English understanding is quite good." Ergo, I got caught in the middle trying to soften the remarks of a visitor who was being unduly blunt by Thai standards.

A lot of this bluntness related to issues like refugees, cross border problems with Cambodia, myriad leftover issues related to Viet Nam as in those days Embassy Bangkok dealt with most all of the Indo-China aftermath -- everything from the Khmer Rouge to Laos MIAs to yellow rain and so on. These were the issues that animated that Congressman Solarz and others who flew through Bangkok week after week and would command an airport briefing at two a.m.

Q: They wouldn't come into town? They were going off?

HUDDLE: Typically, Don Coleman would truck out to the airport. My bit was to attend mammoth, long-winded outdoor political rallies. It would be midnight as things wrapped up. I would hunt for a working phone booth to phone in a report before driving an hour home in grinding traffic. One midnight, after a 17-hour work day, I phoned Jim Wilkinson with a report and he responded, "Great work Pancho, take the rest of the day off." Even I broke out laughing.

Q: In addition to these rallies that you were going to who would be the kind of officials that you interacted with?

HUDDLE: Well a lot of mine would be quite high ranking, even cabinet ministers. Why? Political Counselor Wilkinson was savvy in selectively leveraging my PhD with a Thai officialdom that cared about titles. He'd say, "Pancho I want you to be the one to go tell minister so and so that we are giving him a grant to go to the States." I'd reply, "Jim, I'm the junior guy." But he would push back, "Yeah, but you have a Doctorate from Harvard and we will call you Dr. Huddle. One such meeting involved Dr. Kramon Thongthammachaat, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, a key portal for embassy dealings with the civilian side of the government.

Another job was to tutor a key royal living at the King's main palace. A stitch. I would use the royal toilet on floor one, tinkle a royal piano on floor two etc.

Phongphan Adireksan, then the son of the opposition leader and later himself Foreign Minister, was a friend whom I once fixed up on a double date with my secretary's daughter. She said, "That guy must be something because everybody was bowing and scraping when I went to this club with him." I said, "Well his father is the leader of the opposition and loaded to boot.

Q: Let's focus on the IVP program for a little bit because a lot of people don't understand this international visitor program that the embassy has available to it. You are right -- the object of the game is to identify midlevel people who will be future leaders or future movers and shakers and everybody has their antennae out to interact with these people.

HUDDLE: Thai culture is a mystery to most outsiders -- the more so as one moves beyond surface pleasantries and politesse. Even the conventional institutions function in an idiosyncratic, hard-to-understand fashion. Without Thai language, they are all but impenetrable. All in all, IVP identification works best when done in Thai.

Conversely, one flaw in the IVP program was that embassy officers with limited or no Thai favored and over relied on contacts who spoke English and functioned well with Americans. Great for the Embassy cocktail circuit but not the essential skill to become a Thai Prime Minister. What we really wanted were grantees who would maneuver beautifully and brilliantly in the host country. Instead, we often got people who had the English skills to become an IVP grantee but lacked Thai political skills to rise in the government.

In Bangkok (and especially during my follow-on assignment as Principal Officer in Songkhla south Thailand), my job was to find the players who a decade hence would be cabinet ministers. At one point, two-thirds of the Cabinet including Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai were Songkhla grantees.

Q: Now Stape Roy was the DCM at the time you were there in 1982. John Dean was the ambassador?

HUDDLE: Yes. I was their writer-gun for hire buried down in the trenches. Dean would have me draft his employee evaluations, key private reports or special messages to DC and/or the media.

Conversely, for cables, the clearance process up the line scrubbed the life out of drafts. The winds blew fair one day when the intermediate bosses were gone and my first-cut went directly to DCM Stape Roy. Minutes later, he showed up in our office asking "Who wrote this cable, this is the best I've gotten in six months." I raised my hand.

In the afternoon I sent a second cable. Again, he popped by and said "This is the best cable I've had in two years here, who wrote this?" I raised my hand. Thereafter, they made sure that I got the follow-on job that I wanted as Principal Officer in Songkhla. A

decade later, Roy wanted me as a DCM in Bangkok when he was slated to be Ambassador there.

Q: Well now was that a function of them recognizing you what they appreciated and mentored or recognized and pushed you forward?

HUDDLE: I don't know really because Ambassador Dean was a very senior ambassador and he was a very dignified gentleman while I was a flunky. Bangkok put me in for the worldwide reporting (from obscure Songkhla, a post now closed), I was runner-up two years running.

Songkhla itself was the end of the world or you could see it from there. But it covered refugee issues, counter-narcotics, the Muslim and communist insurgencies as well as being our base for riding circuit throughout the south to constantly touch the grass roots. The consulate, almost all locals, ran internally mostly in Thai. The beach was 65 seconds away so I would windsurf 150 days a year. Once collided with a pilot whale (a large dolphin) and cracked five ribs but otherwise found it the perfect break from researching and writing cables hour after hours.

There were awkwardnesses. Once I had a long conversation on counter-narcotics, politics and civil rights with then Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir who had come to Songkhla to open the new Malaysian consulate general complex. (No Malay officer dared talk with the PM and the Thai officials had limited English). As Mahathir didn't meet our Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur, discretion seemed the better part of valor, hence no cable report on the talk.

I later alluded to the meeting to the political counselor and said "Washington can do without a report from a junior officer on a difficult Head of Government to a neighboring country". Nothing was lost because I had no standing and was akin to a grad student arguing in the dining hall over the issues of the day.

Q: Now back up in Bangkok did you have an opportunity to travel around the country much?

HUDDLE: No, in Bangkok I stayed home as we had consulates in Udorn which was responsible for Udorn and Chiang Mai which covered the Northeast and North. The embassy covered directly only the central provinces. In political terms, Bangkok very much runs the show in any case.

Q: Now give me a sense of what the Thai government was like at that time. Was the parliament in session?

HUDDLE: Yes, Parliament was in business and military rule was less harsh. As noted earlier, Thai political institutions confound outsiders. The monarchy was the rudder but the king rarely intervened. The Prime Minister was an unmarried former army

commander who decorated his office with handsome young male officers. A soft-spoken devout monarchist from Songkhla, he ran the show with political skill that outsiders routinely underestimated. On the local and provincial level, Ministry of Interior bureaucrats dominated, with 73 governors and their vast network of subordinates also being a key interface with our consulates

Q: What was driving internal politics in Thailand at this time?

HUDDLE: In many ways it was the classic fight between the military/royalist right who were in charge and the intellectual left who felt the early 1970 democracy movement should have won out and it didn't. By the 1980s, the battle was largely being waged behind the scenes. To this day, in a way it is still being fought.

For Consulate Songkhla, refugee politics were more sensitive than conventional national politics -- with the government extraordinarily sensitive about media allegations of Thai fishermen killing Vietnamese refugees fleeing to southern Thailand by boat.

For example, in 1987 an ABC team came south to do a story on the so-called boat people. When the lead American journalist asked to meet the consul (me), his two Thai Foreign Ministry minders insisted on joining in. As the U.S journalist wanted a private talk, I met with him alone as the minders hovered outside my office stone-faced.

To get even, a senior Ministry of Interior official complained to our green DCM who had recently replaced DCM Freeman (who replaced DCM Roy). This new DCM then phoned to imply "you have been rude?". I responded, "Of course not", I simply complied with the request of an American journalist who wished to meet his American Consul ALONE. The DCM still didn't get it so I elaborated "if I would have refused an American journalist a private audience, you and I might be on the next airplane out of here, that's a firing offense."

The new DCM proved difficult otherwise. Complaints in Bangkok were legion. His one familiarization visit to Songkhla was a chore. When I hosted an all-American-staff breakfast, he clinked his orange juice glass and said "Well I guess it's a good time for anyone to voice complaints about Pancho now that we are all together?" Embarrassed silence. Finally, the DEA chief spoke up and said, "well, four of the five of us have extended our tours here, I guess that answers your question?" Comment: had this DCM been in the military, he would have risen to Major rather than Major General equivalent (minister counselor).

Q: In Thailand, at times it's all gwanchi, it's all personal.

HUDDLE: Yes, especially upcountry where diplomacy succeeds or fails on personal ties. Even in Bangkok, it was and is key. One time, we were reviewing applicant letters for a local hire in our political section. When an American personnel officer came over to assist, she brought along a five-page handwritten letter of endorsement for one candidate.

She disparaged the letter, saying it is from some guy who claims to be Thai Foreign Minister." I said, "well actually he is foreign minister (Siddhi Sawetsila)", the essential White House and Ambassadorial link to our treaty-ally host government. "How about penning a thank you?" She declined.

Q: One of the big policy things that was going on at the time was narcotics and DEA and DEA's presence was increasing not only in Bangkok but at the constituent posts.

HUDDLE: DEA was on a roll in the mid-80s and had a robust staff in Bangkok where the living is easy and the pleasures of the flesh alluring. Something like 44 officers. Years later as Ambassador in Tajikistan, the world's second largest heroin transit country, I couldn't induce DEA to send one officer while they still had 30 in Bangkok, a net importer of narcotics.

Even DCM Roy had trouble controlling the DEA. At one point, they even placed an article in Time Magazine complaining about his lack of support for their programs. They were on such a roll at that time that State couldn't do the needful -- expel the malcontent who had misused the media.

I had a similar problem in Songkhla with a DEA officer who had had six major vehicle accidents and finally sideswiped and killed a push-cart vendor. He didn't tell anyone of the death for two days. Neither I nor even then DCM Freeman had enough traction to expel him, which certainly would be the norm.

Q: As principal officer how is your relationship with the embassy? Who is your boss?

HUDDLE: The DCM. The only frictions came when DCM Freeman asked me to write big-think pieces that normally would have been drafted by Bangkok's political section. Fair enough.

A second issue was Songkhla's reporting on the police's arbitrary killing of habitual criminals (known in Thai as ying (shoot) ting (throw away). In my era and later under Prime Minister Thaksin in the mid-2000s, the police got rid of thousands of people this way. Consulate Songkhla had hard evidence and sent in reports that the embassy preferred to sit on rather than pass on to DC. The fun came when they accidentally transmitted one of my messages to Washington.

The most outrageous case involved the Thai brother-in-law of my American local assistant. The American assistant had been asked by the police "Is it okay if we kill your brother-in-law who is a habitual criminal?" My American offsider, who partied hard and likely had six king-sized Singha beers under him that Friday night, told me that he had responded, "Eh, it's no big deal." The next day, Saturday, a pillion rider on a motorcycle rode up to an outdoor restaurant, got off, and put a 9mm pistol to the head of his brother-in-law. After one shot, the killer walked back to the motorcycle and rode off. The restaurant patrons continued to eat just like a mafia movie.

Q: Now the Songkhla district is on the peninsula there so it is long and thin. How did you get around?

HUDDLE: We had a Toyota Cressida. My driver, political assistant and I endlessly rode a circuit to all thirteen provinces including the deep south's five so-called Muslim provinces. (Four strongly Muslim and one less so.) I paid particular attention to that region because Washington wanted direct reports on the two major insurgencies, one of which continues, albeit in altered form, to this day; the Muslim one. The other, a Communist insurgency, was a leftover of the Malaysian Communist Party, which had been fighting for 50 years in the jungles. It is now gone.

In spring of 1986, they "bombed the consulate". I was on home leave. In fact, it was a so-called "rebut len" -- Thai for "play bomb" that had been thrown over the wall. It cratered a hole the size of a small flower pot; Thais being Thai, my staff had already put in a plant by 10 o'clock in the morning and watered the area to assure growth.

Q: Now the provinces down there are of different sizes. Did it appear that the governors assigned by the ministry of interior were appropriate to the size and the complexity?

HUDDLE: The governors were well-disposed to the U.S. and its diplomats. The exception was Songkhla's long-serving governor who had gone to Cambridge and had beautiful English. For years, he had refused to meet consuls, was considered to be corrupt, and, according to DEA, had staff that were smuggling heroin. I met him only twice but never entered his governor's mansion that was immediately next door to the consulate. At one point, the ranking Ministry of Interior official (the Permanent Secretary) asked me to have the ambassador raise with Prime Minister Prem the alleged narcotics connection. Our Ambassador, in his final month anyway, chose not to get involved.

The only other headache came about when one Muslim consulate employee ditched his Buddhist wife to take up with our newly hired Muslim consulate communicator. The consulate local staff bearded me collectively and said, "you have to fire him." Adding to the dilemma was the fact that he was probably the best employee and the new communicator was second in competence. I stalled them out but it was not easy to fend off a rebellion at a small, family-style upcountry consulate.

Q: Okay but the one thing I wanted to get into thought was, I was teasing you, at one time you must have handled a number of presidential visits and you said Reagan was supposed to visit Bangkok in '83 and had to cancel.

HUDDLE: I wrote presidential remarks long before the 1983 visit was scrapped. Reagan canceled after Aquino was killed on the tarmac of Manila Airport and his Administration opted to punish Marcos by cancelling the Philippines visit. The White House scrapped Thailand as well, a calibrated nuance designed to soften the blow to the Philippines, a

Treaty Ally. Thailand was collateral damage, if you will. The ultimate in bureaucraties: six months ahead, I had already sent the NSC Reagan's remarks and also, as White House instructed, a draft ataboy for myself.

Q: So the planning for that was quite far down the road?

HUDDLE: Yes.

Q: After Songkhla, where did you go

HUDDLE: I took another year off to help my Thai girlfriend Pom (wife since 1988) learn English in the States (San Francisco) and otherwise adjust to the prospect of being an American diplomat's wife. Summer of 1988 found us in Cebu -- a larger, most important post -- as Principal Officer for the southern Philippines.

Q: Today is the 27th of July and we are returning to our conversation with Ambassador HUDDLE. I think we talked about the year you took off from '87 to '88 but your next assignment is principal officer at Consul Cebu. How did that opportunity come up?

HUDDLE: Then Country Director Charlie Salmon (later Ambassador to Laos) recommended me to Ambassador Platt who accorded a 20-second interview at Main State's underground parking lot. He asked where I had gone to school and I said, "Brown." He said, "Oh, Brown," with a rising tone.

Q: You got the job anyway.

HUDDLE: Yes. When I came through Manila en route to Cebu the first time, Ambassador Platt summoned me to his outer office -- once occupied by General McArthur. Patrician to the core, he had connections (including VP Bush), presence and knowledge. He ran a tight show. The talk went on for 45 minutes in the oddest of veins.

The theme and ritornello centered on the importance of not dating or bedding local staff. Finally, I muttered, "Ruby," and he looked disconcerted. It was my version of the Rosebud line in Citizen Kane. Platt juttered to a halt and I said, "Yes, I've heard all about Ruby and my predecessor's alleged failings" -- the previous Consul used to take along Ruby as "interpreter" on overnight trips to meet Filipino Governors who spoke native American English. I added, "My wife is Thai...you don't have to worry about me... you can be confident that this is not an issue."

