

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

RAY E. JONES

Interviewed by: Thomas Dunnigan
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INTERVIEW

[Note: This transcript was not edited by Mr. Jones.]

Q: I am today about to interview Ray Jones who had a lengthy career in the Foreign Service and was one of the top secretarial assistants in the service for a number of years. The date is August 23, 1994.

Ray, why don't you tell us first of all how you acquired your secretarial training and what you did with it.

JONES: Well, after high school, 1940 which I graduated, in the fall of 1940 I went to Lafayette Business College which is in Lafayette, Indiana. During that period, I took a civil service test and in 1941, I came to Washington, DC. I spent a year in Washington, DC, in the Department of the Interior, one year, and then I went into the army, 1942 to 1945. My career in the army involved a lot of secretarial work, mostly court reporting. I was overseas from 1944 to 1945, and was mustered out in 1945. In 1946, I went to Berlin with the Department of the Army and remained there until 1949.

Q: You were there then during some of Berlin's most exciting times.

JONES: It was terribly exciting at that time because I was there during the Berlin airlift in 1948.

Q: Yes I was there at the same time, but unfortunately, with all the Americans there our paths never crossed. What were you doing during that period in Berlin?

JONES: In Berlin, I was in the statistical branch, OMGUS.

Q: What is that? The Office of Military Government....

JONES: The Office of Military Government for the United States, yes.

Q: What were your impressions of the situation in Berlin at that time?

JONES: Well, I certainly admired the Berliners with all their suffering, and when I first went there, you were not supposed to fraternize or anything else.

Q: However, that was honored in the breach as much as anything else, wasn't it?

JONES: Absolutely.

Q: Did your life change at all during the blockade? Tell us about conditions then.

JONES: I can't say that we really suffered. I think that the main thing was the power outages. You had a lot of candlelight dinners.

Q: But there was no physical danger?

JONES: No, no physical danger, none whatsoever.

Q: Well then, you were still with the army at that time. How did you get into the State Department?

JONES: Well, I should say that after Berlin, I was with, I guess it was ECA at that time, three months in Korea in 1950. I was evacuated from there in June 1950.

Q: How did you get to Korea? Did you go with the Department of the Army?

JONES: No, it was the Economic Cooperation Administration.

Q: Oh, the ECA, I'm sorry, which today would be known as AID.

JONES: It's AID now. After Korea, I came back to the States.

Q: Excuse me, Ray, but tell us a bit about Korea. Those were fantastically exciting days in Korea in 1950.

JONES: Tom, I was only there three months.

Q: Before the attack?

JONES: I arrived in March and, in June, the communist onslaught came on, or the north Koreans. I was there when it happened. I was evacuated from there to Japan.

Q: Was there panic at the Embassy at the time? What were the conditions like?

JONES: I can't say it was really panic, but most of the time was spent on destroying documents before word came to evacuate the place.

Q: Ambassador Muccio was there I believe?

JONES: Ambassador Muccio, yes.

Q: And you were evacuated first to Tokyo, then to the States?

JONES: To southern Japan and I finally arrived in Tokyo. I decided not to go back to Korea. I resigned and came back to the States.

Q: Resigned from the ECA?

JONES: From the ECA.

Q: Well, pick up the story from that time. This was 1950 and you were then obviously looking for work?

JONES: I came back to Europe on my own and I had the nibble of a job in Hamburg with the Military Security Board. I was in Hamburg from 1950 to 1952. But at the end of 1950 I was offered a job with the State Department and that's how I came in with the State Department being hired overseas.

Q: Did you work for the Consul General?

JONES: No, it was called Military Security Board and it was not with the Consulate.

Q: Not attached to the Consulate?

JONES: No. I was very close with the American Consulate General personnel and with the Consul General whose name at that time was Cowan I think.

Q: What did the Military Security Board do?

JONES: They controlled the ship building.

Q: Hamburg being the largest port for that?

JONES: Yes. It was a tripartite organization, French, British, and American.

Q: Did you find the work interesting?

JONES: Yes.

Q: Tell me about your attitude toward the Germans. Had that changed or not?

JONES: It had changed. I had a lot of good German friends and a lot of good British friends, Hamburg being at that time the British zone of Germany.

