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MILTON LEAVITT

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Lew Schmidt interviewing Milt Leavitt at his winter home down in Florida. Milt, I know you had a long career with USIA, but first I'd like to have you give a brief background on where you came from, what your education was, and a little bit about your unfortunate war experiences. Then from there you can tell me how you got into USIA.

Biosketch, Including Bataan Death March and WWII POW Experience

LEAVITT: I was born and raised in Worcester, Massachusetts. I went to school there, graduated high school. Shortly after high school, I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. This was in 1940. I was trained as an engine mechanic, airplane mechanic, in Savannah, Georgia, at Hunter Field.

Our outfit was transferred to the Philippines. The timing was rather unfortunate because we arrived there about two weeks before the war started. I arrived in the Philippines on November 20, 1941, seventeen days before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor! I was twenty years old, and by that time, had been in the service for one year. My unit was the Air Force Pursuit Group, 16th Squadron, 27th Bomb Group. Our planes never had the time to be unloaded, and many never arrived. Consequently, we were all placed into the infantry and sent to Bataan Peninsula. We fought on Bataan for three months until April of 1942, at which time the commander of our forces, General Edward King, surrendered to the Japanese.

The story is a familiar one from there on, but anyway, I will go through it. After our surrender to the Japanese, we were marched on what became known as the Bataan Death March to Tarlac, Philippines, Camp O'Donnell. The march spanned a distance of eighty to ninety miles, over a three to four day period. Of about 75,000 men taken prisoners, nearly 10,000 died on the march from thirst, hunger, disease, or gunshot wounds. The Japanese were never prepared for the great number of men. Later, one of the Japanese procedures was to divide the men into groups of ten. If one man escaped, or tried to escape, the other nine were shot. From our first camp, O'Donnell, we were transferred to a second camp in Las Penas outside of Manila, which was a work detail, building a runway for a Japanese training squadron.

All told, I was in the Philippines in these two camps for a total of about two and a half years. The last year of internment, in July to August, 1944, along with 1,500 men, we were shipped to Japan by the Japanese. The ship out of Manila was the NISSYO MARU. The 1,500 men were packed into two of the ship's holds. We stayed in port for about five days before the trip of two and a half to three weeks. The men were so packed into the holds that we were unable to lie down. We could lean against each other. The ship docked at Moji, Kyushu, and we were transported to Osaka. Our camps were work camps. Much of the time we worked in the Japanese coal mines. I was bivouacked in Osaka and then near Fukuoka. I was outside of Fukuoka when the war ended with the A-bomb attack in Nagasaki.

Back Home: Hospitalization and Return to School

We left Japan after the war ended, went through Nagasaki where we beheld a sight we really never believed: the results of the A-bomb attack. We came through about three weeks after the explosion, went to the Philippines and onto home.

Upon liberation, I weighed ninety-four pounds. I was in the hospital for about a year and upon discharge from the hospital decided that I had better go back to school, which I did. In those days, there was no military de-briefing. I went to Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts and did graduate work and got my masters' degree in communications from Boston University. This was 1951.

Getting a Job in IIE, A Predecessor Agency to USIA

I was somewhat at a loss as to how to proceed getting a job in the communications, public relations field. But I decided that having already served almost five and a half, six years in the service, three and half of which were in internment, that the government would be the best place for me to work. So I went to Washington, and, after a series of meetings and interviews with various people, I ended up in the Department of State, speaking to people who were connected with IIE as it was called at that time, the International Information Education program, I think it was. I remember speaking with Catherine Porter and Ralph Busick who were old Filipino hands. Knowing I had been interned in the Philippines, they were all delighted to have me go back there as a Public Affairs Officer in Legaspi.

1951, First Post: Branch PAO in Legaspi, Philippines

Q: Was it Legaspi, did you say?

LEAVITT: Legaspi, Philippines, which was in the southern Luzon province. This was 1951. Mount Mayon at Legaspi is the only tourist area of the Archipelago. The Philippines doesn't have many tourist attractions but Mount Mayon is one of them, an active volcano.