Once in Cebu, Platt's concerns were documented. Love poetry left behind in the office spoke for itself as did the fact that the previous Consul rode out on his farewell trip to the airport with four comely local staff while his wife, supposedly a former Miss Alaska, went with the kids in a separate car. So did visa irregularities including a welter of presents from Blue Label Scotch to mini TV sets left at the security checkpoint.

After my arrival, the frustrated Vice Consul Charbonnet put his considerable talents to work immediately. A sign above a huge box went up -- "all presents go directly to charity". The next week we needed only a small box. The week thereafter, no box was required.

The task was to clean up after the party within the consulate and get cracking outside our office. Embassy Manila wanted far more showing of the flag and direct reporting from the communist-ridden provinces in the south where official Americans had rarely if ever ventured for years. Why? Well, the end game to keep our bases in the Philippines and that in turn required better grassroots support to nudge Manila political leaders in the right direction.

Manila wanted Cebu to go on the road. But there was an element of official danger -- I was number four on the Commie hit list, according to another Agency, and some islands like Samar and Negros were communist dominated. No officers had been to the backside of Negros for a decade.

When we drove around Negros Island the first time, I laughingly told Alvin my driver/bodyguard/friend, "ok, Alvin, get in the backseat and read the Herald Trib while I drive." Alvin declined the backseat or the White Man's newspaper. He sat next to me, fingering his 9mm.

Official travel also took us on a circuit to meet Cardinal Vidal and some 42 other bishops who had great influence over rural attitudes. Wherever we went, there were often elaborate receptions -- sometimes several brass bands -- for the Consul who, unlike the Ambassador or DCM, wielded a visa stamp to America -- nirvanha for rural Filipinos.

Reporting on the status of the military also featured front and center -- all too often the military was less prepared than communist or Muslim insurgents who actually had distinctly better discipline. One visit to a Mindanao Philippine Constabulary (more military than para-military) camp hard by an insurgency hotspot left us gasping. About 1 P.M., we drove up to find no guard and no one around whatsoever. Everyone was away or sleeping out back. All the doors were open; papers strewn everywhere. We could have taken over the company-sized facility single-handedly. An hour later, two officers emerged sleepily, wiping sleet from their eyes and acting as if nothing were amiss.

Probably the biggest single difficulty in the job was that while the ambassador is the big dog everywhere, in the Philippines a visa stamp beats a royal straight flush or an ambassador or a cabinet minister. People would rush past the front office to get to me at conferences because I could stamp visas. Finesse was essential. At the 1989 Leyte Landing ceremony, they had a giant placard for Consul Huddle. Buried in the weeds and mud way in the back was a mini-sign for the Chargé (with enough rank to be an Ambassador). I waded into the mud to swap out the signs before my boss saw them and understandably hit the roof.

The Philippines was also wearing in the sense that all this travel literally beat one up. Potholed roads had to be driven dead-slow, say three miles an hour. Still my wife got five stitches on her forehead at an Army forward camp after we bottomed out in Panay. We used to say in the Philippines. “The road to hell isn’t paved with good intentions, it isn’t paved at all

Q: Let’s go over some of the issues that you were looking at. You mentioned the church a couple of times. What was its view or the officials that you met on the major political and social questions in the south?

HUDDLE: Well the largest real issue involving the church revolved around human rights and centered on rightwing killing of clergy who were at times American citizens. Vice Consul Charbonnet made dozens of trips to monitor trials in Mindanao after a wonderful Father was gunned down by a right-wing Filipino military man. We would track and monitor these cases like this at great length and the church was often our main source of support because the Philippines, as you know, is a highly oligarchic society with a handful of families in each province otherwise calling the shots.

Q: Let me backtrack a little bit. How big is your consulate district?

HUDDLE: The consulate district included all of Mindanao; Basilan, Jolo and Tawi-Tawi, the Muslim-insurgent epicenter. We also covered the Visayas or central Philippines. About half the country.

Q: So you had Leyte?

HUDDLE: Yes, Leyte is the next island east from Cebu.

Q: Which was, of course, where MacArthur came in during World War II. Was there much influence of the American liberation or participation with the American forces that remains?

HUDDLE: That’s an excellent question. Let me loop back to the beginning. My great uncle is buried in Baguio and lived in the Philippines from about 1903 to 1933. At one point, he ran the Stutz Bearcat dealership and so there has been a family tradition there. The old military ties went way back and you felt them everywhere you would meet old soldiers who had entered into the U.S. military in the ‘20s or ‘30s and were trying to get benefits. Overall, there was a huge reserve of good will but also an odd anomaly. In most countries when one asks locals what country would they ideally be from, they choose their actual country. Even the most impoverished lands like Tajikistan have this national sense of belonging. In the Philippines, however, a majority would say America. So you had this anomaly amplified by the fact they had been both a colony and a stepping off place for wholesale outmigration to Hawaii and the US mainland. By the way, everyone knows Leyte, but we also fought our way across Mindanao in 1944.

Q: Now in your getting around you didn't have Tagalog so it was pretty much...

HUDDLE: I had rudimentary Cebuano and the vast majority of people I dealt with spoke English. By and large, I wasn't doing retail diplomacy but mostly wholesale, meeting with governors, mayors, bishops and such like. Several of the key governors, including in Cebu, were US citizens.

Q: So the bases and getting around and showing the flag or showing some interest was a primary thing for you because at some point the Philippines had said we want to relook. In fact, as Shultz and Aquino back in '87 had begun some negotiations on the base.

HUDDLE: Right, this was the over arching issue for my two-year tour.

Q: You were saying that you were on a local Communist hit list what did you do for personal protection?

HUDDLE: I had the usuals for the times -- a bodyguard with a small arm, a lightly armored car and evasive tactics which included driving the car flush to the consulate's back door. But things were loose and lapse. Once, during an impulse weekend search, we found a gun in our local visa employee's desk drawer.

Towards the end, after Colonel Rowe's killing, I had four armed guards at the house with M-14s. But they were of limited value. One night, in an inside job, a friend of one of the guards broke into the house and stole various items. The next day he tried to rob my immediate neighbor who, as a typical resident in that area, had an M-15. He bracketed the thief with a couple of rounds.

Thereafter came the trial which the DCM asked me to write up to show admirable Philippines justice in action. The idea was to craft an upbeat cable that would help us gain Washington support.

Things got off to a rocky start when the Vice Mayor of Cebu, a major coconut oil entrepreneur and my bodyguard all asked separately "would you like to have him killed and spare the embarrassment of a trial?"

Later, when we went to court -- and paid to file a criminal case -- the unshackled offender was seated directly behind my wife in the courtroom. I was furious as a Philippine general had just been killed by a detainee -- and the ensuing melee burned an entire division-size military base to the ground. Thereafter, we passed the word to keep the thief in the jail till our tour in Cebu ended in a couple of months. When I told the DCM what an honest telegram would cover, he responded, "Well maybe we don't need to write a cable on the Philippine justice system after all."

Q: Which reminds me one of the administrative duties is the cost of living survey and that sort of contribution to the background notes. Did any of that come up during your ...?

HUDDLE: It only came up in Songkhla when inspectors came down briefly and loved having drinks over sunset at the beach. They started talking about lowering the differential for hardship until I said "Ok but last week we caught six cobras in a DEA's officer's yard". After they followed up by recommending a differential reduction anyway. In response, we caught twelve cobras the next day. Washington moved on to something else. If you reside in Annandale, Virginia, and do cost of living surveys in Rosslyn, the horror of twelve cobras around your house and kids is a dealmaker.

Q: Now looking at the way in which the mission in the Philippines was organized you were the only consulate?

HUDDLE: I was the only principal officer, with six official Americans and a far larger complement of local staff. My contact with Manila was mostly by cable but once a month I trekked up there to kiss the ring. It was good management for the ambassador to include his one Principal Officer in the country team; the bad news was that it was a gigantic gathering. My low formal rank meant a seat in the second row. I was never called on to speak. Typically, the front rowers like the AID director would stem-wind on. Ambassador Platt would get exasperated to the point that he would raise his right index finger and move it briskly in a circle aimed at the second row or back end of the first row. The taxpayer was the loser: every month I spent a day or two in a posh Manila hotel on the government dime to no result.

Q: Did many officers from the meeting come down to Cebu?

HUDDLE: Quite often, but it was an odd embassy. The DCM and I had a very close relationship. The Ambassador and I had quality working ties. He was a consummate pro but distant. Finally, after a year without ever seeing his actual office (only the outside sitting room for non-cleared visitors), I strolled into his inner sanctum after asking permission from the secretary. He looked nonplussed and asked, "What are you doing here?" I said, "I've been here a year as your only Principal Office and I just wanted to see your actual office." He looked puzzled. My point then and now is a military one: if you are going to be a leader, please lead by being inclusive.

Q: Would you describe the staff that you had and the duties that they had since you were the single consulate?

HUDDLE: Visas uber alles. Every day, tides of people. Our refusal rate was about 40 percent but it could have been 90 percent. A previous vice consul, Rick Kupke (an Iran hostage) had gotten in trouble with the Consul for doing the right thing. Malacañang, the president's Palace, complained to the Ambassador at one point that we were destabilizing the Philippines by not issuing enough visas.

If it had been post 2001 September 11, there would have been far more control. As it was, I would get requests from people with influence and power in Manila including senior

embassy officers telling me to issue visas to so and so. It was an untenable position because a refusal on my part might result in a poor efficiency report.

When our regular vice consul was absent, and his nominal backup, known as Roundheels W. (because he always caved) worked the line, the word would get out through the travel agents. By ten o'clock in the morning we would have to close the outside doors lest there be a riot or applicants sink an overloaded interisland ferry headed for Cebu that day.

Q: Now the consulate had a political officer.

HUDDLE: Yes, Mary Amaral.

Q: Now you were saying the Philippines is a very Wild West. I assumed it was very male chauvinist. How did she operate?

HUDDLE: Not a real issue. In fact, Mary had worked at DIA and handled the military portfolio well. Once, she wrote a wonderful cable that got the Front Office hairbrush on my fanny. I think its title was "Jolo, Beirut of the East". It was the kind of reporting Manila discouraged because it gave Washington negative news -- so the DCM called to dress us down.

Mary had travelled to dangerous Jolo solo and then linked up with a military detachment. They took her to the obligatory crescent-shaped beach, set up M-50 machine guns at each end and established perimeter security otherwise. Then, they broke out the beer. Party time; it was the Philippines after all.

Manila hated such honesty because it confirmed Washington's nascent sense that the Philippines was out of control. All too often in the Foreign Service, honest reports hurt the drafters.

Q: Yeah, did you have a commissary there or...

HUDDLE: No, we were totally local. It wasn't a problem in the Philippines. The only issue was getting AFRTS. Our military cut off upcountry Philippines (which was somewhat ham-fisted but had to do with communication laws). The embassy continued to get AFRTS because they were in Manila and there was a big base nearby. The consulate lost out.

Q: Things are going on in the outside world, certainly in 1989. You had Tiananmen Square in China; you had the Berlin Wall fall does any of that come to your attention?

HUDDLE: Not much. Cebu became a Danger Post. We had our own problems and a daunting visa load day after day.

Q: I have a note here that 1990, probably closer to about the time that you left, the Peace Corps pulled out of the Philippines. Did you have much of a Peace Corps presence and what was behind all of that?

HUDDLE: No Peace Corps -- believe they had pulled out for security reasons. The only other overt U.S. government presence in the south was a branch Public Affairs Office in Davao. The one officer nominally worked for me; in reality his higher was the Manila PAO so that's where he saluted.

Q: Now you were saying once you left the consulate in Cebu it was closed down?

HUDDLE: No. It closed a year or two afterwards as part of a Washington cutback of smaller posts.

Q: Who replaced you?

HUDDLE: My deputy, Mary

Q: Now did you ever have a circumstance where Marcos came down to your area?

HUDDLE: No, the only person who ever came down, LOL, was President Aquino's son. He camped outside my residence from 6 a.m. or so on till I woke. It was, of course, to pitch a visa case.

Q: That's right Marcos was gone

HUDDLE: Long gone.

Q: How was Aquino's administration perceived down there?

HUDDLE: The Oligarchs saw her as of the bone -- she owns vast latifundia. The broad mass of people, I think, were indifferent or conflicted. After all, President Aquino was on the one hand the widow of a person gunned down by Marcos, himself disliked in much of the South, but on the other hand she was herself a major land owner.

Cebu supported Aquino for the most part during the 1989 Coup attempt. Rebel military captured Manila airport but loyalist airport officials were able to evacuate four 747s to Cebu's airport on Mactan Island. We had to evacuate the consulate as part of the coup effort in Cebu; Mary Amaral (now Witt) did a good job in getting Red Cross flags and putting them on a rented school bus which took consulate personnel across the battle lines to the airport. This was all done in my absence. The only thing I have is an "I Survived the Coup in Cebu" T-shirt.

Q: Now you were saying that you might have stayed there for three years.

HUDDLE: Washington was looking for a seasoned manager capable of imparting, without provoking offense, unwelcome news to an incoming political Ambassador. The job was DCM in Rangoon, above my pay grade. There were 39 at-grade bidders but the Ambassador chose me (in large part because my wife Pom came to interview and did her magic).

Then came backlash. Deputy Assistant Secretary Lambertson, later Ambassador in Bangkok and hence my big-brother counterpart when I was in Rangoon, had been told from on high to assure another aspirant became DCM. Undersecretary for Political Affairs Kimmitt told the ambassador-designate to dump me. The Ambassador, a social and work friend of Bush, stood his ground. State backed off but it was a rocky start in the sense that the wrong horse won the DCM race.

Q: Well then let's get to it.

HUDDLE: I finished in the Philippines on the 12th of June, I went directly to the DCM course, my only significant training other than languages in 25 Foreign Service years.

Q: What is the DCMs course like?

HUDDLE: OK -- good on speaking tips, amateurish on role play exercises.

Q: Who else was in your DCM course do you recall?

HUDDLE: A talented science officer named Daniel Server went to Italy as DCM and later was prominent at the U.S. Institute of Peace. One woman named Whitney went to Perth and was asked to leave by the Ambassador. One could see that coming during the course. Ray Burkhart, already DCM in Korea and previously at the NSC, was one star.

Q: Ah huh.

HUDDLE: I believe of all the 20 or so DCMs, only a couple became Chiefs of Mission including Ray who was a political Ambassador to Vietnam.

Q: How was the DCM course organized? What were they trying to do?