Q: By this time you were on the State Department rolls.

JONES: I was on the State Department rolls and I got a direct transfer from Hamburg to the Consulate General in Dusseldorf.

Q: What was your job in Dusseldorf?

JONES: Secretary to the Consul General.

Q: Who was?

JONES: LaVerne Baldwin.

Q: Yes, I see. I remember it was quite a happy staff there.

JONES: Oh yes. He had the best morale probably of anybody in Germany.

Q: Did you find that the Consular officers were well managed?

JONES: Extremely well managed. The Dusseldorf staff was probably the best I ever served with and to this day every five or six years we get together for a Dusseldorf reunion.

Q: I've heard of that and I envy you. I think that's a marvelous thing to do. Were you as a secretary included in post events or not?

JONES: Absolutely. There was no division between officers and staff personnel.

Q: This gave you five straight years in Germany. And then came a transfer?

JONES: After Dusseldorf I went on home leave and was assigned to Bern, Switzerland which was my first Ambassadorship with Frances Willis.

Q: Oh, this is a first for the Service, having first career woman and a first for you?

JONES: Yes, I think I was very lucky to get to be secretary to the Ambassador at that early stage.

Q: Well I had known her in London and she was quite a remarkable woman. Were there problems in Switzerland?

JONES: No, Tom. No problems at all. I must say, it was unique to have been assigned to her, because women in Switzerland do not vote.

Q: But they accepted her?

JONES: They accepted her. I must say she was old style Foreign Service and I learned a great deal from her.

Q: During your period there, I believe, the Big Four meeting took place, did it not? Eisenhower, and Khrushchev, and Bulganin got together. Was that ...?

JONES: I don't believe so.

Q: The spirit of Geneva arose from that? That would not have affected you in Bern? I think that was 1955.

JONES: No, Geneva was kind of a separate entity. We didn't do too much with Geneva.

Q: Were there many visitors in Switzerland that gave you problems, or was it routine?

JONES: Not in Bern. Maybe Geneva and Zurich.

Q: I see. Well, after your years with Willis you were transferred to the Department?

JONES: I had illness in the family and I was transferred back to the Department. 1956 to 1958 I was on the Israel/Jordan desk. I think we had the 1957 war.

Q: The '56 war, yes.

JONES: Yes. It was a lot of work. Much, much overtime, but very interesting period.

Q: Yes, of course. You were there approximately two years.

JONES: Two years. Almost two years to the time.

Q: And then in 1958?

JONES: In 1958, I had the two years and I was ready for a transfer, and I had my first experience in Africa. I went to Khartoum and I had a marvelous Ambassador there who was a real Arabist, James Moose.

Q: Oh, yes. He was one of the best Arabists in the service.

JONES: Khartoum was a sleepy little post and I had four marvelous years there.

Q: Well, the country hadn't been independent very long then?

JONES: No, it was a British colony I would say.

Q: Were you able to travel about the country or not?

JONES: No, it was impossible. No roads and it was very primitive.

Q: Most people remark on the heat there. I believe it's one of the hottest posts in the Foreign Service.

JONES: In the summertime it can go up to 120, but it is a very dry heat.

Q: I see, unlike some of the West African posts where it ...

JONES: Yes, it's different.

Q: Did you get to know any of the local people? Any Sudanese?

JONES: Oh, yes. Very, very friendly types.

Q: How important was it for our people to be able to speak Arabic there? Could they get by with English.

JONES: No. English was the second language.

Q: It was useful to have Arabic, I'm sure.

JONES: It was useful to have it, but everything at the Foreign Ministry was done at the English level.

Q: We all know that in recent years there has been a raging civil war in the Sudan between the north and the south. Was that evident in your day?

JONES: No, not at all. But they treated the southerners, Tom, like second-class citizens.

Q: I see. That is the difference in ethnic backgrounds, etc. and religions I guess too.

JONES: Right.

Q: What were the main concerns of the US with regard to Sudan, if you could tell us? Were we trying to recruit them as allies? Did we want them to stay away from closer ties with the radical Arabs or ...?

JONES: At that time, the Sudanese were kind of independent

Q: Since Sudan is a third-world country, we must have been doing something to assist them. Was there an AID mission at that time?