I had just gotten married, and we spent our honeymoon in Legaspi. I was assigned there as a Public Affairs Officer. I believe we were the only two Americans in the town at the time, with the exception of a missionary family in the area. I worked there for a little over two years building up a branch post. You probably know that, at that time, the branch posts were rather new to the islands. We established eight branches throughout the Philippines, three in Luzon and the rest on the other islands, Cebu and Davao among them.

Hukbalahap Rebels, Some of Whom Had Been in Prison Camps with Leavitt During War, Send Out Word Not to Harm Him or His Wife

The highlight of the Philippines was the fact of the Hukbalahap (more familiarly referred to as "The Huks") Revolt when that communist-led organization tried to overthrow the Filipino Government under President Quirino at the time. The Defense Minister was Magsaysay who worked very closely with us. During my stay in Legaspi, I had the cooperation of the Philippine Constabulary and military in showing films throughout my area. I was very fortunate in that some of the leaders of the Huk Revolt had been in prison camp with me, and they were careful not to do me or my wife any harm during the time I was there.

Q: You mean some of the Huks had been with you in the prison camp?

LEAVITT: That's right. I didn't know that until they came and told some of my people who were out with mobile film units, "We know Mr. Leavitt, please advise him that we wish him no harm, and we'll do all we can to protect him." However, they did warn me that there were certain things that I wasn't allowed to do in the barrios, certain posts that they had there, and so forth.

Q: Let me ask you now, did the fact that there were certain things that they told you you couldn't do unless you wanted to get into trouble, did they impair your program efforts to any great extent?

LEAVITT: No, not in the least. As a matter of fact, strangely enough, they were very cooperative with some of the film programs that we had. Most of the films that we had at that time, if you remember, were mostly how-to-do-it films, how to build an outhouse, how to build a chicken coop, and so forth. And they were very desirous of receiving those films. It's interesting that some even showed the films themselves.

Q: This makes me wonder, it's rather interesting that you were probably out there supposedly helping the Philippine Government, not only in this mundane sort of thing, but in part with anti-communist propaganda too, and yet you were doing things that the Huks themselves wanted to have done. Did the Agency back home ever realize that you were, in effect, showing some of these films and doing work and doing things that the Huks themselves found beneficial to them?

LEAVITT: Right, these were useful films, and I reported all my activities to Harry Hudson, Jim Meader and Ralph Busick at the time. Whatever happened to our reports in Washington I don't know. But this lasted through the time I was Public Affairs Officer in Legaspi.

A lot of our program, of course, was the library program in Legaspi. We had two large mobile units. One was a German truck, an Opel Blitz, I remember. And the other was a French unit, a Delahaye. And there were hand-carried generators which went with our crews into the barrios throughout the area. This lasted the whole time we were there until the last year I was there.

Unfortunately a typhoon, what in the U.S. we call a hurricane, hit the place. It wiped out our Center and the library and everything in the building and it took several months before we were back in operation again. For months we dried library books, page by page, on the roof of the Center. By that time, I was ready for transfer, at which time I was transferred and went back to Washington.

Q: I want to ask you also, was the fact that you were known to and recognized by many of these Huks, at least the lower-level leaders, both the Philippine Constabulary and did the Magsaysay forces realize that this was the case? Or was that kept from them?

LEAVITT: No, it wasn't. It was never kept from them because Magsaysay used to come down into the Bicol (it's the peninsula where Legaspi is located) from time to time, and, of course, he was privileged to all the information I had. We worked very closely together with the army and the constabulary. They never showed any films other than how-to-do-it films, how to build an outhouse or how to dig irrigation ditches, and things like that. The leader of the revolt, Luis Taruc, never came down into that area. He was always up in the central highlands somewhere, so I never met him.

Q: Did the Philippine Army and Constabulary, at any time that you were there, make attacks on the groups that incorporated some of these people that you had known when you were in the prison camps?