HUDDLE: Only vague memories. We had touchy feely MMPI types of questions like Myers-Briggs. We had DCM on DCM (white on white) role playing that suffered from the fact that us novitiate role players didn't know how to elicit genuine reactions from others. A role player who was supposed to be distressed, acted so fake-distressed that one didn't react to him with sympathy. You were internally laughing. I say this because I train Special Forces now and regularly role play as an ambassador. To be a good actor/role player is a specialized skill.

Q: And that course was about two weeks three weeks?

HUDDLE: Something like that.

Q: And there was an offsite part of it as well as a...

HUDDLE: We went out to Sulphur Springs for a day or two. My memory is poor as I was fighting a cold, was jet lagged and worried about my wife packing out solo in the Philippines after my sudden reassignment.

Q: When did you arrive in Burma?

HUDDLE: July of 1990 to find an embassy in transition and riven with policy cross-currents. The Ambassador, a charming talented gentleman, and his DCM had lost the confidence of key subordinates in terms of policy direction. A controversial inspection in 1989 had essentially denied both quality onward assignments.

The front office had shut down most efforts to conduct diplomacy with the Burmese military government after Rangoon's 1988 bloodbath wherein several thousand people died and protestors sought refuge within the Chancellery. Before I arrived, the Ambassador argued strenuously against assigning a replacement DCM or Ambassador to Rangoon. Behind the scenes he worked skillfully to assure an Ambassador never arrived. Rangoon shredded cables on this subject before I arrived so it would be hard for a historian to track.

A further complication was the 1988 evacuation of Embassy Rangoon staff to Bangkok. The Ambassadors in Bangkok and Rangoon, for historical reasons, were at loggerheads. Both had been DCM in Bangkok. Their styles were antithetical.

Q: This is Burton?

HUDDLE: Yes. He worked hard to queer the placement of a new DCM -- something I learned of only a year later. This said, Burt and I had a collegial relationship and played poker together despite sharply different ideas on the best approach to the Burmese regime. I and the other key officers argued for engagement; his view was that for Burma "we had the luxury of our ideals"-- unlike in China or Indonesia where the USG had serious equities. We were to use Burma to soak up Washington's human rights initiatives that might otherwise be directed against important countries.

I was DCM for about nine weeks, including Burt's three weeks for farewell DC consultations. Two-thirds of the ranking embassy officers disagreed with Burt's policy guidance so as DCM, meat in the sandwich, brokering differences was most of my job.

Q: What did you presume you were walking into?

HUDDLE: Diplomatic turmoil. Our country director, the late Phil Mayhew, had provided me an insightful overview of the problems which included the Hill where Burt had used his contacts to assure key Senators were teed up to block administration efforts to send out another Ambassador. Phil had a disobedient desk officer who secretly leaked documents to the Senators friendly to Burt. The desk officer even pressed me to courier documents to dissident Burmese on my initial trip to Rangoon. He was openly angry when I declined his demand. In short, I arrived at post already knowing firsthand about the sharp policy differences in Washington.

Q: Now those differences were within the building as well as Congress?

HUDDLE: They were all over Washington. Burt, a master of public diplomacy and a brilliant cable writer, had done a world class job of plowing salt into the ground. There was a logic in his approach in that the Burmese resisted most forms of conventional diplomacy. Stubbornness was in their DNA. Ne Win had effectively imposed a boycott on himself, refusing to deal with the world outside from 1962-1988.

In any case, Burma, as a resource rich country with an austere populace, was supremely resistant to outside pressuring. Economic sanctions were also unrealistic in that all of its neighbors were willing to trade and have conventional diplomatic relations. Organizations involved with human rights saw Burma as an ideal target in that it provided nothing vital for the West. "Everybody needs a cat to kick and Burma fulfilled the role admirably" as the Australian ambassador used to put it.

So that was the backdrop when Levin flew off on October 1, 1990 into retirement. Within 24 hours the country director had cabled me, "Do you all really mean what you said that Burt should not be replaced?" I said, "No, that cable was written by the previous Chief of Mission." So that was the first mincing step towards trying to have some kind of engagement.

Then, three days later, Friday October 4th 1990, I went over to the Foreign Ministry to push for better treatment on reciprocity issues. After I finished and stood up to leave, my interlocutor said, "Mr. Huddle sit down, we have something for you. The SLORC (The State Law and Order Restoration Council) has decided to withdraw Agrément from Ambassador Vreeland."

It was one of those joke punchlines wherein your mother-in-law whom you don't like drives off a cliff in your new car. On the one hand, Ambassador-designate Vreeland picked me and that deserved loyalty. On the other hand, his reputation suggested that he was ill-suited for Rangoon and a better fit for Morocco where he had a house and ultimately wound up as Ambassador.

Vreeland's better half reportedly didn't believe in the embassy rules about property and was seen in Washington as prone to disregard standard Department strictures. This boded

ill in that subordinates cannot voice unwelcome news without being ousted. DCMs lack a loud whistle to rein in Ambassadors or their spouses, political or otherwise.

What had transpired? During his hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vreeland, under pressure from two Senators, had departed from his script to venture that some kind of sanctions would be OK. Unhelpfully, two journalists in the back of the hearing room had rocketed the story back to Rangoon within an hour.

Ironically, the SLORC so disliked Burt that they inserted Vreeland in the diplomatic list well before Burt finished his tour. The point was that they wanted Burt gone and a replacement approved.

So here I was, a couple of ranks and 15 years of service less than Burt, and yet nominally in charge -- a Lieutenant Colonel in a Major General's job, running a sizable embassy with 53 Americans and 350 local employees. I had none of the usual arrows in my quiver that an ambassador would have as instructions or authorities. Pom and I, and our son, lived in the DCM's house over the next four years as candidates were put forth to be Ambassador -- only to be blocked by the nomination process. I had even on the computer a sort of template for a cable welcoming the next putative incoming Ambassador.

Bearing out my minimalist role was the Chief of Mission's Conference in Honolulu in 1991. Our bureau's Administrative Officer tried to keep me from attending as a lowly Chargé, albeit in charge temporarily for 15 months -- and eventually four years. Ambassador-designate Parker Borg, languishing for two years without a hearing, also was present. The turning point came when all the Chiefs of Mission briefed President Bush for two hours. Bush was intensely engaged, especially with Ambassadors like Don Gregg in Korea, whom the sitting president asked about his two sons and knew their ages. Gregg, who had served in Rangoon, had been highly complementary on our reporting cables and so informed the White House.

Assistant Secretary Solomon went around the room left to right, allowing every envoy to speak.

Then came an awkward moment as to whom would brief Bush on Burma -- would it be Ambassador Borg who had never been to post or place-holder Pancho Huddle? No one. Dick Solomon "forgot" to call on either of us. President Bush stood up and left.

Poor Parker was steaming mad and went storming up toward somebody while I went over to Dick Solomon who said, "Oh sorry, I forgot you guys." I responded, "Oh, I thought it was quite clever to duck the inability of the Administration to move this long-stalled nomination." Solomon smirked ever so slightly. This would have been the perfect moment to force the issue. It was time for the White House to seriously push to get its ambassador nominee confirmed or stop horsing poor Parker Borg around.

Q: Ah ha. How big and how organized was the mission and what problems was it focused on?

HUDDLE: Burma had the full run of Foreign Service issues but was underworked in that we had few programs (no assistance, limited economic engagement etc) and no senior visitors other than from the Hill. Unofficially, the Administration allowed no one from the Executive Branch more senior than an Office Director. The CIA once sent (under the radar) an Assistant-Secretary equivalent.

Much of our reporting centered on the future of Burma and the best strategy for engaging. In this context, we reported amply on China's relationship with Rangoon as well as on India's and ASEAN's. We also covered narcotics, human rights, arms sales and many other standard issues. In 1991, when Secretary Baker established a worldwide award for best Embassy Reporting, it went to Rangoon by unanimous vote. If truth be told, my acting DCM Jameson and others did a terrific job reporting, but could do so in part because we had ample staff and relatively little to do in terms of programs.

Another area of engagement revolved around bilateral reciprocity issues. Burma was the last country where the USG held excess currency left over from the PL 480 assistance process. This excess currency paid most of our bills -- largely because the Burmese maintained an artificial exchange rate that overvalued their currency, the kyat, five and eventually ten times.

But it was a very complicated issue and bit in several different directions. First of all, American staff either had to use the open market (which the OIG forbid) or pay \$1000 for a replacement battery for one's car. For two years, the Department allowed a work-around wherein we contracted on the open market for goods and services, but this arrangement was ultimately nixed by Treasury which wanted, for accountancy reasons, to keep the official rate as the only rate.

As an outgrowth of the kyat/PLO 480 issue, the Burmese government owed us \$6 million in back payments at one point. On a whim, I finally sent the top general a handwritten, three-sentence note saying in essence "pay us this week lest the US Government start taking steps that you will not like". It worked. The SLORC paid the next day. A day later the Department sent a cable that began, "Frankly we are surprised that you were able to collect this money."

We had a very awkward situation with the Hill. On the one hand Senator Moynihan and others were dead set against doing anything with Burma. Conversely, Congressman Rangel and others interested in counter-narcotics came frequently and often stayed at my house or in the vacant Ambassador's residence. Once Rangel and Gilman brought along then retired Congressman Wolff who had headed a House Foreign Relations Committee. While in my house, Wolff worked on doing a major rice deal, against administration policy.

Q: So you would have had a fair number of Congressional visits during this period?

HUDDLE: Burma was exotic and charming. We had the same visitors like Rangel again and again. Senators like Cochran and Shelby would come MilAir.

Q: At an earlier period there were consulates in Burma.

HUDDLE: Mandalay had had a Consulate. We maintained the historic building.

We covered upcountry from Rangoon. The ruling generals would now and then fly mission chiefs around in helicopters (aging Hueys) to the until-recently headhunting Wa areas and other exotica. As an enemy envoy who could speak Burmese, I was aggressively tailed. Once in Moulmein, I engaged with a twentyish minder who was bicycling behind me for an hour. "How much are you getting per day?" He replied, "25 kyat," -- about fifty cents on the open market. I said, "I'll give you 50 kyat if you go away." He paused and thought about it while stroking his chin and said, "No, sorry I can't do it."

To have Burmese friends was to cause them problems. Saw Sai, the son of Burma's first President and himself a Shan Prince, was my closest friend. (His daughter worked for USIS). After Saw Sai gave me farewell dinner with some old friends at his house upcountry in Taunggyi, the SLORC came to his house six times for interrogations. Our last night in Burma we went to his Rangoon house for a family dinner and he closed the evening by saying "Pancho, lie to me, lie to me, give me some hope about Burma. It was the most poignant moment in my two decades overseas.

Q: Did the embassy have its own aircraft?

HUDDLE: No. You flew dodgy commercial air or took trains. In Burma, in those days, flights often had just the day of departure but no time. One would go out to the airport about seven or eight in the morning and wait until noon. Then there was a race to get to the plane. I was still quick in those days so I could get a seat.

Q: Turning to another subject you are the head of the American mission there you would have had a fairly frequent contact with other heads of missions. Who knew Burma well?

HUDDLE: The Chinese knew Burma exceedingly well and had an Ambassador who was truly fluent in Burmese. The British and Australian Ambassadors had a close relationship with us.

Q: How did you pick up Burmese?

HUDDLE: Early morning study, most every day for four years

Q: So you would have had a military component at the mission?

HUDDLE: We had three military attachés who were assiduous in their prime task -- to ferret out Burmese arms deals that we were trying to block; with countries like Yugoslavia,

HUDDLE: Yes.

Q: One thing that tends to happen when the Chief of Mission is there for a long long time is that it sucks opportunities for the more junior officers to get out and report on things and, of course, you are in a very restrictive environment. So how did Jamison...

HUDDLE: Junior officers got out and used their Burmese to good effect. When Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi had her first meeting in five years with an American official (she was under house arrest from 1989 on and had no visitors save her late husband), I was asked to join in. Instead, I sent political officer Ken Pitterle to note take for Congressman Bill Richardson. Ken did two splendid cables richly praised by the Department. The session's choreography was complicated because Time Magazine wanted to know about the meeting ahead of time, was ferreting around and later lambasted the embassy in their editorial page because we didn't give them a scoop. We went into a rope-a-dope as Washington had ordered no pre-meeting press coverage.

Q: What about USIS?

HUDDLE: The public affairs program consisted of two fine officers. USIS took over the former North Korean embassy which had been closed ever since the North Koreans bombed and killed seven members of the South Korean cabinet including the President when visiting Burma. The Burmese then derecognized North Korea as a country and took over their building until we bought it.

Q: In 1994, you left Burma. To where and how?

HUDDLE: I was slated to be either Ambassador to Tajikistan, Country Director for Pacific Islands, or (by request of then Undersecretary Tim Wirth) Ambassador to the UN for Sustainable Development. Senator Wirth, who was at our 1994 Chief of Missions Conference, created the latter position, rammed through the paperwork and identified me as the sole candidate. In the end it came to naught when the October 1994 congressional elections changed the composition of the House and Senate and precluded confirmation for the position.

A cute aside regarding the Chief of Mission Conference at the Hilton Hawaii Village: Ambassador to Japan Mondale walked by while I was lunching outside during our break. He says "Oh hi Pancho, can I sit down and have lunch with you." "Sure Fritz I actually voted for you." He sits and I open up by asking, "Well Fritz how did you handle Washington's instruction that we all fly tourist class to the chief of missions conference?" even as Washington jefes flew out business class to Honolulu.

The former Vice President, with a twinkle in his eye, answered, "You know Pancho before I became Ambassador to Japan I was on the Board of United and Northwest Airlines. (The key American carriers flying between the US and Japan). And in Japan whichever airlines the ambassador chooses to fly is worth millions and millions of dollars because the Japanese take their cue that that is the airline in the ascendency." So I said, "Okay so A or 1 B?" He responded, "I prefer the aisle."

Q: He is quite engaging. I interviewed him for this program.

HUDDLE: One of the most engaging people I've ever met.

Q: Back to Burma. I'm sure that Washington is tugging and pulling on Burmese policy. Are you seeing opportunities to expand or contract? What's the post telling Washington?

HUDDLE: Remember when you're Chargé not Ambassador, Washington readily ignores your suggestions. DC folks will say when your cable reaches their desks, "Well, if Rangoon really cares about this issue, the Ambassador will get involved." All in all, Washington, I think, was happy to have an underpowered Chargé capable only of keeping Burma policy in a holding pattern -- in contrast with Burt who had pushed hard and often effectively on policy.

Q: One of the things, I don't want to say dreaded jobs; one of the very common jobs is the cable comes out from Washington please demarche them on the vote in the UN third counsel or whatnot that must have been humorous?