JONES: When I arrived on the 1st of October, 1958, there was just beginning to develop a large, large AID mission.

Q: But there aren't many people in Sudan, are there?. It is a very sparsely populated country.

JONES: No, it's a very, very poor country.

Q: What was our AID mission trying to do there?

JONES: To help them get on their feet. Exports they do. It's just like Egypt. They raise a lot of cotton. Some of the world's best cotton. It's not as good as Egyptian cotton, but very good.

Q: Was the AID mission a success in your view?

JONES: I would say no.

Q: Why was that? We didn't put enough money in? Or it wasn't well used?

JONES: We put a lot of money in, but I would say it was probably for the wrong projects.

Q: I see. Well, after your four years in Khartoum, Ray, I notice you were transferred to Vienna. Quite a change of pace. Tell me about your assignment there.

JONES: Yes. I received a direct transfer from Khartoum to Vienna. I was there from 1962 to 1964 and my position there was secretary to the DCM, Bob Brandon.

Q: Oh, yes. He had a good deal of background in central European affairs.

JONES: Vienna was a delightful spot because our Ambassador there was Jimmy Riddleberger. He was absolutely a delight. The staff adored him. Not only him, but Mrs. Riddleberger who was ha!

Q: As nice as they come.

JONES: Anybody who could serve with the Riddlebergers were indeed fortunate.

Q: I know having been under him in Berlin, I remember well how popular he was there. Did we have many problems in those days in Vienna with the Austrians?

JONES: Not at all. Not at all. Anybody who is assigned to Vienna should take advantage of all the amenities. Magnificent opera and delightful restaurants.

Q: Is that where you began your well-known art collection?

JONES: It was in the beginning, yes. Vienna was extremely good shopping.

Q: You certainly added to it in subsequent posts. Two years in Vienna and then came another direct change.

JONES: I was due for home leave and at that time, there was a new team getting ready to go to Saigon. The Ambassador was General Maxwell Taylor, and the DCM was Career Ambassador, U. Alexis Johnson.

Q: And did they ask you to go along with them?

JONES: And General Taylor, out of my files from the State Department chose me to come to Saigon.

Q: I presume you'd not known him in Berlin because he had arrived in Berlin in 1950?

JONES: I knew him vaguely but not well.

Q: Did he regard himself as successful in Saigon, one of the most difficult missions in the world at that time?

JONES: Well, General Taylor is a very astute general, but he could irritate the Vietnamese, I mean lecturing to them and things like that. His assignment there was for one year only. And I must say, of all my posts, I would say Saigon was one of the most exciting that I had. We went through four or five coups d'etat and it was just work, work, work, almost as events proved all the hard work was for nothing.

Q: And you were there during the beginning of the great American build-up, were you not?

JONES: The great American build-up. We came out to replace General Harkins I think it was with Westie, General William Westmoreland. I had very close relations with him. A lot of times on Sunday he would call me up and say: "I'm going out on a little field trip. Would you like to go with me?"

Q: Was this General Westmoreland? It was very kind of him.

JONES: Yes, General Westmoreland. Of course, he was a protégé of Maxwell Taylor. When he was at West Point, he was the number one cadet and that impressed General Taylor who at that time was the Commandant at West Point. Westie was kind of his protégé.

Q: What was the atmosphere you found in Saigon among the Vietnamese? Were they delighted we were there? Were they sullen? Were they helpful?

JONES: Not too helpful, Tom. We always thought they didn't pull their weight.

Q: Tell me about the arrangement at the Embassy where you had two seniors such as General Taylor and Ambassador Johnson. Did Taylor leave the running of the Embassy to Johnson? Did they get into each other's way?

JONES: No. I believe he and Johnson attended, maybe, Chinese training together, so they were great friends, and Taylor was the one to help Johnson to come to Vietnam. He chose him as his DCM.

Q: Was the Embassy in agreement with ... Policy in Washington was promulgated in Washington or were there differences?

JONES: No. I don't believe so. There were no differences.

Q: We saw the situation. Both ends were about the same. Why did General Taylor leave there after a year?

JONES: It was agreed between him and President Johnson that he would take the assignment for one year only.