LEAVITT: No, our crews were left alone to freely do what I wanted them to do which was to show the films in the various barrios and to distribute pamphlets produced by USIS. We had no trouble in distributing the printed material that came out of Manila.

Of course, as I say, the biggest part of our program was the library program in Legaspi. We had very few speakers come into the area at the time. So we didn't have to worry too much about walking or escorting them throughout the area.

1953: Assignment to Amerika Haus, Munich

Then in 1953, late '53, I was transferred back to Washington prior to my assignment to Munich, Germany. In Munich I was assigned to the America House. Thinking back on the two years in Munich, my PAO was Lowell Lucas and, later, Roger Ross. There are really no highlights that were worth going over at the time except to say that we had a very large and extensive program in the America House. The America House, incidentally, was a huge physical establishment. The library was where the Munich Pact was signed. There was a little place in the corner where we had a posted sign noting this fact and designating its location in the library. We had quite a few speakers come through. We had a large auditorium and large stage. It was a huge establishment physically. But I have to admit it wasn't as exciting as the Philippine experience had been.

Q: Was it used very extensively by the Germans, however?

LEAVITT: Oh, yes, it was very heavily used by the Germans, both for research, and, because at the time the university was just rebuilding, was one of the few libraries open in the city. In most libraries in the area at the time, the German libraries, you didn't have free access to the books on the shelves. But we did, and, consequently, we had a heavy clientele.

Q: Mike Weyl in giving his interview said that he sometimes ran into opposition from the German librarians who were appalled that you had an open-shelved libraries. I don't know whether they were objecting to the fact that you were catering to the hoi polloi rather than to the elite or what their objection was. They were just appalled by it. Did you have any of that trouble?

LEAVITT: Yes, but, of course, actually we didn't have much choice in the matter. This was the system we had used in the United States, and this was the system we were going to use in Germany, and we did. We always figured that if any book was stolen (a few were stolen), at least they were being read. So it didn't bother us too much that one or two or maybe a few more were pilfered from the shelves of the library. But it was a very, very well-used establishment.

Q: I suppose that in the beginning most of the books were in English?

LEAVITT: Yes.

Q: Later, I suppose, you had access to a translation program, but to what extent did the Germans in the Munich area understand English when they utilized your books before you got some in the German language?

LEAVITT: There was no problem. I mean, most of the Germans that used the library spoke English. And I found most of the Germans, at least all on our staff and those with whom I came in contact with were English speaking. English was the second language at the time. This was in the middle '50s. A few lecturers would speak in German. Those who were German spoke in German and had large audiences, and those who spoke in English also drew quite large audiences.

Q: Did you have any specific objectives that you were trying to reach at that time or was this just a generalized program in trying to get most of your information thoroughly over to the German population?

LEAVITT: It was a generalized program trying to get the information over to the German population. There wasn't anything specific that we went after except to help get the Germans acquainted with Americana. I did mention that there wasn't really any highlight to my tour there except one, and that was the Edward Steichen photo exhibit that came through that was put up.

Q: The "Family of Man" Exhibit?

LEAVITT: The "Family of Man" exhibit. After Berlin, it came down to Munich and Steichen accompanied the show. He was well-liked and popular in Munich. We also had one of the first Atoms for Peace exhibit in Munich, which was put up at one of the museums there. This was with the mechanical hands and all. It was quite popular. I remember these two highlights of my time spent in Munich.

Q: We had both of those in Japan, too.

1955: Back in Washington, Leavitt Helps Establish the "People to People" Program

LEAVITT: After Germany I returned to Washington and was assigned to a new branch that was set up called, "People to People." We were the first ones to establish the "People to People" program in the Agency: the town affiliation committee, the book committee, the professional groupings, and so forth. Conger Reynolds was in charge and John Begg was his deputy at the time. It was a very exciting and rewarding time for me in Washington.

The "People to People" program was tremendously successful and, as you know, it's still going on to this day. The town affiliations and the sister city program and the professional affiliations are still going. They are still organized. They are still going strong. I still look back and am rather gratified that we were a part of setting that up. A lot of the guys are still around. Conger Reynolds and John Begg have died, but most of the others are still around.