HUDDLE: At times. Only one headache when then Undersecretary Zoellick stood in for Secretary Baker at the ASEAN annual in Singapore. In so doing, he offered up some ill-phrased comments about Burma. When Washington sought SLORC comment, we got a skillful retort from Foreign Ministry Official (who had been schooled in the States). We made the mistake of reporting this accurately. Back came a fanny slapping cable saying please be aware of showing sympathy to those "who imprison political prisoners". Can't recall the rest of the one paragraph cable but it prompted us to run for cover via a return "grovel-gram". Later we heard that Zoellick's staff aide was hell-bent on assuring that his boss looked more effective than had been the case.

When the OIG came out and reviewed our files, they interpreted this exchange as the turning point wherein our embassy ceded action to Washington players bent on treating Burma as a parish nation ranking as the world's worst country. In actuality, Burma is nicer to live in than any Middle Eastern country. Ask its women!

Q: Actually let's go back and talk about the role of an OIG coming into an embassy. How does that proceed? You're told them ahead of time, who's coming, what they are looking for?

HUDDLE: Well Rangoon was a special case in that it had been the subject of a celebrated, controversial inspection in 1989. Some in Washington applauded the findings; others thought it a hatchet job. Our inspection, perhaps a corrective, was stellar by any account. Team leader Ambassador Clyde Taylor was a fabulous writer who got many of us promoted. It helped morale which the OIG cared about that Embassy Rangoon had perhaps the world's highest extension-of-tour rate (74 percent extended at post). While this made the Front Office look like nurturing managers, many extended because Burma was fascinating, had a manageable workload, excellent housing, a quality International School, and an unduly generous hardship allowance. (Aside: Burma leads the world in snake-bite deaths per capita so like Songkhla it had a trump card for those adjudicating hardship allowances.)

Q: You were there for four years. What would you say was the difference either in yourself or in policy as you walked out the door?

HUDDLE: Precious little in policy, it was really stagnated. Personally, after a so-so career, I had three promotions in seven years as well as Secretary's Management and Reporting Awards as Chief of Mission. The downside was that, as they say to Rhodes Scholars, "you have a great future behind you". The Personnel system bluntly said "you got a lucky break"..."get back in line"..."pay some Washington dues".

Q: Now as you left Burma were you replaced as Chargé or did an ambassador come in?

HUDDLE: After my departure, more senior officers came as temporary, or much later, permanent chargés. A few years back, we finally got a political appointee Ambassador.

Q: And who replaced you?

HUDDLE: Marilyn Myers? I think was her name.

Q: How did you get your next job?

HUDDLE: DC networking. All of my jobs after Bangkok came via personal ties rather than the Personnel system.

Q: So the job that you got in this case in the summer of '94 was the director of the office of Pacific Island Affairs?

HUDDLE: Yes, a once important job now all but insignificant. The Pacific Islands had garnered much attention but by my era we had ceded the lead to Australia. We had Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands that was vital but otherwise the work-around was to keep the Pacific islanders happy while engaging minimally with them.

Main State work was a mixed bag. One took pride in driving policy more than had been possible when overseas -- our office single-handedly pushed through Palau's

Independence. Yet, day after day featured mind-numbing meetings, endless clearances, and undue attention to document formatting. The triumph of process over substance. When decisions were being made, our Deputy Assistant Secretary would ask, "what does Harry think, or Ed or Joe, all of whom represented different bureaucratic components". She and others seldom talked about the actual subject matter or larger USG equities. It was just which bureaucratic entities were at play and how they were going to out-muscle each other. Kafka would have felt right at home.

Q: We are returning for our conversation with Ambassador Huddle; it is the 4th of August. Pancho we just left Burma and the first thing I want to ask you is you are coming back to Washington. Describe the job as director of the office of Pacific Island Affairs in the Asia Pacific bureau?

HUDDLE: The Pacific Islands Directorate was rather inconsequential and overstaffed (five State Officers plus an Army Colonel John Cole) for the level of work in that the U.S. was steadily lessening engagement with the smaller Pacific islands. The field was being left to the Aussies and to a lesser extent the Kiwis, with China looming. Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands was the epicenter of our immediate national interest. The other former Trust Territories, Micronesia and Palau, had significant US engagement via access to 44 U.S. Government programs (handled chiefly through the Department of Interior)

My first step as director was to manage Palau's transition from U.S. Trust Territory to independence. Our stellar FSO and lawyer Phil Savitz induced a reluctant Justice Department to approve the paperwork recognizing Palau as an independent entity. This was predicated on a three-quarters vote of approval by Palau's parliament, a hurdle that had itself taken years to surmount. Thereafter, the Justice Department threw up other technical legal hurdles. In fall of 1994, Assistant Secretary Winston Lord used a cherry picker to raise the flag of Palau at the Department. Palau's leadership was unabashedly grateful. Several times, President Nakamura, a real gentleman, called himself to say thanks. Twice, we had this "Head of State" on call-waiting -- we would be embarrassed and apologetic.

Q: I was going to say so Palau became a nation state under your guidance. Did you get any chance to travel out there?

HUDDLE: Yes, twice, but generally I encouraged my deputy and desk officers to travel as our family was adjusting to a new country, Northern Virginia. Klouy, our Thai-born son, was on the Mainland for the first time. (He had been at a boarding school in Hawaii and had made the high school baseball team, as a pitcher and third baseman, never having played before.

One seminal trip was to San Francisco to negotiate compensation for the Marshall Islands whose leadership was looking for billions, not millions, of dollars for nuclear injustices. I kicked off talks by saying "we are not here from the Red Cross". In the end, we peeled

off about \$40 million from what we knew to be their bottom line. Washington was pleased.

A fair amount of time went into supporting political-appointee Ambassadors to Micronesia and to Fiji. Undersecretary for Management Moose summoned me for detailed descriptions of ambassadorial residences in the Pacific Islands. Answer: "Well Micronesia has a green shag carpet as you come in the front door. The laundry room with machines grinding away is on the right hand side. Then, you reach the tacky living room and the world class view. It would be a \$1,200 rental in Annandale, Virginia." He then pursued Fiji. "That's a \$2,000 rental in Annandale, 2,000 low-ceiling, nondescript square feet with a small pool in the front.

Few big-ticket issues -- mostly tiny islands creating tiny problems, with the exception of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (the NPT) where Palau had the same single vote as China. The Department was always buckled down and loathe to waste staff time or budget on obscure country leaders so a tricky part of the job was to scrounge for support in hosting islander big shots when they came to DC. Once the Tongan Crown Prince, later King, arrived in his camel-haired coat and gold-tipped cane. Even our Deputy Assistant Secretary declined to meet, much less host, him. In the end, DOD/Air Force helped out with a classy lunch, presumably mindful of landing rights or basing needs down the line. It was amusing when the Crown Prince of Tonga called the Assistant Secretary host a flyboy. If there is such a thing as audible bristling, you could hear it.

In Papua New Guinea, our highly professional Ambassador Dick Teare had the ultimate challenge in assuring security for his team. Downtown Port Moresby is hell incarnate, day or night. So-called "rascals" had gang raped the German ambassador's wife and beat her to an inch of her death, leading Berlin to downgrade relations sine die. One night, two rascals attacked our communicator's house, using a sledgehammer to batter through the abutting garage. He sent out a NIACT communication seeking immediate back-up. Help came and the two baddies left. The night following, they come back the next night with a gang of four and the following night with six.

The NPT, the non-proliferation treaty was our single biggest moment. Our backwater directorate had more votes than any other office at State. Our assignment was to rouse the islander leaders from those crescent-shaped beaches where waves lapse gentle as sighs and fly them to NYC to vote. We developed a starter kit that included round-trip air to New York City, instructions on how to vote and even prepaid hotel assignments. President Clinton penned a note of thank you when it was all over.

A final aspect of the Pacific Islands Directorship was the distraction of a lawsuit launched by a disgruntled Rangoon employee against me, our Chief of Station and ultimately the Secretaries of State and Defense, among others. It dragged on for 17 years without discovery ever taking place. While the Department of Justice and a private white-shoe firm defended us, the sheer waste of time and implausible allegations were a disgrace. For several years, the lawsuit ruled out Ambassadorships such as Mongolia that were

offered. The silver lining was that the Department and the Deputy Secretary Talbott offered choice alternatives -- consul generalships in Bombay and Toronto. Six great years -- how else does one get to dine with Joe Torre after a baseball game or Gordy Howe after a hockey match?

Q: Now the part of the Marshall Islands that we were interested in was that Kwajalein and the missile range?

HUDDLE: Yes. Majuro was the capital city, a disappointment to most. You can hit a golf ball across the island with a two iron. Garbage everywhere. Fifty-one percent diabetes rate from U.S junk food. Wags say the largest import is beer and the largest export, empty beer cans.

To close off the Pacific Islands, one war story from January 19, 1996, a day when our national government was doubly shut down by the budget impasse and a major snow storm. In town, waiting to be sworn in that day was a political appointee Ambassador to Fiji who had serious White House contacts and a major fortune. He had been Diane Feinstein's leading fundraiser and also a major player in California Democratic circles.

It was to be a gala weekend, with 150 gilded guests like the SEC Director staying at the Hay Adams on the Ambassador's dime. I drove to the Department from Arlington in a vintage Mercedes 200, running several lights (there were NO other cars) on hills where the heavy snowfall precluded stopping/restarting. There were about ten cars in State's vast parking lot, all four-wheel drive.

My colonel had also four-wheeled in. We went up to State's Executive Secretary to see if the swearing-in could be done at the Department. Answer, No. We then arranged for it to be at the White House (the Ambassador had horsepower), and asked to use the Executive Secretary's four-wheel drive to advance the swearing in. Answer, No. State is not much on non-standard logistics.

In the end, Colonel Cole rented a school bus to ferry the 16 most important guests to the White House's Roosevelt Room. The last complication was that the Ambassador's wife had forgotten to bring an ID -- a must for entering the White House compound. Colonel Cole and I then created confusion by moving up and down the aisles of the bus like circus monkeys as the Secret Service counted heads and checked IDs. They missed her. We got in. We swore in the Ambassador. We ran into Monica and Linda Tripp, just hanging out.

Q: Excellent, well then after this two year stint you've had your Washington tour and you go back overseas.

HUDDLE: To Bombay.

Q: And how did this job come up?

HUDDLE: The Department offered Karachi or Bombay -- important consulates general with challenging work and glorious housing. Then and now, Pakistan seemed a security accident waiting to happen and indeed three consulate employees were killed at what would have been my consulate general. Bombay, one our largest visa posts, is also India's commercial, nuclear and financial center akin to NYC plus Los Alamos. Perhaps more so in that India's Federal Reserve headquarters are also there.

Congressman Solarz, then in line to be Ambassador to India, interviewed me for Bombay and out of the blue asked me to be his DCM instead, a position not sought as India's national politicians and New Delhi bureaucracy are notoriously prickly. In the end, his nomination foundered. Ambassador Wisner came instead. He vetted me via long-distance phone. It centered on a trick question -- "What kind of financial background do you have?" I answered, "a doctor's dissertation in economic history but really not much." I was told later by DCM Matt Daley that Wisner already knew my limitations. In a sense I was a pretender because that job historically went to economic officers.

Q: Ah ha. So you arrived in the summer rotation of '96. How big a mission is Bombay?

HUDDLE: Bombay had about 25 Americans and more than 100 Foreign Service national employees. We arrived to torrential rains; the pilot aborted the landing and flew out over the raging sea for an hour. We arrived to flooding, tides of people and trash-strewn streets. Water was the least of the post's problems. Wisner had just expelled the Administration Officer whose wife, the key visa section chief, departed as well; the previous Consul General had run afoul of Delhi, the Junior Officers in the sprawling visa bullpen were overworked by managers who did not pitch in when visa demand surged.

Then a sea change. On the first Saturday, we took a long walk through the Parsi-dominated old Bombay. It was magical -- Victorian England to advantage dressed, with filigreed houses, exotic vegetation and vibrant colors everywhere. Our two junior officers who went on to Paris reported back that Bombay was much more fun. Charismatic entrepreneurs like Ratan Tata, world-class parties, and visitors from Cindy Crawford, to Michael Jackson, Arlo Guthrie, and Richard Gere. Colin Powell came for dinner a couple of times, one-on-one. Likewise V.S. Naipaul and Paul Theroux. The residence itself was a former Maharaja's town palace with two acres on the sea and a majestic domed swimming pool. Tennis courts as well. The bottom two floors housed the consulate; the top two marbled floors were the consul general's digs. The structure just sold as India's most expensive house ever -- \$113 million.

The issue of the day was Enron which was busily (and perhaps illegally) constructing the world's largest non-nuclear power plant. Washington and the Ambassador, who later served on an Enron board, demanded our fullest backing. Indeed, U.S. business lay behind our decision to go along with the local Maharashtra government's renaming Bombay as Mumbai. It was a Hindutva political move -- not justified by history. The name Mumbai was and is anathema to many in Bombay but popular with the then ascendant right wing government.

Q: If it was that big a post then you must have had other agencies in place.

HUDDLE: Large Commercial and USIS sections. We also covered nuclear issues -- Bombay is India's Oak Ridge/Los Alamos/Livermore. During my tour, they tested for the first time in decades a nuclear weapon, doing so on hard on the heels of a visit by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission head Jackson.

One key contact was nuclear czar, Chidambaram, India's Robert Oppenheimer if you will. We had dinner the week before the test and he even teased me over a toast, saying "Well Mr. Huddle's father is quite a famous scientist and his son must know a lot about what we are doing in India". Not true -- as India skillfully guarded nuclear matters. The nuclear czar was enjoying the moment as a week later, about May 11, 1998, India tested a nuclear weapon whereupon Pakistan followed suit.

Q: And DEA was also represented there weren't they?

HUDDLE: No

Q: The plane hijacking and crash?

HUDDLE: My wife Pom and I were skyjacked during a vacation to East Africa in late November. The three hijackers ran our 767 out of fuel. Eventually it crashed in the Indian Ocean, with only 42 of the 163 passengers surviving. After we had already boarded, we got a free upgrade from a row in which everyone perished to one in which all survived. Woke up in the ocean, still floating in our seats and the plane gone. Pushed Pom through the water until a boat came to rescue us. A NO anesthetic operation in the Comoros Island's main hospital and then quality support by the French who flew most survivors MilAir to Reunion for a free week's hospitalization cum operation. Embassy New Delhi charged us \$3.95 for a replacement bandage upon return to post. See YouTube or Internet for details.

Q: Who was your PAO?