Q: I see. Did you feel yourself in any personal danger out there?

JONES: No. None whatsoever.

Q: Not even on your trips with General Westmoreland?

JONES: No, although one night during period there we had several bombs. The Embassy was bombed but I was back in the States on a trip with General Taylor when the Embassy was blown up and there were quite a few casualties.

Q: Then you left with the General and moved to the White House with him, is that correct?

JONES: Yes. He asked me to come back to the White House with him. I spent five interesting years there from 1965 to 1970.

Q: With the General?

JONES: With the General. He was Special Assistant to President Johnson.

Q: And then also presumably to President Nixon for a while if it went on until 1970?

JONES: At that time yes. General Taylor was head of the President's Advisory Board. And it was interesting, Tom, during my 1965 to 1970. Every three or four months we would make a trip back to Vietnam, because Taylor was advising Johnson on Vietnam.

Q: Could you describe a little more about what the General was doing from '65 till the end of the Johnson administration? Was he concentrating almost entirely on the Vietnam war or was he doing other things?

JONES: No, he was concentrating on the Vietnam war.

Q: Did he see eye to eye with the Pentagon and the State Department or were there differences that you believe in.

JONES: No, no differences.

Q: What was your impression of the LBJ's White House. How did it function? What was it like to work for a man as prominent as he was?

JONES: I was a great admirer of President Johnson. He had a very, very good staff. The National Security Advisor when I first came back in 1965 was McGeorge Bundy. After McGeorge Bundy was Walt Rostow.

Q: Two very prominent people who had a great influence?

JONES: And we had very good relations with those people. Many times, I would be typing something and get it right out of the typewriter and Taylor would take it directly to McGeorge Bundy and it would be pushed on directly to President Johnson.

Q: What would you say of your time there with the Nixon White House? How great was the difference between that and what had gone on with LBJ?

JONES: It was completely different. Taylor being a democrat and he stayed on about a year as the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board after Nixon came in. I could see the handwriting on the wall and I was about ready to be posted anyway. So I left there and Taylor left there also in 1970.

Q: Did the General retire from that or did he go to another position?

JONES: He went on to another think tank operation. I think he was president of that. I think they called it IDA. I don't know what the initials stand for, but I had nothing to do with that.

Q: How did the General get along with Henry Kissinger in the White House, or did they?

JONES: I'm glad you brought that up. He got along with Kissinger very well, but it was always difficult to get an appointment to see him. So he kept him on the back burner a great deal of the time, although they were on a first name basis.

Q: Now, you left the General at that time and presumably the Department looked for an assignment for you. What did they find?

JONES: Well, there was nothing upcoming. There were two or three posts available and I volunteered to go to West Africa, Monrovia.

Q: Monrovia. Well that's a I don't think they get many volunteers ...

JONES: They don't get many volunteers for a post like that.

Q: Describe it to us. What was your life like there?

JONES: Very easy going. The Liberians were at that time extremely friendly, but very sensitive. It was kinda like Amos and Andy land.

Q: Was President Tubman alive or had he died?

JONES: I was there during his funeral. A big US delegation was despatched there. The interesting things during my period there was having Mahalia Jackson come in for a concert. At the time, they wanted Eartha Kitt, but Eartha was a little bit too much money so they settled on Mahalia Jackson. She gave a marvelous concert. She was a great gospel singer, and the Liberians were pleased to have her at half the money.

Q: Who was your ambassador during that period?

JONES: The first time I had ever worked for a black, Sam Westerfield.

Q: Oh, Ambassador Westerfield, I see. Did we have a lot of problems with the Liberians? Was the Ambassador easy to work for?

JONES: No. He was very easy to work for.

Q: So, after your experience there, you went back to Europe. Tell us about that.

JONES: Well, from Monrovia, I got a direct transfer to The Hague. This was in the fall of 1971.

Q: Yes I remember it well having been at The Hague at that time. I might add that I know why you were brought there, because the Ambassador, Bill Middendorf, had not had the best rapport with the first two secretaries he'd been given and I think the service was looking for its best. But, anyhow ... Then you arrived in The Hague, and with his reputation which I presume you'd heard of. Did you have any doubt about going there?