Q: What were you doing specifically? Were you trying to locate sister cities in the United States?

LEAVITT: Not specifically. I was involved in a little bit of everything, helping out everyone, the sister city program, the multi-professionals, and, mostly the administration of these programs. I think Mort Levin was in charge of administration at the time. So I worked closely with him and with John Begg, the deputy.

Cultural Affairs Officer in Bombay: 1958

When I finished that assignment, I requested an overseas post again. I had a medical problem which wasn't serious. This was a residual from my prison camp days, a liver problem, which I cleared up. Then I went to India as a Cultural Affairs Officer in Bombay. Dan Oleksiw, at the time, was the branch PAO. There again, Bombay was an interesting and exciting assignment. We traveled extensively throughout the Bombay area with our mobile units, traveling exhibits, and speakers, and so on. India was a new experience for me. It was a part of the world that I had not been to before. I had been to the Far East and Europe by this time, but India was new and exciting, and very, very rewarding.

Bombay was the center for printing for USIA at the time, SPAN magazine and a lot of publications came out of Bombay. We had the entire building to ourselves on Queen's Road, if I remember correctly.

Q: The was during Nehru's incumbency wasn't it?

LEAVITT: That's right.

Q: How did you find the attitude of the Indian people? Nehru was always sort of at arms length with the U.S. Government, and he didn't seem to adhere too much to the American viewpoint. I wondered if you found any reaction on the part of the Indians?

LEAVITT: Bombay is the city in India to which important cultural events come. So we worked closely with the Bombay music group and other organizations to help bring in these cultural activities. We didn't find any of the "anti" feelings in Bombay, not even in the outlying areas where we traveled quite extensively. Now this might not have been true of Madras or Delhi or Calcutta, but in Bombay we had no problem with that. Madras was quite cooperative and worked closely with us and we worked closely them. We had a very compatible relationship with Indians, at least the whole time I was there.

Q: Was the general population of the Bombay area again supportive of Nehru politically or did they pay much attention him?

LEAVITT: They were quite active politically, and I'd say the Parsi group especially was quite active. They were quite aware politically of what was going on, and I think they were very pro-Nehru. When he came to give a speech on the beach area, hundreds of thousands of people would be there. Of course, there are hundreds of thousands of people all over the place anyway, but he drew enthusiastic audiences all the time.

Q: What period was that when you were in Bombay?

1960: Washington Again with International Visitors Program; Work with Norman Cousins and Henry Kissinger

LEAVITT: That was up through 1958-1960. I was then returned to Washington, and again, I had a medical problem which was cleared up. But I had a stateside assignment for about a year with the International Visitors Program. That was a very interesting time for me. I worked closely with two people whom I remember quite fondly. One was Norman Cousins, who went to India for us, and Henry Kissinger who went to Pakistan and India. And I can recall how impressed I was with Henry Kissinger at the time.

Q: He was still a Harvard professor.

LEAVITT: He was a Harvard professor at the time and married to his first wife. He was connected with disarmament. He had just written a book on disarmament or something at

Harvard at the time. He went through and lectured for us in India and Pakistan, and Norman Cousins also lectured for us in India.

I remember a very cute little incident with Cousins. After he got back, the Agency owed him quite a bit of money for per diem, not travel, but per diem. I called him up and I said, "Where can I send the check?"

And he said, "Gee, I was wined and dined no matter where I went." He said, "I really don't deserve that money so you better keep it."

I said, "Well, all right." So I gave it back, turned the problem over to administration and what they did with it I don't know. But he didn't want the money. He felt he didn't deserve that money since he didn't have to spend any money. I thought that was quite admirable of Cousins at the time.