HUDDLE: Sheldon Austin. His deputy Jennifer Galt stood out. Now Ambassador to Mongolia, she proved herself highly effective when we had one serious issue involving our most senior local Foreign Commercial Service employee. He had grossly harassed female workers. Jennifer took the lead in having him retired or sacked for cause. It did not, however, prove to be Commerce Department's finest hour in that they declined to hire a replacement for months and implicitly punished the consulate for doing the right thing. On my final day at post, I told the Delhi Front Office that we would be raising this with the Department of Justice. The Ambassador, a former Governor and true star, must have done something because, wow, that same day Commerce finally designated a replacement.

Q: You know how to get people's attention.

HUDDLE: If essential, yes.

Q: What's the relationship between the consulate and the embassy? Who was your minder up at the embassy?

HUDDLE: The DCMs were my bosses and friends. The Ambassadors were splendid and reviewed the consulate's performance in 13th discipline terms. Governor Ambassador Celeste also asked me to move to Delhi as his DCM but I opted for a break in Toronto.

As an aside, the consulate received strong Hill support on occasion. For our part, we assisted Senator Shelby in a memorable spat with the Indian Government. The Indians were wary of Shelby who had come to see Bombay and its nuclear facilities, with the ranking Senate Select Intelligence Committee staffer in tow -- a star nuclear physicist.

The senator and nuclear physicist staffer were supposed to go to the BARC, India's nuclear facility, for a lunch cum tour but at the last minute the Indian foreign ministry nixed the staffer. As Shelby raged, I got on the phone to the America's Director or Deputy and said, "You have two minutes to make up your mind. My wife is poised to lay on a lunch for Senator Shelby if you fence out his assistant". The Indians caved. In parting Shelby said, "Son, if you ever need help with Jessie getting an ambassadorship just call me." Ironically, about two or three years later I made the call to Senator Shelby. He called me right back on the line himself and said, "I talked to Jessie, it's okay, it's taken care of." A relief. At that time the Department was having a lot of troubles with Senator Jesse Helms over ambassadorial assignments.

Q: What was the diplomatic community in Bombay like?

HUDDLE: Well there were about 20-25 consulates; we were the largest, the Brits second. All the usual players were all there. No anomalies

Q: Was there a monthly lunch or whatnot of certain embassies?

HUDDLE: My entire career overseas never devoted much to dip-on-dip, as I call it, or white-on-white, as the military terms it in exercises. Often low value for time. In Burma, it was a necessity as embassies other than the Chinese had negligible contact with the government and even less interaction with the ruling generals. We swapped our gleanings.

In most other countries, the U.S. has more information than anybody else for a variety of reasons, partly the sheer size of our post, partly our better intelligence methods. There was too much take and no give so I generally tried to dodge a lot of it without being insolent or mean. In Bombay that was certainly the case.

Q: Who was your number two?

HUDDLE: The number twos were good friends Bruce McKenzie and Don Wells.

Q: After three years and the heat of Mumbai you exchanged atmospherics and went up to Toronto. How did that opportunity become available?

HUDDLE: Byzantine. Calls from the Deputy Secretary's office telling personnel and the Western Hemisphere Bureau to satisfy my whims -- a reward for the idiotic lawsuit mentioned before. Toronto was a plum that never went to outsiders, especially those without special circumstances. It was harder to get this job than to do this job.

Q: In preparation to go to Toronto how were you briefed and what were your expectations?

HUDDLE: No briefings or serious prep. We knew Canada from previous vacation travel; the job entailed management, promoting business and public diplomacy. A rerun of Bombay, but easier -- and yet more important as Ontario (our consular district) had more trade with the US than China. Endless trade issues such as whether FEDEX could fly onward from Toronto to deliver their stuff upcountry and so on.

Q: Now Consulate General Toronto is almost bigger than the embassy in Ottawa.

HUDDLE: Not in terms of staff, even if you include the INS/Customs (ICE) people which we had who amounted to about 150. ICE functioned largely on their own. Occasionally there would be something amusing. Once, we drove to the Niagara Falls area where our customs and immigrations' folks had a large office. The driver was stopped at the American entry point because my Thai wife was in the car and she is a bit younger than me and more importantly looks a lot younger. The officer stopped me because I fit a profile of the aging white guy running away with an Asian putzy while the American wife cries her heart out in Toronto. As we headed into secondary, my driver started squawking "If you know what's good for you, you'll knock this off -- he's coming to see your boss's, boss's, boss who works for the Consul General. The immigration officer backed off. LOL.

A lot of the Toronto job was, to be honest, like Beethoven's music -- better than it sounds. The best part might have been the material for name-dropping. One could sit next to Gordie Howe, also in a camel's hair coat, at a hockey game, or between Ken Dryden and Frank Mahovlich or watch a Blue Jay's or Raptor's game from the owner's box, hang-out with major league ball players in the club house. This sort of thing went on and on. Oscar Petersen came to the house for July 4th as did a group of astronauts.

At one point I was asked to perform with the Toronto Symphony in an outdoor gala. That was both good and bad in that it was something novel but seemingly an easy gig -- doing the Speaker Role in Copeland's piece called Abraham Lincoln. Our rehearsal went

perfect. But with 5,000 people out there and me cloistered in an artist's trailer with a glass of pinot noir, I forgot my reading glasses. I realized this once on stage as the orchestra sawed away the first seven minutes and ten seconds of Abraham Lincoln before I was to come in. The voice role is highly syncopated and I could not read the score. "Gee", I said to myself, "wonder if I can wander off the stage in front of 5,000 people, to retrieve my glasses". No. So it was a tad ragged; at one juncture the name conductor started looking nervous so I came in quickly, perhaps an eighth of a note late. As we walked off stage, I apologized, "Hey, sorry I left my reading glasses in the trailer." The conductor smiled and said, "Don't worry no one who pays for a ticket can hear the mistakes."

Q: Given that kind of representational opportunities how was your representational budget and your housing arrangements?

HUDDLE: The housing was great, you lived next to Arthur Labatt as in Labatt Beer. We were likely the only family in the neighborhood without \$100 million; everybody else was trying to look poor for the tax man and we were trying to dress rich for the job. Charity solicitors would ring our bell in the daytime and my Asian wife would say, "Oh I'm sorry I'm just the Filipino maid" -- because her appearance fit the neighborhood stereotype.

We had an ample representation budget and we opted for an unconventional strategy to use the same. Instead of wasting it on large functions where you really do no work, we did almost daily four-eyes lunches with top players in financial services and the Ontario government. The two Ambassadors in Ottawa -- one as ex-governor and the other a Clinton insider who grew up in Canada -- approved this strategy which enabled us to ease regulatory problems for American businesses.

Q: Right. The Canadians and the Americans are so close they have to find things to not like about the other guy.

HUDDLE: The real issue was that Canada is said to define itself as "not the United States". Quebec was far friendlier -- because the enemy of my enemy is my friend. Quebec was unhappy with the English speaking national government in Ottawa so they tended to turn to the U.S. Toronto viewed the U.S. as overly dominant in the Ontario economy -- where we represented 80 percent of the action.

There was lots of local bad blood especially after we bombed Serbia. Toronto had a large Serbian population, and once I got followed home by two baddies -- and had to radio for help. My last year, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police insisted on chauffeuring me because of Sri Lankan and other terrorists in town. The co-leader of Sri Lanka's major terrorist group lived openly in a Toronto suburb. I raised this with Washington. No action taken.

Q: What's the issue there?

HUDDLE: Well he was the co-leader of one of the USG's 26 designated terrorist groups living openly in a friendly, neighboring country with which we had extradition treaties. The Department sat on its hands. Perhaps simply a matter of lack of will on the part of the country directorate. After 9/11, they would have reacted differently. Before 9/11 it was difficult to spark real action in many counterterrorism fronts (Think Gerry Adams); Terrorism in Northern Ireland and IRA fundraising in New England was considered to be oh a British problem and not our concern for decades.

Q: Toronto is quite ethnically diverse, very typically American in that sense there's Chinese neighborhoods.

HUDDLE: The world's largest Chinese community outside the Far East, 500,000 and growing. About four serious Chinatowns.

Q: What were your July 4th parties like?

HUDDLE: One year, we asked President Clinton's staff if they were willing to do something for celebrated jazz pianist Oscar Peterson who was retiring after a stroke. The junior White House staffer had never heard of him and said the president would not be interested. The staffer must have said something to up the line because the next day came a frantic call from a more senior aide saying, "President Clinton would be happy to do something for Oscar Peterson. What sort of Presidential Proclamation would you like?" Peterson came to the house and it was an iconic moment. The glitterati tripped over themselves to be part of the occasion. The year following we had the astronauts as well as the Toronto Symphony

My assignment there was for three years but it came to a sudden truncation after 9/11. I was already slated to be Ambassador in Dushanbe whenever the Department got around to processing the appointment. Things thereafter moved at warp speed. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman invited me to lunch during the hearings. The Senate approved the nomination the next day. A week later, Armitage swore me in his office and told me to get on a plane to post the next day.

Q: Today is August 11th and we are returning to our conversation with Ambassador Huddle. I am reading you 5x5 on my speaker.

Now let's get to that because in that timeframe. The U.S. coalition first goes into Afghanistan on October 7th.

HUDDLE: Right and I arrived at post on October 10th.

Q: Okay, how does one get to Dushanbe from Washington at this time?

HUDDLE: Mostly via Almaty Kazakhstan. But this was a tortuous story if you will. The embassy in Dushanbe Tajikistan had had its ups and downs, and was effectively closed

from 1998 to 2001 September. It was in a sense a prisoner to State's security officials who wanted to dominate our Tajikistan diplomatic activities. Simply put, after the 1998 bombings in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam, they were eager to close posts with security problems and marginal US equities. Dushanbe fit the bill, in their view. Sheer nonsense. We had kept the post open during the five-year civil war, but Washington security bureaucrats essentially shut it down afterwards.

My predecessor Robert Finn fought this tooth and nail in elegant cables before he went on to Afghanistan as Ambassador. He himself was allowed only minimal time in Dushanbe and was officially assigned to Almaty where he had a work-space under an embassy stairwell for classified work and a separate office for unclassified work. Whenever he or his other Americans travelled to Dushanbe, security had to vet the same. Mother may I.

When at post, Finn lived, as I did, inside the Dushanbe "house" embassy. The residence amounted to a bedroom (a converted store room above a garage) connected to a hallway to a micro-living room; a micro dining room that sat four or six if gaunt; and a micro-kitchen; it was like being a well-off student in the 1960s. He and I (initially) had a barebones American staff of four State officers along with a Defense Attaché. No travel outside the Embassy allowed except with nine guards coming along. No classified communications or secure phone. To transmit cables, we flew to Almaty via Tajik Air, nicknamed Tragic Air, or went by land over several days.

With 9/11 and the impending War in Afghanistan the driver, we addressed this on day one. But pushing security was often futile in that the otherwise powerful EUR front office -- all the while telling us to "do something" -- never seriously intervened. Indeed when our very senior Deputy Assistant Secretary came to post, he changed the subject again and again whenever we tried to seek his intervention with the security division in Washington.

The first step was to set up shop in Dushanbe. An aging Yak-40 flew me down. I had an aisle seat next to a solidly built sort of Oakland Raiders middle linebacker wearing a thick coat. In a nice way, I said, "could I put your coat up above so we have enough room". He pointed to this window and smiled. Once airborne, I realized why he did not shed the coat. The window seat was a meat locker -- with thick frost on the inside just like a Siberian farm house. Of course, there was cigarette smoke from the crew, and the Managing Director for Tajik Air fired up a Winston as the plane took off.

Embassy Dushanbe, then sited in a traditional Tajik home, was a beehive of activity. DCM Jim Boughner had excellent Russian and great skills. Brad Evans was our Swiss-Army-knife first tour officer. His gambit ranged from political and economic work to counternarcotics and consular assistance. Until his wife arrived, Brad also did public affairs. (About 7 or 8 officers now cover his portfolios, in far less busy times). Our counternarcotics assistance alone amounted to \$9 million a year -- normally enough to keep several officers engaged. We had a temporary administrative officer, a security

officer, as well as a DATT and deputy. Not long thereafter the security officer lost his clearance for improprieties. A series of temps filled in for a year.

Another government agency had makeshift quarters where paramilitary types slept on floors or, if lucky, two or three to a small room. The COS had an armored car flown in, with which he rushed back and forth to the Afghan border to support the Northern Alliance leadership that had long been exiled in Dushanbe. All of northern Afghanistan fell within a few weeks as unconventional warfare leveraged our assets to great effect. Bob Woodward alleges that we were loading helicopters with \$10 million in hundreds and sending them to key node points -- and to win the battle space with a handful of casualties. Don't know if that is true but do recall that \$10 million in hundreds weighs exactly 100 kilograms (222 pounds). A clean US bill weighs one gram.

Q: So it was a very spartan arrangement in Dushanbe?

HUDDLE: Yes, spartan. There was a war on and we were a secret part of it. The U.S. military staged in the Embassy day and night, freely using our Satellite phone at all hours. Interestingly, to limn the difference between State and DOD budgets, when we gingerly asked for reimbursement as Sat phones cost dollars per minute, we anticipated a fund cite for \$5000. DOD sent a half million dollars. \$5,000 would have been chump change. Go away, sonny, we are the big boys.

Presenting credentials replicated Gilbert and Sullivan. An overstretched, aged-out, tatterdemalion Chaika from the Joseph Stalin or Nikita K. era came to pick me up. Once at the President's palace, one ambled a couple hundred yards on a soiled red carpet to the outer room of the presidential inner sanctum.

The next day, we compiled a list of key Embassy objectives -- 43 goals including basing rights, overflight permission, a Status of Forces Agreement, a site for the new embassy, foreign minister and presidential visits to the White House and a bridge to Afghanistan, among others. Not on the list, lauded by the OIG as bearing out USG priorities, were Department bells and whistles like the all-too-often worthless Mission Program Planning (MPP) exercise. Side note: in India, the Ambassador used to task me to write his overall Mission Statement.

Q: Yes we should go into that but let's start with the embassy side of things. You've got a mall mission now were those people in place when you arrived or they came with you?

HUDDLE: Until 9/11, our key operations were nested in Embassy Almaty's chancery as an adjunct to our sizable Kazakhstan mission. As noted earlier, Embassy officers were officially assigned to Almaty and flew in to Dushanbe only TDY -- and (other than the security officer himself) only with a chop from Washington security folks who had arrogated to themselves control over travel. Family members were not allowed in Dushanbe -- a stricture later ignored so as to allow Pom to come down five times. A great morale booster as she shaped up our common kitchen and quarters otherwise.