JONES: No doubt, whatsoever. Bill Middendorf was an extremely generous person to work for.

Q: Well I think this is partly due to your way of handling ambassadors.

JONES: I enjoyed his flair and his collection of art and taste. Exquisite.

Q: Well, I know that he reciprocated that because he was very impressed with your art collection. Did you have any problems in your life in The Hague or was it ...?

JONES: None whatsoever. I enjoyed the Dutch very much. They were very good friends.

Q: And certainly a tremendous change of climate from Liberia.

JONES: Definitely.

Q: Now I notice that you left The Hague in 1972. Where did you go then?

JONES: In 1972, yes. I was due for home leave, having had a direct transfer, and built up time. I had a friend, I guess he was in the Director General's office at that time, (Cleo Noel) who talked me into coming back to Khartoum where he had just been assigned as Ambassador. I returned to Khartoum in 1973 for one day only because during that time he was assassinated.

Q: Was that on the day you arrived?

JONES: It was the night before. I was en route to Khartoum but had had to spend the night in Athens because there was a terrible haboob, a dust storm. We could not land in Khartoum that evening. So I had to spend the night in Athens and we took off the following morning. I think this was about March 4th, because I think he was assassinated on March 3rd, 1973.

Q: So you arrived there at that terrible moment?

JONES: I arrived there and it was complete chaos.

Q: Because the DCM had been assassinated too?

JONES: Yes, you're right. It was Cleo Noel and Curt Moore, plus a Belgian Charge. Cleo Noel's wife, Lucille Noel. They were anxious to know what I wanted to do. Stay in Khartoum or what I wanted to do. I said: "I want to return to the States with the bodies," which I did.

Q: Tell me. How were the Sudanese at that time? Were there tremendous expressions of regret or were they sullen or...?

JONES: Sorrowful because Cleo Noel had been assigned to Khartoum two or three times, I think, Tom, during the American interests section which the Dutch were handling during that time. I was always very happy in Khartoum.

Q: I know, you mentioned that in your earlier tour. I was wondering because the Sudanese allowed the killers to get away, I believe.

JONES: The killers, the Palestinians, escaped to Cairo.

Q: So you came back with the body and presumably Mrs. Noel, too.

JONES: With Mrs. Noel and well, with both bodies I should say. A presidential jet was dispatched to pick them up and actually the one who was handling all these negotiations was very famous in the State Department. It was Bill Macomber.

Q: Oh, yes.

JONES: He had been at one time Ambassador to Jordan and during my time, back in 1956 to 1958, he was a Special Assistant to Secretary Dulles.

Q: So he brought the bodies back?

JONES: He brought the bodies back, and I was scheduled to return to Khartoum.

Q: Were the bodies buried in Arlington Cemetery?

JONES: In Arlington Cemetery. Both of them in Arlington Cemetery. And I was scheduled eventually to go back to Khartoum. Well, friends in Personnel didn't think it was a good idea and at that time we were in the process of establishing diplomatic relations with China which was breaking. That was in 1973. I was chosen to go to Peking,

or Beijing they call it today, to be secretarial assistant to David Bruce which I was excited to do.

Q: Yes, of course, with his tremendous reputation in the service and the fact that you would be out there among the pioneers. It must have been one of the more interesting experiences of your life.

JONES: Ah. He and his wife were just fantastic to work for. He was a marvelous person. Both of them.

Q: Did he and you and the others get cooperation from the Chinese in opening up the Embassy there or were they difficult?

JONES: No. We had very good relations at the time I was there, '73 to '74. We were not an Embassy. We were ... It was called United States Liaison Office, USLO, they called it. I don't think full diplomatic relations were established till about ... After Mr. Bruce left, and the first Ambassador was President George Bush.

Q: I see. I think it was President Carter who may have established relations but I'm not certain about that. I mean raised it to embassy status.

JONES: No, all this time it was Nixon.

Q: Yes, but I was referring mainly to moving USLO to embassy.

JONES: That I don't remember. That we can look up.

Q: Did Ambassador Bruce think that he had been effective in his mission there, doing what he wanted to do?

JONES: I think so. I believe so, but during that time, during our status with USLO, it was kind of unique because the staff accepted no national day receptions or anything else like that.