1962: Leavitt Becomes First Career Reserve Officer to Head Up BNC in Bogota

Then they were looking for people who had Center experience, and they wanted to bring the Binational Center Program in South America into the USIA fold. In other words, we were thinking of making the Binational Centers more information-center oriented. So I went to Bogota, Colombia to set up this kind of a center. We were quite successful. We built a new center in Bogota. We had eight satellite centers throughout the country at the time which I was instrumental in establishing. From my efforts there and for a successful program of this kind, I was awarded our Superior Honor Award in Colombia for my progress in the program.

Q: Were you the first USIS officer assigned to a Binational Center there as a USIS officer?

LEAVITT: Yes.

Q: Didn't they subsequently give career status to most of the Binational Center people?

LEAVITT: That's right.

Q: As a USIS officer?

LEAVITT: As career officers. USIA had just established career officer status, and we were all FSCRs, I think, at the time. I was the first one to go out on such an assignment.

Q: Was this '61?

LEAVITT: This was in '62-'64 my first run out, yes.

The old Binational Center was bombed as we were building the new one. And, just before our new center opened, we were again the recipient of a bomb and some rock throwing, but we built the new center on Calle 19, Central Colombo Americano. There was an auditorium, an exhibit hall, a library, we had English teaching, and it was quite successful.

We had centers throughout Colombia, all directed from Bogota. Bob Anderson and Keith Adamson were the PAOs I worked with at the time.

Q: I'm wondering, did you ever have any conflicts with the Board of the Center wanting to do things that were not in accord with the USIA program? You had some of that trouble elsewhere?

LEAVITT: This was not true in Colombia. The Board was very cooperative. Within limits, there was very little that we were not able to do. They went along with us. We wouldn't deliberately go out of our way to antagonize the Board: you knew pretty much what you could do and what you couldn't do. It was a good informational program, cultural program and it was our only instrument outside of the embassy. These were the only outlets for USIS.

Q: You say it was the only outlet?

LEAVITT: I mean, it was the informational library. It was the English teaching program. It was a lecture program. It was a film program. Everything operated in the Center, except when we would take films, which was rare, to the schools from time to time.

Q: So you think it was that it was a highly successful program?

LEAVITT: Oh, yes, I do. And the PAOs did. The ambassador did and the Agency did because they gave me the Superior Honor Award for it.

1964: Short Stint in Peru, Then Transfer to Bangkok, 1967

After Colombia I went to Peru as cultural attaché but was only there for a year.

Q: Who was the PAO there?

LEAVITT: Fred Barcroft was the PAO at the time.

Q: Who?

LEAVITT: Fred Barcroft.

Q: Fred Barcroft, yes. I knew Fred quite well.

LEAVITT: Kermit Brown was the area director at the time. I expressed my desire for a transfer to Kermit, who was an outstanding man. They don't come like that anymore. He was already sick at the time, unfortunately. But, after a long interview, he transferred me to Bangkok.

I went into the Binational Center in Bangkok, and this again was the first time that a career officer had come into a center in that whole area. Jack O'Brien was the Public Affairs Officer at the time . . .

Q: Had they built that new center of theirs out there at that time?

LEAVITT: They had built the new center but only partially. The classroom part was finished where they taught English. But the library was not done. The whole new building in front which we have now on the street was not completed yet.

I went into the program with more or less orders from Washington to try and pump in good USIS informational activity into the program. At that time, we had an informational center which was in another location, but that was only a library and film program. The lecture programs that we undertook at that time were done mostly in universities and schools throughout the country.

At the time there were seven branch posts, well, branches of the English teaching center in Bangkok, throughout the country. The program was large in its English teaching aspect. There were some 4,000-5,000 students at the time studying English at the Center, but little else was going on, little information activity.

When I went out there I sat down with the Board Chairman, Phra Bisal Sukhumwit, a great guy, and told him what my assignment was and asked for his cooperation. He gave me all this cooperation. And I wondered after, what was the problem? What was the problem in the first place, because he was so cooperative? But I didn't go into that.

The first year I was there, I worked very extensively with information activities in the Center. There was a small auditorium in the Center at the time, and the USIS film program was very well attended also during the time when I first went out there. But the Information Center, for some reason, was closed down for rent. Was there a rental problem there? You were PAO at the time.