Because of these security and personnel strictures, we were in a bind. A more robust embassy was essential for the war, but we were told to keep a low profile in terms of publicizing the growing size of our staff -- i.e. we shot up from four to eighteen officers but were not supposed to advertise this fact or ask for proportionately more administrative support. This complicated efforts to find housing, a search for a new chancery, and our temporary expansion of the existing embassy (a classic Persian home with a central-courtyard-cum-persimmon trees and rooms arrayed around it).

We expanded by renting the houses adjacent to the "embassy home" -- in so doing we fenced out the Iranians who wanted to occupy a premise next door. Eventually, we had a pod of four houses around which were erected Delta barriers. At the end of a warren of narrow streets that trucks (bombers) could not negotiate, it was akin to a gated community. For good measure, from the air, our houses blended in with the other residences nearby.

All in all, it proved an elegant short-term fix. In some ways, the old compound was less vulnerable than the new "secure" embassy compound that we began constructing in 2003. This facility stands out in the middle of an empty field and is inherently vulnerable to drones or M 79s.

Q: Now you are describing the working and living arrangements in Dushanbe?

HUDDLE: That's right, I'm never going to talk again about Almaty because other than going up there to see Pom or play piano, the work was all in Dushanbe. Going up to Almaty was to sit around killing time after transmitting or reading our modest classified traffic. We were all operational and had minimal opportunity for conventional State Department reporting. Also, our reports would generally have been stale by the time one flew to Almaty. As I had made a living for a decade winning reporting awards, we were bemused when our country director grumped to the OIG that Dushanbe needed to do more reporting. The OIG backed us up and got me a major Presidential Award.

Q: So here you are, you are actually building this embassy from scratch. Now the people that were there had already been assigned?

HUDDLE: There was a continuity of staff of four or five American officers. But remember, most of them spent 90 percent of their time up in Almaty so they weren't really occupying the embassy before 9/11. From 1998 to 2001, the embassy would go a week or two with no Americans around. There was one AID officer responsible for Tajikistan, but he only came down TDY even when we reached the top ten in the world in terms of assistance. (Over \$100 million for a country with six and a half million people.)

Q: So with your arrival did things begin to gel into a real live embassy with real live places to live and work?

HUDDLE: No, it was a slow transition. After 9/11, Washington hued and cried that we had to have a better chancery NOW. So we would spend an hour or two a day looking for structures more akin to conventional embassy ones. We didn't even deal with officer residences, given the war environment and laundry list of other priorities. Most of the houses/buildings offered for rent or sale looked like over-the-top narco-structures air-dropped out of Cali or Sinaloa. After months of this, the Department reversed course and said the best solution was to build from scratch. Cost about \$60 million. We broke ground some months later but it was three years before the flag was raised.

Our very first priority from my arrival was to get overflight rights. We didn't have any way to translate things into Russian or Tajik (NO top officials spoke English) other than using a local employee. But this subject was at least a Secret NOFORN, if not more so. So first the DCM and later I wrote out ragged Russian translations ourselves and ferried these over to Foreign Minister Talbak Nazarov.

A charmer, Nazarov made himself ever available. Nazarov lived on a salary of \$30 a month, plussed up through 100 days a year of per diem while traveling. He stood out for probity amongst the Tajik senior officialdom. Typically, the foreign minister gave me an hour or more of his time each week, whenever in town. It was one-stop shopping. Either he or President Rahmonov (now Rahmon) would approve things on the spot. Once, Nazarov phoned the Justice Minister in front of me -- and chewed him out for complicating our security. The phone dressing down began in Russian "what kind of idiocy". The Status of Forces Agreement was approved the day after we sought the same. It was an unusual arrangement: the president ran the show, the foreign minister was the enabler, and Parliament clicked its heels.

Next came basing rights -- a direct White House initiative. In early November 2001, a C-17 flew Secretary Rumsfeld and a large delegation into Dushanbe to seek basing rights, most likely in Kulob, President Rahmonov's hometown. My recollection is that the Russians were already occupying this run-down facility though their presence did not come up in the initial discussions.

The trip was haphazard. No country clearances for anyone including Undersecretary Douglas Feith at DOD and Undersecretary Bolton at State (who chose to stay on in Moscow at the last minute). No one had arranged full landing rights so at one point the owner of Dushanbe's airport (yes, it was privately owned) was badgering Rumsfeld for money on the tarmac. The Tajik Defense Minister told the airport owner in Russian (a language not known by the Secretary who was within earshot) "not to disgrace Tajikistan".

Equally goofy was the ride from Dushanbe Airport to the Presidential Palace. The driver and bodyguard occupied row one, two passengers (Secretary and Ambassador) were to be in row two, and row three had a stack of guns/flak jackets. I slid in first and ushered Rumsfeld into the Ambassador's seat of honor by the door.

Round one: Feith then jumps in between us whereupon Rumsfeld turns to him and says, "Doug, it's too crowded here, get in the back." So Feith, no ballet dancer for agility, has to clamber over the seat back to be splayed in the third row. (One can't open the second row outside door from the inside). Rumsfeld had my vote. He whiled away car time by reminiscing about his days as a Congressman and otherwise running out the clock rather than talk substance with a State official.

Round two: Once inside the President's inner officer with his Minister of Defense and others, Feith replayed the must-sit-next-to-boss routine, aggressively shoehorning himself next to Rumsfeld. A bad idea as neither knew a word of Russian, and the DOD translator, an aged émigré, was to fumble the ball by failing to translate Rahmonov's offhand, one-word approval of the bases ("please" or "help yourself") in Russian. A disconcerted Tajik President looked at me. I immediately went into horror mode because in Asia, if somebody gives you a 'yes' answer and you don't respond, they may assume this means that they gave the wrong answer and should reverse course to say 'no'. So I jumped into the conversation and said, "He said yes." We landed our base.

Bemusingly, as we walked out of the two-hour Russian (Da...Nyet) conversation, Rumsfeld, just coming from Moscow, asked what language the conversation had been in. He had had a long uncomfortable flight and was clearly tired but still on duty.

Seven weeks later, Christmas eve, as Maersk is unloading ammunition at a European port and freight trains are carrying material for a U.S. Brigade in Kulob, an American Colonel, slated to be commander, phones from San Diego on the open line. "Well, there was just a video teleconference and Rumsfeld decided not to use the Kulob base. We will use a base in Kyrgyzstan instead).

The next day I called on President Rahmonov to deliver the bad news. He took it surprisingly well -- the more so as his government had already asked the Russians to leave the base, a major step in that Moscow had long posted a division-plus in Tajikistan and otherwise provided Rahmonov security. The Tajiks to their credit took it like a man and didn't say anything about it and kept the relationship going.

The story has a postscript -- a year later. Rahmonov came to Washington for an official visit replete with Blair House, the Oval Office and 21-gun salute at Arlington. Before President Bush came in from his side room for the Oval Officer prebriefing, Secretary Rumsfeld, already there, wandered over and said, "Hey, Pancho, so how did the Tajiks take it when we didn't use the bases that they offered?" I responded, "they pulled up their socks like a man, and marched on." Rumsfeld, "No, no I'm serious how did they react?" I said, "They didn't complain and they didn't go public" whereupon the Secretary said, "Well, I guess we owe them one." I answered, "I think so." Rumsfeld asked, "What can we do?" Huddle, "Well, for two years we've been trying to raise money for a bridge, the 'Bridge of Enduring Freedom', between Tajikistan and Afghanistan."

Rumsfeld then asked how much was needed. Answer: ten million USD. State had gotten \$1 million through an EUR assistance mechanism and a \$1 million from the Norwegians but we needed at least \$12 million. (After gold-plating and the contracting process otherwise, it ultimately cost well more than twice this amount). As we wrapped it up, Secretary Rumsfeld, as they often do at his level, didn't venture anything. He just nodded. Three weeks later our DATT's office receives a fund cite for \$10 million signed by Pentagon Comptroller/CFO Dov Zakheim.

The DATT said, "You know Mr. Ambassador they're not allowed to just send money like this". I laughed and said, "Well major, go ahead and rebuke Secretary Rumsfeld, I'm sure that will help you get pinned on quicker for your next promotion". Anyway, with that money the bridge got built. It took five or six years and a series of ambassadors continued to nurture the initiative but that was what made it happen.

Q: Now something like Rumsfeld's visit and whatnot must have all been done over an open line, yet you don't have classified communication and whatnot.

HUDDLE: There are tire tracks across my back over the classified issue. At that time, we still had no State classified communications so we couldn't report base approval from Dushanbe. Even the unclassified system as well as the open phone lines were down. Alas, Secretary Powell asked our Assistant Secretary "what happened" -- probably within a few hours of the visit -- and she could not answer.

Hell hath no fury like an Assistant Secretary 'let down' by the field. The desk office sent an email the following Monday saying "it's hitting the fan"...the Assistant Secretary is raging "doesn't Pancho know who he works for?" The silver lining was that our 'can-do' Assistant Secretary sent out a team from DC to install a makeshift, limited classified communications set-up and a classified phone. We could not print; it was slow, but it was progress.

Q: Let's see you also wanted to talk about Soviet nuclear assets.

HUDDLE: Well that's pretty sensitive for a public document.

Also operationally sensitive then, though not classified now, were our work-arounds for the all-but-non-existent banking system. Week after week, we hand-pouched U.S. currency from Almaty. It went smoothly and the Tajiks could have cared less. The one hiccup came when one officer (a stud whose brother actually did play tight end for the Oakland Raiders) got to talking with a comely seat companion on the flight down. He forgot the pouch with 25 grand under the seat. Fortunately, his imposing appearance, good Russian and interpersonal skills were up to the task. He was able to talk his way back onto the plane after everyone including the pilots had left.

CARE also needed our help in working around the banking system. The organization literally had two million dollars cash at one point, income from a monetize-the-economy

program wherein they in effect sold assistance to peasants at ultra-low cash prices. The program dated from the late 1990s and the money piled up. The CARE cash was stashed in a rusty safe in the basement of the "embassy house". Only one officer, variously, knew the combination. We ended this arrangement, but did so gradually lest CARE have problems.

Q: What was rudimentary about it?

HUDDLE: No conventional banks. No savings account. Nothing.

Q: Because Tajikistan was so new separating from the Soviet Union?

HUDDLE: The always-rudimentary banking system collapsed during the long civil war, well after Tajik independence. It was never rebuilt. People kept wads of cash; credit cards could not be used. When we vacationed to Europe, we wandered down to the market to swap dollars for Euros. The only bills sellers had were 500-Euro notes and they had bundles and bundles of them, quite likely narco-money. Try to pay with a 500-Euro bill, you effectively cannot do it. Think of a \$1000 bill in the U.S.

Q: Right.

HUDDLE: Another epiphany took place when the foreign minister came over to my micro-dining room for a lunch on his birthday. He was clearly comfortable in the tiny room so I finally said, "you want to see where I live? I took him from the micro-dining room down the hallway to the converted store room above the garage. Tellingly, he thought it was pretty nice. Wow, and he had been Foreign Minister for a decade or so.

After that, Nazarov invited me to his apartment -- perhaps the first time an American had been in the home of a senior Tajikistan official. One could see why. His circumstances were humble in the extreme. Rundown, erratic electricity, fifth-floor in an, at best, nondescript neighborhood.

A contrasting cameo. One-time EUR jefe and talented officer, Jim Dobbins phoned to talk about visiting Dushanbe on the eve of the 2001 seminal Bonn conference on the future of Afghanistan. I explained that we had no guest quarters and a sofa or cushions on the floor might prove the best bet. The conversation juddered to a halt. A Europeanist, he lost interest in the visit to Dushanbe. Jim might have been ambassador to Afghanistan but the word on the street was that its comforts were not to his taste

Q: Let me divert you for a minute but as you are operating in Dushanbe what's the background of the foreign minister and some of these other people that you are running into?

HUDDLE: A well taken question. The president had directed a kolkhoz (USSR collective farm) and spoke Russian in the low-brow, rough rural fashion. Those like the Russian

Ambassador (the great grandson of Gorky) who spoke elegant Russian so noticed. Foreign Minister Nazarov, conversely, had near perfect Russian because he had a PhD in economics from Leningrad and had grown up in a USSR orphanage. Most of Central Asia's leaders, like Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Karimov in Uzbekistan, or the Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan, were also said to be products of children's homes, with better Russian than their local language.

Foreign minister was equally engaging and graceful in Tajik but preferred to use Russian with foreigners. The first time I told him about our enormous impending aid, he smiled and mused in Russian, "the only free cheese is in a mousetrap".

When, after 9/11, the State Department "discovered" Muslims and somewhat clunkily tried to show US sensitivity to them, we began getting Washington messages timed to Muslim holidays like 'Eid al-Adha or Eid al-Fitr. The Department would craft a general message to the effect of "We too are a multicultural, multi religious country and on this day we want to offer our congratulations." Ambassadors were supposed to bring them to the attention of a very senior official and seek reaction.

The first time I took one of those messages to Nazarov and sought reaction, he shot back "religion is the opiate of the masses", adding "don't forget I grew up a USSR Communist". When I asked if "I could tell the Secretary that he appreciated the gesture, he said "sure."

While Nazarov also had many traditional Tajik values that were an anathema to the USSR, he was by and large a typical urban Tajik with progressive views on education and the role of women. Meanwhile, rural Tajiks lived and thought similar to counterparts in Iran or Afghanistan -- save for a historical USSR overlay wherein women had more education and no burqas. It was often said that Tajikistan was the "Old Testament plus the Soviet Union minus electrification".

Q: Now this schooling that he had would that be like a British school?

HUDDLE: No, an orphanage.

Q: In an orphanage?

HUDDLE: Yes

Q: Right. But I mean if you are an orphan you don't have a family.

HUDDLE: No, he lodged at the school.

Q: Okay.

HUDDLE: I think that's the case for most USSR children's homes. That's not all that unusual if you look around the Soviet Union a lot of the major players went through similar kinds of things, especially because of its two frightful world wars. Think of Stalin whose father was absent. Little Joe would end up in a seminary in a distant town where he was noted for his beautiful voice. Choir boy becomes mass killer!

Q: Now one of the big things that you were involved in was the state visit of the president of Tajikistan to the U.S. in December of 2002. Were you the one that was successful in getting that? I would assume that your predecessor was also pushing.

HUDDLE: No. It was only possible after 9/11 when we suddenly were demandeurs of Tajikistan.

Post 9/11, our Tajikistan diplomatic world sea-changed as dramatically as anywhere round the globe. Washington welcomed "obscuristan" into the club of significant countries. Once, I wrote a biographic cable about the foreign minister because I had seen him so often. Someone in Cheney's office, perhaps later DOD Undersecretary Eric Edelman, flagged it for the Vice President. Cheney reportedly said, "I want to meet this foreign minister."