Q: And of course they could not perform any of the normal consular functions or anything like that?

JONES: Not at all.

Q: It was largely a reporting unit?

JONES: It was indeed an honor to be accepted because there were about five or six of us. We were the advance party to go into Peking. It was also a unique set up. We had two DCMs.

Q: Tell us about that.

JONES: The two DCMs were John Holdridge who went on to be Ambassador to Singapore and I don't know the other posts. And the other DCM was Alfred Jenkins.

Q: Oh yes. They're both Chinese language men, I believe.

JONES: They're both Chinese experts. John was on the secret mission when we were establishing relations with China. John was the one who went in with Kissinger.

Q: I see. But how can two DCMs function when one has to be sort of looking after the running of the Embassy.

JONES: During this period of time though there really wasn't much work to do because we had no contacts or anything else. The first post I ever had where we called them DCM 1 and DCM 2.

Q: I see, and I presume that in dealing with a country like communist China, where everything was centralized, that the most effective representation could only be done at the highest level, by Ambassador Bruce.

JONES: By Ambassador Bruce, yes. During that period of time, you had to get permission from the Foreign Office to travel and that has changed over the years.

Q: Were you personally able to see anything of China while you were there?

JONES: Canton on my way. I took a vacation back to Hong Kong and we had to stop overnight in Canton and then proceed the next morning. All of that has changed. It's simplified. Also I got to Tientsin.

Q: A seaport.

JONES: A seaport, yes.

Q: And you saw the great wall?

JONES: I must say I did go back for three weeks to China in 1985 and traveled all over the country.

Q: Were you bothered with high level visitors during this period of your service in the Liaison Office in Beijing.

JONES: We had very, very few.

Q: Was there a Kissinger visit at that time?

JONES: Yes, we did have a Kissinger visit and that involved a lot of work. That was very interesting because the whole staff was invited to a banquet at the Great Hall and at that time Zhou En-lai was still alive. Very, very interesting time, and also very good food. During the first six months, housing was very difficult and before we all got apartments, we lived at the Peking Hotel. The food there was just absolutely magnificent.

Q: So one did not suffer?

JONES: China has completely changed since the days when I was there. I think they have enormous staff and maybe too big. I don't know.

Q: Now, after you left Beijing, tell us how that happened.

JONES: This was another situation. Mr. Bruce's assignment out there was for about a year only, just like Maxwell Taylor.

Q: At his request?

JONES: At his request, yes. I knew that he was leaving and I told him I wanted to leave also when he left, and he said he'd help me all that he could. We did a little soul searching and we found out the only thing good coming up was Berlin, back to Berlin again.

Q: You'd come full circle?

JONES: I came full circle, yes. So I received a direct transfer in May, 1974 back to Berlin and I stayed there until I retired in 1978. I had two very, very good Ministers to work for. One was David Kline, and the other was Scott George.

Q: Oh, yes. And how had Berlin changed since you were there?

JONES: Tremendous. Very good housing. I still had a lot of good German friends from my earlier days and the local staff at the US mission there was probably some of the best I've ever seen in the Foreign Service. They could practically run the place.

Q: Now, we also had a mission in East Berlin at that time.

JONES: It was probably about mid-seventies that we decided to establish relations with East Berlin. I believe that first Ambassador was the renowned Senator John Sherman Cooper, and his DCM was also quite au courant with Germany, Brandon Grove.

Q: Did you get to meet these people or were you separated by the wall or ...?

JONES: No, because being stationed in Berlin, we had what you'd call a yellow card that we could go through Checkpoint Charlie at will, anytime of day or night. Our relations with Ambassador Cooper were very, very good.

Q: And what about the mission's relations with the Embassy in Bonn? Were they close?

JONES: They were very close. They left it to the Minister in Berlin to handle everything and we were in constant telephonic conversations with the Ambassador at that time. When I was there it was Marty Hillenbrand. I believe the DCM was Frank Cash. He was the Minister.

Q: I know this has always been a problem over the years. The things are seen a little differently from Bonn than they are in Berlin. but if there is a good working relationship you can sort these things out.

JONES: There was a very good working relationship. Excellent.

Q: Well then Ray, this brings us to your retirement. Could you tell me why you decided to retire at that time or not?