Q: No, it was just a decision at Washington, and I think it was a proper decision. Why should we have two essentially, partially at least, duplicating programs if the AUA [acronym for the American Universities Alumni Association], which was your Binational Center, was doing so well? It would make better sense to simply close our library and our other small information library operations out, and, if Phra Bisal was willing to take it on--in fact he turned out to be quite enthusiastic--if he would take it on, allow the library to be used the same way as it was when we had it as strictly a USIS operation,

why not? We would save money. We would not be duplicating, partially somewhat, one another's efforts. It just seemed the logical thing to do.

LEAVITT: Yes, when we discussed this with Phra Bisal, Chairman of the Board, he agreed to it, and we received a grant of funds of money from Washington to build a new library which we did. It opened in, I think, October of 1968. The new library opened and the whole USIS staff from the Patpong Road library moved over with the library. It was immediately successful. The Board Chairman and the Board of Directors saw that they had done the right thing, that they made the right move.

Q: What year did you arrive out there as the Center Director, your first tour there?

LEAVITT: 1967.

Q: You arrived just about a month or two before I came out.

LEAVITT: That's right. Jack O'Brien was there for about three months and then you came out.

That was, I believe, the highlight of my first assignment to Bangkok, namely, the acceptance of the Board and the Chairman and the Board of Directors of USIS's program in the Center. This had never been done before since the information center opened in 1952.

The Center was called AUAA, American University Alumni Association. A little background here: the Board was composed of Thais who had graduated from American universities. Phra Bisal, himself, was a 1922 graduate of MIT. You couldn't have met a better bunch of Thais than the people on the Board. They were just outstanding patriots and outstanding people and all for USIS's information program.

I had heard stories of what transpired before I got there, but thinking back on my own experience, I don't think there was one program that we wanted to put into the Center that was refused by the Board or the Board Chairman.

Q: I wanted to ask now, the time that we were contemplating the move of the library into the Center, I think you carried out most of the negotiations on it, did Phra Bisal express any worry about bringing a good portion of the standard American information program into the library? Did he have any reservations?

LEAVITT: If he had any reservations, he never really expressed them to any great extent. He did say once, maybe while we were negotiating, "Well, of course, you're not going to do anything to hurt the reputation of the program, of the library, of the English teaching activity."

I said, "Rest assured, I would never do that." This was true for the whole program.

At that time, we had 6,000 students coming in every day. I think when I left it was about 8,000 studying English. And these were all adults and had to have some knowledge of English prior to enrollment. It was a very successful program both the auditorium, with the lectures and the films, and the library program. As I said, Washington was very generous with funds for building the new library. We built it in about six or seven months. We completed the whole thing, driving the pilings and everything else. It is a beautiful building to this day. I don't know, I haven't been out there for ten years now. That was the highlight of my first tour there, to get this program underway.

1970: Return to Washington as Chief of English Teaching Division Then Back to the AUA in Bangkok, 1974

I stayed there for three years, went back to Washington, became Chief of the English Teaching Division and stayed there until 1974. The highlight of that time really was the good luck in being able to go into China with the Voice of America as a foreign language teaching program. Neil Donnelly, I remember at the Voice at the time, was my sidekick there. It was a very successful program.

In 1974, at my own request, I went back to Bangkok. I took over the Center again. It was hugely successful a second time. There were really no highlights. There was already an information program. We had lost several satellite programs because of budgetary reasons. But some of the big ones, Chaing Mai and Songkhla, were still operating, were still going when I first went out there.

Q: Well, of course, I think your AUA branch posts were different from our USIA . . .

LEAVITT: Usually we were located in the USIA.

Q: Well, we had thirteen branch posts under USIS in Thailand at the height of the operation there.

LEAVITT: We had fifteen teaching posts, too.

Q: Yes, when the Nixon Doctrine was put into effect in 1970 we began closing those posts which had been opened successfully during the period from about 1965 to '67. The thirteenth post had just been activated when I came out there as PAO in May of 1967. They were all open during the time I was there, but immediately after my departure, as a result of a new policy in Washington, the post had to begin closing them. So the USIS centers as we had known them for about three or four years were gradually shut down. I think there are only three or four left now.