So the Foreign Minister from obscuristan is invited to meet with a uniquely influential U.S. vice president. Just a few phone calls thereafter and a President Rahmonov official visit was on. My sense from afar was that Cheney's office and not the Department drove this visit which had many of the hallmarks of a formal State visit.

In fact, the Department could not get Blair House, the de rigueur lodging for head-of-state visitors like Rahmonov and asked me to phone DC to play "the Card card". I replied, "Wait a minute, I'm ten thousand miles away in Dushanbe and a junior envoy." Back came reassurance -- "No, no, you have connections to Chief of Staff Andrew Card who accepted to come to your swearing-in". "You masterminded the 11th hour security for his buddy USAID Director Natsios, the first ranking U.S. official to go into Afghanistan in a decade."

This had happened in November 2001 when Card's offsider phoned and asked me to lay on last-minute security for Natsios. I sent along the DATT and another imposing guy as muscle -- and was later rebuked by Washington security for not sending two of their "professionals". Well, it was the 11th hour and the best (and only) option were my Ranger DATT and an ex-Green Beret who, importantly, looked like real security to an Afghan audience.

Card and Natsios were appreciative. We three were avid Red Sox fans. So I phoned Natsios who regularly phoned Card to talk baseball. Approval for Blair House literally came back via an open-line phone call to Dushanbe in ten minutes. This was a key part of the visit architecture for a Tajik President who knew what fellow "important" leaders typically were accorded

The centerpiece of the December 2002 visit was a major Oval Office session, though Cheney also met him at home and Powell hosted a lunch. Rahmonov reveled in the 21-gun salute performed in a deeply snow-laden Arlington Cemetery with hundreds of soldiers lining the road on both sides.

At the Oval Office, Powell, Rumsfeld and Rice joined with the President. The National Security Advisor was a charmer who steered me to one of the four padded seats while she sat down on a metal chair. I said, "Hey, wait a minute." She said, "No, no, that's the way protocol works here." Condoleezza Rice in person came across as ultra-relaxed, pleasant and competent.

At one point, I ventured, "I hear you accompanied Yo Yo Ma at Constitution Hall...that would have been my dream at Manhattan conservatory years ago." She said, "I didn't play at Constitution Hall because I was a good pianist, I played because I was the NSC advisor."

Before Bush came in for a pre-brief, I delicately asked who is going to brief the president on Obscuristan. Several staffers offered a wishy-washy, "Well it is sort of informal, whoever wants to do it." I said to myself, "My God, how many of those present could find Tajikistan on a map". When Bush asked the first question, I tried to answer in crisp military fashion. One or, at most, two sentences to the point. After that, Bush directed questions to his Ambassador.

Most memorable was the President asking "Rahmonov's married right?" "Yes." "How many kids does he have?" "Nine, seven girls and two boys that we know of." Then, as the pre-brief closed, I handed Condoleezza Rice who was next to Bush a photo of snow-stained Tajik mountains. Bush looked at it and said, "It looks like west Texas." Rice said, "No, it looks like Colorado." Earlier that day, I had passed a copy of the same photograph to Rahmonov with the idea that the two presidents might bond by popping the two pictures out at some point. Also, it would give our president a sense of how beautiful impoverished Tajikistan could be. That came to pass as the two Presidents left the Oval Office and talked about the mountain scenery, photos in hand. Rice pulled me aside and said this wasn't an A meeting. It was an A+."

Bush himself deserves the credit. He drew to good effect on the pre-brief. The highlight came when he turned to Rahmonov and asked with a warm smile, "You're married right?" "Yes" "How many kids do you have?" Rahmonov said, "Well nine". Bush, "How many girls and how many boys?" and Rahmonov answered, "Seven and two." Then Bush said, "Wow, you've got the stuff, huh?" While the response might not have worked in the U.S. context, it was pitch perfect for a Tajik leader who is often photographed dandling his grandchildren on a knee. We got everything substantive we wanted out of that meeting.

Q: Now the local hires, was the embassy free to hire anybody that they wanted? Did they have a DSB like the Chinese did when we were there?

HUDDLE: We could hire as we saw fit, Many were presumably ex-KGB which had a near monopoly of top USSR talent. Eleven of our 31 bodyguards were physicians lured from medicine by our salary scale. I used to joke that I would take along the orthopedist seeing the ministers of defense or interior who had bone crushing handshakes. Tajikistan used to regularly win things like the hammer in the Olympics; they had all kinds of people who were fabulously strong. All the physicians were crack shots.

Q: Was it that Diplomatic Security demanded that you have a personal security detail?

HUDDLE: Yes. The personal security detail's very first question was "you like to swim?" "No, I swam five hours a day on Brown's team...I hate swimming." It turned out Ambassador Finn used to go out to lakes, even in the winter, and one guard had to swim alongside.

The main thing with security is that it took a couple of hours to rally the minimum nine bodyguards. So on the weekends I would be pretty much pinned down, playing a rented East German upright piano. Now and then, a math professor from the university would come over to play chess. In the final parting, he happily took away my extra suits. Again, his monthly salary was \$30.

Some Sundays I treated myself to a long drive in the countryside outside of Dushanbe which was staggeringly beautiful and was as good for shooting photographs as Nepal had been in my National Geographic days. With the money from 2000 postcards sold for charity, we assisted a dirt-poor village. Administrative officer Sara Penhune, with Russian and good Tajik people skills, went out to the village along with driver Mahmud. The latter, maybe the cleverest fellow around, realized that our 100 coats and 100 boots and 100 hats or whatever would spark a dog fight. He lined up the entire village by order of height and then distributed them by having groups step forward by height. Elegant.

Q: Who did you sell these postcards to?

HUDDLE: All locally sold. They went like hotcakes. The problem was that I paid for only one print run in New Delhi and the Foreign Minister Nazarov phoned two days after the sale started and said, "I want a thousand for the ministry". I gulped and said, "aargh, sorry, sold out." It wasn't prudent to do a reprint as charity sideline work at embassies often runs up against arcane State regulations.

Q: These were pictures that you had taken around Tajikistan on weekend jaunts.

HUDDLE: New Delhi printers did a great job. You can see them on the Internet under my nickname. After a Cal Berkeley interview as part of their distinguished person series, they, sans permission, placed the postcards on the Internet and supposedly got an award

for best free website photos. No harm, no foul. The cause is good: Tajikistan deserves favorable publicity.

Q: How about Embassy support like cars, we've talked about telephones?

HUDDLE: Vehicle support became adequate. We had armored vehicles and Langley early on flew in a four-and-a-half-ton armored Peugeot 607 for its COS. State had several eight-ton fully armored Blazers but these proved a mixed blessing given Tajikistan's burning summers, steep inclines, bad fuel, and altitude. Routinely, the driver Mahmud would have to cut the air-conditioning whenever the motor started overheating. Inside a sealed vehicle in 100 degree plus heat is hot.

Q: Now in the neighborhood is Afghanistan how about what's going on in Tajikistan that's impacting on Afghanistan or the other way around?

HUDDLE: Well, there are lots of sensitive, secret squirrel stuff that was going on all the time. In other words, when Bin Laden was almost captured, we were tangentially involved. Most of it was secret or compartmented information and probably should remain so or at least I'm not going to be the first one to pop it out. A host of Special Ops were being conducted in concert with the Tajiks.

Keep in mind that the USSR had invaded Afghanistan from Tajikistan in December of 1979. Northern Afghanistan is largely Tajik and Dari/Farsi/Tajik are effectively almost the same language. One of our efforts was to try and get the UN/Kabul to hire Tajiks to do some of their local work. The problem was the Tajiks had the language to do the job but they didn't have the language, English, that was necessary to navigate the UN hiring hurdles to get the job. Again, a classic case where the system hires those who are adept at filling out the forms for the White Man's game while overlooking those who can actually perform the work in the field.

Q: In 2003 March 20 the U.S. goes into Iraq, Iraqi Freedom...

HUDDLE: An unpleasant chapter. Like many Near East Ambassadors, I was lied to by DOD Undersecretary Feith's shop. "Oh, we have all the intelligence, we've connected the dots, this is as plain as the nose on your face what's going on." With ample background, I was dubious because secular Saddam hated Al Qaida.

Next came a fairly high-level phone call on the open line, not a cable, instructing me to see President Rahmonov and ask for public support. I responded, "listen, he's kept his mouth shut and that's the best we can hope for. This would be an unpopular move in Tajikistan where every senior government official longs for us to finish the job in Afghanistan. It's an unpopular move anywhere in the region, so let's leave it be." A day or so later, another phone call at a higher level repeating the pitch. I said, "So no cable telling me what to do, right?" I got a third phone call. Same drill.

These pressurings had a cost. It is easy for Washington to depict the field as not supportive of national policy. Honest feedback at times can only be provided at one's peril. One gets a rep for not being a team player. All but the exceptionally skillful, determined and well-connected Ambassadors can be steamrolled into backing ill-thought initiatives coming down the pike over the phone and NOT in writing. A classic bureaucratic gambit. A staple in the Soviet Union and not unknown at State and DOD.

Q: You weren't offered anything after Tajikistan?

HUDDLE: Laos had been mentioned. EUR saw me as an outlier; the Assistant Secretary wasn't my bud after the communications snafu left her looking bad in front of Secretary Powell. In any case, the EUR Front Office had to take off the Russian Club who had paid their dues in USSR Moscow.

I opted to retire. Deputy Secretary Armitage called me for an hour to talk about Iran. He was gracious and apologetic, volunteering that Laos had gone to someone the Secretary himself put forward. So be it. At the end of the day, State had afforded this reluctant diplomat a fabulous ride. It seemed time to try something different.

Q: Let's see you officially depart the post on October 9, I think it was.

HUDDLE: That's right. Went to Berlin to give lectures for the Marshall Center. The Center tried to bring me on as number two via a Department mechanism. After retirement, they flew me to Berlin to pitch a professorship.

Q: Before we leave Tajikistan let's talk about the IG that comes out and looks at the post. When was that visit?

HUDDLE: Fall of 2002? Ambassador Bob Barbour, then 75, headed the team. Later a colleague at the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Bob initially worried us as his age was evident. We were wrong. Maybe the best Foreign Service writer of our time, Bob is thoroughly decent, sagacious, and reviewed with consummate commonsense and a poorly staffed and supported embassy. Even at our best, we had a third of the 2016 Dushanbe staff and yet far more work of high-level Washington interest. If truth be told, we failed to dot regulatory "I's on inventory reconciliations or soil samples confirming trace elements of molybdenum that keep an elaborate Washington bureaucracy on the payroll. Ambassador Barbour looked past all this and commended in highest terms our achievements. Told our Front Office that it was the best European post he had inspected.

Q: How big was the inspection team?

HUDDLE: Three officers

Q: So you retired in 2003, yes?

HUDDLE: Yes, in 2003 I came back to the Department on October 30th or thereabouts. I had an old Mercedes 12-cylinder 600S black on black in storage. A real mafia vehicle. I chauffeured my wife and mother-in-law from DC via Florida to San Francisco. I played the part of an aged white transporting the head of the Tong. Two classy fine-featured Asians meriting a white driver.

Q: Why did you pick California?

HUDDLE: Family ties, ice-skating rinks and windsurfing under the Golden Gate. Didn't want to hang around DC to relive my career in retirement. About a year later, the three OIG ambassadors who had inspected my embassies recommended me as a senior inspector of U.S. ambassadors and their embassies. Off and on, I did that for five years before moving on to train Special Forces.

Q: Okay this is the 20th of August we have returned to our conversation with ambassador Huddle. Ambassador last time we spoke we got you retired. But in fact you have been doing some more interesting things in retirement, almost another full career primarily with the Office of Inspector General which you mentioned was of great assistance during your career. How did you get this opportunity?

HUDDLE: Well when I first retired I did some lectures/seminars at Harvard, Georgetown, Stanford and worked for PACOM. Next came lecturing on high-end tours that flew private 757s from Machu Picchu to Easter Island to Samoa to Bhutan, Tibet, and Timbuktu etc.

Concurrently, the OIG hired me in 2005 summer to conduct a Rule-of-Law inspection in Iraq. The programs ran to more than a billion dollars to include prison construction and wholesale restructuring of Iraq's judicial system on down. Our five-person team, including co-leader Ambassador Battle, flew MilAir from Amman. We corkscrewed sharply down into Baghdad Airport. As Ambassadors, we did not have to wait until 4 a.m. for the so-called rhino bus into town. Instead, we helicoptered in. Frankly, it was more nerve-wracking than our plane crash in that the pilot flew about 150 feet off the ground dodging minarets at an extreme angle. Had he sneezed, we would have been toast. We landed right next to one of Saddam Hussein's palaces that served as our embassy and walked over to single-wides that we shared. The TV on top of the pink plastic chair was a nice touch.

The very first night featured rocketing. Loudspeakers said "go to the safe haven" but security had not told us 'where'. Myself, I took a ceramic flak jacket, poured a paper cup of Old Saddle Sores and clambered under the bed as the ceilings were paper-thin aluminum. Phoned security whose line was busy for the next 45 minutes. When all clear sounded, I told the RSO that I had just hunkered down rather than wander around outside in search of a safe haven. He approved. Marhaba Iraq.

Our estimation as the inspection got underway was that Embassy Baghdad was full of committed, hardworking, talented, misused people. A thousand strong, with a handful of real Arabic speakers capable of direct contact work. It was mini-Washington where one clears things back and forth between different floors of the Department, only this time it happened to be an embassy. I didn't see a product justifying the staffing. Ninety percent could have gone home without hurting USG equities.

Q: Now the programs that you were looking at were those programs executed by the American staff or civilian or the U.S. military?

HUDDLE: No, we were primarily reviewing programs being executed by State. Some had a military component via Commanders Special Purpose Funds. The military did better in that they dispensed with reams and reams of paperwork. All in all, the programs produced minimal bang for the buck as security expenses at times ate up as much as 80 percent of the budget.

Q: What about the Embassy's management?

HUDDLE: Makeshift. The ambassador, a political appointee and wonderfully nice, ultra-disorganized person endlessly changed his schedule. This generated rippling inefficiencies as subordinates had to alter their schedules in turn and sub-subordinates followed suit. Most dysfunctional embassy I had ever seen.

Q: Did you get involved with Abu Ghraib?