JONES: Tom, at that time, with all my military and government service I had about thirty-seven and a half years. I retired when I was fifty-six. After that I always thought I should have seen what the Department would come up with as another post, but I think I'd had it. The Foreign Service, I can only say, was very, very good to me.

Q: You certainly had interesting and varied posts on a number of continents. I must say you never shied away from the difficult jobs, too.

JONES: And I had marvelous ambassadors to work for.

Q: That's a story we don't always hear. Well, looking back on those happy years, Ray, did you as a male secretary, did you ever feel that there was any prejudice or discrimination against you, since there were very few male secretaries.

JONES: None whatsoever. I would say, when I came in, I was probably the only male secretary in the Foreign Service. I don't know today how many there are, but if they are any good they should advance rapidly. I would say one thing, just because I was a male secretary, if you look back, usually you'd think you would be available only for hardship posts. Most of my posts were in the fleshpots of Europe.

Q: Well, you did have your Liberia and your Khartoum and your Beijing, etc. But I agree with you, you did fairly well. But you were also serving with very prominent men. Did I neglect to mention Saigon?

JONES: I will say even some of those posts. Saigon was a deferential post. They called it a hardship post. I don't know, we had every luxury in Saigon, good housing, good food, good commissary, and even Peking. It was a pleasure to be assigned there. It was a 15% deferential. I don't know why. It was great.

Q: Did the female secretaries resent your presence or not?

JONES: No. I always had good rapport, Tom, with the secretaries.

Q: This is a delicate question, but I'll ask you. Having had so many chiefs, could you rank order them and say who's the best to work for, and the second best, etc.? And who's the most difficult to work for?

JONES: I think I would have to put number one on the list was probably Maxwell Taylor. He was so well organized and he taught me a great deal about administration. Number two I would say would be David Bruce.

Q: Those would be your top choices? Would you venture a guess as to who was the most difficult to work for?

JONES: I would say that the most difficult to work for was probably Frances Willis although she taught me a great deal. It was my first post and she taught me a lot about personnel, and everything else, but was one of these persons if you wanted a job done well you had to do it yourself. I used to tell her: "You sound just like my mother!" But she was a great person also.

Q: What you're saying is she didn't delegate a lot.

JONES: She wouldn't even delegate anything to her DCM because she really didn't need a DCM. She did everything herself.

Q: One last question on personalities. Of all the ambassadors you worked for, who would you say was the most effective in what he did?

JONES: Maxwell Taylor. Tom, you think of the military as just mostly military. I won't say that he was always the most diplomatic, but this general spoke about six or seven languages. He was so educated.

Q: Including Japanese.

JONES: And we did draft after draft for the final product. But the final product was a work of art. I helped him, not on government time, but I helped him write three books. And I would say the best drafter I have ever seen is probably David Bruce. What a command of English!

Q: Ray, how were your relationships over the years with the ambassadorial spouses? Sometimes I know these can be very tricky particularly for a man in your position as the Ambassador's right hand man.

JONES: Well I find you're making a big mistake if you don't butter them up, but you're making a big mistake if you fight the wife. That's half the battle. If I had a problem I'd usually mention it to the Ambassador and let him take it up with her. It's much better that way.

Q: Without going into many names here, could you tell me who was the easiest ambassadorial spouse that you had to work with?

JONES: I would say Evangeline Bruce. I'm still in touch with her, you know. She lives in Georgetown. I'm invited to her cocktail parties, and dinners, and stuff like this.

Q: Did any of these ambassadorial wives try to treat you as their social secretaries?

JONES: No. Not at all.

Q: And presumably you would not have stood for it for long, had they tried?

JONES: No.

Q: Finally, I would ask if you would recommend, these days, that a young man entering the service take up a secretarial career?

JONES: I don't believe so.

Q: That's interesting. Please tell us a little about that?

JONES: I'm not so sure that I would recommend the Foreign Service today. The Foreign Service has changed since right before I retired. I think you might move ahead quicker in private industry.

Q: Well, thank you very much Ray.

This has been an interview of Ray Jones who had a long career as secretarial assistant in the Foreign Service. This is Tom Dunnigan and the date is August 23, 1994.

End of interview