LEAVITT: Well, we were able to maintain some of them after they were closed. We were able to maintain an English teaching activity for some time in several of them, not all of them. But their programs were small nonetheless. The last I heard AUA had about 9,000

students going in every day. I mean, this is fantastic. It's the largest teaching activity in the world at the present time.

We published our own books with the help of the Manila/USIS printing office. We were able to produce our own materials which was a big help. We taught not only English but we also taught Thai to Americans and other foreigners and printed our own materials in Thai also, teaching Thai to foreigners. So it was quite a variety of activities going on, and from early morning to late at night it was busy.

Q: When you were producing your own materials for the English language teaching program, did you try to get any kind of a lower intensity American-type of instruction into it? I don't mean in the methodology, I mean, any of the message material?

LEAVITT: Oh, yes. Just by virtue of teaching itself you had a message. But there were always situations in the lessons. For example, say you were in an American restaurant, or at an American ball game or whatever, but always Americana throughout all the teaching materials. We just did this. And there were no objections. Nobody complained about that at all.

Q: At one time, I've forgotten exactly what it was because it was after I left, but it seems to me it was in the first two or three years after I had left Thailand, there was an uprising which overthrew the government and the students were quite active in that affair. For the first time the students really got politicized and were out demonstrating, two or three of them ultimately, I think, executed as a result of that. Were you there at that time?

LEAVITT: No. I was at home. I was on leave the first time at that time. I was not there. I think Jack Jergins was Center Director at the time. He told me about that. That was very unfortunate that a few students were killed. But, no, I wasn't there. I had left and was with the English Teaching Division in Washington then.

Q: When you went back did you find any antipathy among the student population toward the United States. I understand at that particular time there were the first glimmerings of some anti-American sentiment among the students who were actively and strongly revolting at the time the students were killed. I wondered if you sensed any kind of antipathy toward the U.S. in the student groups.

LEAVITT: A few little things where one or two students were argumentative about various things, but I didn't find too much of this in the Center. You might have come across this if you visited universities but not in the Center. The Center was a place to which they came with a goal in mind because they were paying money for this and they didn't want to waste any time. So you didn't find too much of that in the Center, any antipathy, any anti-Americanism. If there was, it was held down. They would do nothing to disrupt their own programs because, as I say, they were paying money for it, not a lot of money, but to them it was a lot of money.

Q: On the International Visitor Program once you got the Center really established and enlarged, did any Bangkok appearances of the international visitors take place outside the Center or were they exclusively within the Center program?

LEAVITT: No, we held a lot of activities outside the Center, in universities mostly.

Q: Ken MacCormac came back . . .

LEAVITT: Ken MacCormac came back during my time. He headed the Fulbright Commission there.

Q: I guess he went in '70 or '72, I can't remember which.

LEAVITT: Yes, I think '70.

Q: He probably left a little after I did.

LEAVITT: He was there when I first got there and then Frank Tenny. Who was the CAO my second time there? Nelson Stevens.

Q: I didn't know him personally.

LEAVITT: Yes, he was there a short time. But anyway, I completed my tour there my second time in 1978 at which time I returned to Washington and worked for not quite a year, about ten months, as Chief of the Book Acquisition Program and then I retired.

Q: So you retired in '79?

LEAVITT: '79. It was the last year of mandatory retirement at sixty years of age. They changed it right after I retired.

Q: Well, that pretty well covers your active service. Do you have any general comments that you would like to make or additional comments about any of the programs in which you participated while you were there?

LEAVITT: General comments? No. I think the highlights I have already mentioned. I think of all the assignments I had, if I were to point to one country where I felt that I did more probably, accomplished more, I would say Thailand, first, and Colombia, second. These are the two most important countries in which I served in terms of my own accomplishments, Thailand and Colombia. Both were great experiences.

End of interview