HUDDLE: No. The sole time I got involved in anything that one might put on the scandal column of the Washington Post was via a meeting with the Minister of Interior. I used Arabic in the meeting to assure more candor. At one point I asked, "What are you going to do with the air conditioners that we've given you for your prisons? (U.S. law requires that if it is hotter than 100 degrees more than 6 days a month a prison has to be air conditioned.) He mused in Arabic, "We don't air condition prisoners in Iraq...the normal population has less than one percent air conditioning." I pressed, "So what are you going to do with them." He answered, "The morning you leave I'm going to unplug them, truck them to the market and sell them off." I didn't translate that. It's a congressionally mandated thing and well meant. The thermometer that August day officially reached 122 in the shade.

Q: The people on the American side delivering this training and this program were they well trained for what they were supposed to do?

HUDDLE: Companies like Parsons were highly professional but could not control security. No one knew where the next IED would be.

Q: Well let's back up a little. Why was the security situation so inadequate?

HUDDLE: As State had predicted and the Bush Administration ignored, “do not expect to be welcomed with open arms when you come into a country that has profoundly different cultures or religions or values and expect the populace to embrace you as the Messiah.” That’s not the way the world works. The U.S. had this notion that somehow we would be seen as liberators. The average Iraqi probably thinks now, “Well, whatever Saddam Hussein’s problems he’s better than this alternative.”

Q: Before you started off on this particular inspection I presume there were briefings in Washington for your team as to what you were looking for or here’s the background?

HUDDLE: We met with senior NSC and State players as well as with Parsons and other companies. The eye-opener was to truck over to DynCorp and the other Beltway Bandits. Never seen such high-end offices. Looked like a white-shoe law firm. We said to ourselves “I wonder what’s paying for this?”

Q: Well that’s an interesting part of the whole Iraqi thing that AID and I presume most of the money went to AID or even State actually went to contractors not State Department or AID employees.

HUDDLE: The theory is that the private sector gets more bang for the buck. I think you can make arguments pro and con having done both sides. Contractors can hire and fire, but someone up at the top is making far more than the President.

At State Department, it seemingly took one person working full time to fire one person; There was endless procedural/legal blowback that made everybody reluctant to try to get rid of under performers. Cases abound. We once got rid of a surly employee by giving her position away to an unsuspecting office -- as well as two parking places and, we joked, draft choices and an undisclosed amount of cash.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

HUDDLE: Khalilzad. An administration favorite who could be impressive but who seemingly had no interest in leadership or management. After cancelling six follow-on sessions (we met him early on), his youthful political-appointee staff assistant phoned the evening of our departure. The kid says, “The ambassador can” meet you tonight at eleven o’clock”. I said, “No”. He, aghast, said “you have to”. I replied, “well, actually we are inspecting his operation, he’s NOT inspecting us. We’re finished.” The staff aide said, “What what, no no, the ambassador is ready for you.” I said, “Sonny, we are not ready for the ambassador, we are inspecting him.” SitCom dialogue.

Q: Now you are cutting your teeth on your first OIG experience. Are you hired as a WAE or a contractor?

HUDDLE: No, just a WAE, When Actually Employed. I think one other inspection that would be useful to talk about here is when I went to Cuba because that gives you a feel for the when- actually-employed aspect of the job.

Q: Okay, let's go to Cuba for a moment. We'll wait a moment to try and keep in some sort of chronological order so you can fill things in perhaps later what other OIG trips were you on?

HUDDLE: As team leader, I inspected 15 embassies and their Ambassadors. Besides five in Africa and six in Central America/Caribbean, we did Venezuela, Ethiopia and Djibouti. We were supposed to go to Asmara but the Eritrean government wouldn't grant visas. But the Cuba inspection experience stands out. Here too, we initially could not get visas.

Q: Well let's go to the Cuba inspection then. Now because you are WAE there is a cap on either the time or the money that you have so you are probably only getting two gigs a year.

Q: Okay, we are returning to our conversation. What's the date you have for that inspection of Cuba?

HUDDLE: That inspection was originally supposed to be in January of 2008 but visa problems delayed us a month. Our so-called Interests Section didn't expect us to come and hadn't prepared well. It was an oddball three weeks because the Inspector General, soon to retire under a cloud, met with the Principal Officer in Washington without us present. This Principal Officer was supposed to come and see us as well, but blew us off.

The Inspector General inappropriately stayed at the gentleman's house for one night and also instructed me on what to think and write. I parried, "Well sir, you can draft it yourself as Inspector General, but our job is to report what we find." He shot back, "No, no I want you to write something laudatory and this is how I want you to do it." Well that's an untenable position when you're a WAE because you can be fired on the spot with no recourse. P.S., during the DC editing of the final report, he would dump in positive adjectives and we would quietly slide in correctives buried in the text. MASH again.

At one point I was walking to an isolated corner in the breakfast area and the Inspector General spotted me, "Sit down, Pancho, sit down, join us for breakfast," Two other inspectors were sitting there, sipping coffee not saying anything". The Inspector General asked me, "How is it going so far?" I said, "okay, we're just getting started." And he bore in, "No, no, how is this principal officer?" I said, "Well, he is okay but we are just getting started."

The Inspector General bore in, "Well I think our man in Havana is great, what do you think?" I said, "We are just getting started sir, all we've done really is look at some of

these confidential employee questionnaires.” He says, “What do you think of him on the basis of the questionnaires?” I said, “Well, bottom ten percent.” He said “Well, I think this Principal Officer is great and I want the report to reflect that.” I said, “Well sir you can always write that you are the inspector general.” He said, “No, I want you to write it and this is what I want.” My fellow two inspectors took another sip of coffee.

Our overarching finding was that officer time was being wasted with hours and hours of windy meetings to discuss "after Castro". People would fidget in visible discomfort, listening day-after-day to notional plans. Everyone, even Med, was cock-sure that Castro was soon to check out. Eight years later, this seems ridiculous

Q: So in this particular inspection the team leader was the inspector general himself?

HUDDLE: No, I was always the team leader as an Ambassador.

Q: Oh.

HUDDLE: The Inspector General just came along because he wanted to see Cuba. Not only that, he insisted on going to Guantanamo Bay as well and we had a bracing discussion on this score. He said, “yes, I want to fly from Havana to Guantanamo Bay and I want you to make it happen.” I said, “Well sir, you know they’ll shoot you down if you try to fly an aircraft from Havana to Guantanamo Bay.”

Q: How big was that team and who else was on it?

HUDDLE: Bob Whitehead was the deputy and became Ambassador in Togo, he was a terrific writer and very good inspector.

Q: Now this would be, let me use the word normal inspection of the mission so the inspectors inspecting team excuse me would have a high ranking officer and admin officer. I mean you are looking at all the embassy sections. Maybe if commercial, economic were heavy you’d have a person like that but you are supposed to look at all of how the embassy is being run?

HUDDLE: We had about five inspectors, enough for an Interests Section with no programs to speak of and minimal diplomatic activity. The lead officer was officially only the Principal Officer. He lived in a glorious house described as 30,000 square feet in the Washington Post the other day; it’s actually just 18,500 square feet. The DCM lived o.k. but we never saw his house as he flew off to the U.S. early in the inspection -- a no-no for an inspected post. As our visas came so late and it was difficult to get in and out of Cuba, we let it go. Once again, this inspection wasn’t being played entirely by normal rules.

Q: How does one get into Havana?

HUDDLE: We flew from Miami via a special flight that takes relatives going back and forth. The guy in front of me had an ungainly eight-foot tall package. I said, "What's that?" And he said, "A chrome bumper for a '56 Cadillac". Havana, of course, was full of life in some ways and dreary in others. As I told my wife, you have no idea how handsome your husband is -- every young single Cuban girl wanted to hit on me. Well, they need a ticket to ride, to get out. It's that simple (or was).

Q: How was the work life balance for the mission people?

HUDDLE: Bad. All negative issues. Immense problems getting goods and services. Harassment from officialdom. The Principal Officer's goods sat in the port for 15 months. The embassy was saddled with a variety of rules that made life even more difficult. They had a non-fraternization policy more strict than that of Moscow or Beijing. It made no sense, if you looked at it rationally. What it was basically amounted to was that if you slept with a local, you were summarily fired. In Moscow or Beijing, if you confessed the next day and told the security officer what had happened, you could survive. Of course, this meant that officers in Havana would be more likely to be blackmailed.

Q: What were some of the major recommendations from your...

HUDDLE: We recommended unplugging a giant electronic billboard right next to the Embassy -- a health hazard and a counterproductive irritation to the Cubans. It broadcasts US news clips, but so slowly as to be worthless. This was the brainchild of a previous U.S. Man in Havana.

The Cubans simply blocked the billboard by erecting a gigantic phalanx of national flags in front of it. Embassy hardliners thought it was clever but in the end it probably played into the Cuban nationalism that was the regime's greatest advantage in fending off USG initiatives. We thought we were sticking it to the Communists but the reality was the government used this to amplify already strong nationalistic feelings.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to see what the rest of the diplomatic community was doing?

HUDDLE: Not really. We met a few diplomats. None shared our hard-line approach. Consider, a typical UN vote on Cuba might be 183 to 3, with Liberia and Israel on our side. It was like metric countries: US, Liberia and Burma.

Q: What was one of the best places that you inspected?

HUDDLE: You mean in terms of just overall well-run posts?

Q: Yeah.

HUDDLE: Togo had a pro. Honduras had a political appointee ambassador who was extremely effective. Ethiopia, between ambassadors after star Ambassador Yamamoto left, burned through five acting DCMs, the best of whom was a mid-level officer who pushed back against USG policy that allowed a bad government to abuse its citizenry. Ambassador Swan ran a tight happy ship in Djibouti as did Chargé (later Ambassador) Brent Hardt in Barbados. He had clever ideas to build up morale and interest in the seven tiny countries covered by the embassy. My favorite was Brent's monthly TGIF quiz show wherein staff would try to name all of the capitals for all the different countries in the Caribbean; not as easy as you think. What's the capital of St. Lucia? I remember thinking to myself that I thought I knew geography but half the capitals in the Caribbean were a mystery and remain so.

Q: We were talking about well run posts. Let's turn that around and what was a post that might not have been well run and what problems did you see there?

HUDDLE: Typically, a post would reach critical negative mass once several so-so, infectiously malcontent officers soured the atmosphere. A consul general hated by all the visa worker bees because he sat in his office reading the Herald Tribune. A DCM, at post for two years, who didn't know where a section chief's office was when it was only 100 feet away. An Ambassador who wasted \$386,000 on an elevator in a two-story residence on short-term lease. Another envoy bought a high-freeboard emergency evacuation boat that sat like a beached whale in the GSO compound miles from the nearest launching pad. An Ambassador who put in a voucher for fifty cents.

Q: That's fine because what's educationally interesting is what you should be paying attention to and what didn't get paid attention to rather than the posts perhaps.

HUDDLE: Kingston, Jamaica comes to mind for unhappy local employees. Typically, the inspectors meet all the host country nationals early on. An all-hands session, without American bosses present. Of course, in most countries, the local employees are wary of this alleged chance for safe candor because they are afraid the inspectors will rat them out to American management. Anyway, the OIG has a written rating system for confidential questionnaires completed by local employees. Scores range from one to five, with five the top. I asked everybody who had voted 'five' to raise a hand. No hands. 'Four', one hand. 'Three', five or six hands. 'Two', a lot of hands. 'One', a forest of hands along with shouts of "what about zero"? "What about zero"? The Jamaicans had style.

One reason the local workforce hated management was that the post had blithely gotten rid of all the parking places for the national employees -- a major headache which meant talented senior locals had to walk a mile in a hot humid climate from the nearest available unsafe parking. Washington and Embassy Front Office's bright idea.

Q: How long did you work in the OIG?

HUDDLE: I worked there off and on for about five years. The work has a negative side and most everyone moves on. I actually ended up going off to PACOM as advisor to the CINC for Southeast Asia. Then, training Special Forces at Forts Polk, Bragg etc.

Q: Now is that contract work or WAE work?

HUDDLE: Contract work.

Q: How does a retired ambassador with OIG experience end up with Special Forces?

HUDDLE: They needed somebody with an Iran background for wargaming which often involves that part of the world. Their ideal candidate was also an Ambassador with hands-on experience at a danger post in a war environment. Tajikistan filled the bill, as did Cebu or even Burma.

The interview, by phone, took perhaps two minutes to hire and set salary/work conditions. When that company lost the Special Forces contract, the next firm phoned me before the ink on their new contract was dry. Again, about a minute to set the terms. Mirabile dictu! What a difference from USAID which periodically offers positions and then asks for forty pages of paperwork, just to get on the rolls. Death by Human Resources Bureaucrats.

Q: Now this is a role playing exercise simulation gaming which State itself does some with FSI. I mean that's what the ambassador's course is, the DCMs course so in this case the Foreign Service and the military are falling parallel training paths?

HUDDLE: This is far, far better with MILES gear and as many as 4,000 people parachuting into the war zone. Different in scope and complexity and budget. Unlike State, the military has the funds and mindset to take training seriously.

Q: But it gives you a feel for what it takes to do a NEO and that sort of stuff. I'm trying to think what neo means.

HUDDLE: Noncombatant emergency operation. I give lectures on how to do emergency evacuations (NEOs in milspeak).

Q: How about the bureaucraties.

HUDDLE: Manageable. The military contracting system is far easier than State's arrangement for retired specialists. At State, one can only work X number of hours a year. I had to repay over nine grand because my inspection at two troubled Central American posts necessarily ran long. One embassy had 55 recommendations where typically there are 10 or 15. I faced the choice of either downing the tools/walking off the job or finishing it knowing that the State might stiff me. A grievance got lawyered away. That did not leave me feeling warm and fuzzy toward State.

Q: What kinds of things was that post struggling with?

HUDDLE: It had serious issues in all four major sections

Q: In general, inspector general things have been in the news lately. Do you see them as a benefit, a good second look?

HUDDLE: A plus in terms of providing management consultation. Historically, however, some of their disciplinary initiatives have been grossly unfair. The investigative section has been sharply criticized by the Department of Justice, among others. Politics are played during investigations, with the senior and well-connected getting "a pass".

The current inspector general scrapped one of the sharpest arrows in the OIG quiver -- efficiency reports written by the team leader on the Ambassador, DCM, and major Principal Officers. These had proven far more insightful and influential than regular reports which can be long on blather and short on candor.

Q: Since your retirement in '03 and you've had the OIG is there any other particular activity you've gotten into because of our Foreign Service career that we haven't touched on here.

HUDDLE: My first retirement job was a hoot -- a sideline photographer at an ABC Monday Night Football game in Oakland. You are down on the sidelines next to Jerry Rice, Brett Favre, and the local 'Dallas' cowgirls with a long camera shooting pictures and avoiding players hurtling across the sidelines. You learn that in pro games, photographers stay put because the players, all fantastic athletes, will twist to miss you. For college games, run to the left.

Q: Excellent.

End of interview