Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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GREGORY L. MATTSON

Interviewed by: Raymond Ewing
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an oral history interview with Gregory L. Mattson. It's being conducted on the 23rd of October 2000 at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center at the office of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. My name is Raymond Ewing. Greg, you came into the Foreign Service, it appears, in about 1971 and you retired in January 1999. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how you came to be interested in the Foreign Service and what your preparation was prior to 1971?

MATTSON: Gladly. Well, as you note, I entered the Foreign Service in 1971, which made me at that time nearly 31 years old, which was just short of the age cut-off, which was mandatory at that time. I had graduated from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in 1962, so I had a longstanding interest in the Foreign Service. In fact, I took the written exam in my senior year at Georgetown, but regrettably did not pass. At that time, of course, all the able-bodied had a military obligation, so I went to Navy OCS (Officer Candidate School) in Newport, Rhode Island, followed by three years at sea. At that point I could well have left the Navy having fulfilled my service obligation, but I had just married and was offered a ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) teaching position in New York City. Since I wanted to go to graduate school, I accepted that offer and what followed was about four years of graduate study; as I said, teaching naval ROTC courses in New York; and our having our three children. By 1970 or thereabouts I realized that even though I had had a good naval career and was on the promotion list for lieutenant commander as a line officer, I would be obligated to spend long deployments away from home. I concluded that was not really what I wanted to do for my life's work. So, I took the Foreign Service test again and this time fortunately passed, went through the oral examination process, and entered the Foreign Service in January of 1971, later than many but fortunately not so late that I missed the mandatory cut-off.

Q: And you came first to the Foreign Service Institute for the orientation course, the A-100 program. Did you do some other training in Washington, or did you go immediately to your first assignment?

MATTSON: The A-100 class was the beginning of a two-phase preparation, because after that I studied Portuguese for six months, prior to taking up my first position as a political/economic officer in Lisbon, so it was six months of Portuguese after the A-100 class.

Q: Had you had a foreign language before entering the Foreign Service, or was Portuguese your first foreign language?

MATTSON: It was the first foreign language that I acquired any facility at speaking. In graduate school in New York, because I thought in my late 20s that I might be moving in the direction of an academic career, I studied written Greek to pass a Ph.D. requirement but had no spoken Greek. So Portuguese was my first language.

Q: So you went to Portugal in late 1971. This was before things began to change in Lisbon. What was the situation like? Why don't you talk a little bit about the political/economic job that you had in the embassy.

MATTSON: I arrived in late summer 1971. This then would be nearly three years before what the Portuguese called their revolution, which was in fact a military coup d'etat which perhaps became a revolution. I was assigned to the political section, which was comprised of four officers. Our ambassador, Ridgeway Knight, was one of the leading career officers at that time. He had been ambassador in Belgium and chief of mission in Syria. He was a very distinguished ambassador. He was very good at encouraging his younger officers, of whom we were five in the various sections. We were all given significant responsibilities even though we were on first or second tours: my first tour, others had their second tours. I was responsible for domestic political reporting which meant covering the government, the opposition, and the small steps that the authoritarian Caetano regime was making toward some liberalization. For example, the regime allowed the election of five so-called liberals, who after the revolution became prominent in Portuguese politics, including Francisco Sa Carneiro, who became prime minister, another prime minister, Francisco Balsemao, and others. So I got to know those five political figures very well on that first tour because they were a special group that we in the embassy were trying to cultivate. I also tried to get a handle on the apparatus of the regime, which was actually quite interesting. There were various neo-fascist remnants still in the Caetano regime. Caetano, of course, was the follow-on government to Salazar, who was incapacitated in 1968 and then died a few years later. Caetano, for example, kept in place something called the *Mocidade Portuguesa*, which was the Portuguese youth movement, and another small organization called the *Legion Portuguesa*, the Portuguese Legion. Both of those, of course, were holdovers from the 1930s. The Portuguese Legion actually had a small number of Portuguese volunteers fighting on the eastern front in Russia with the German army. A small number, not like the Spanish Blue Division, but some Portuguese did fight alongside the Germans. The Portuguese youth movement was a carbon copy of the Hitler Youth Movement. Both of those organizations still had headquarters and officials and I did some analytical reporting on both of them, which was more of historical interest than for any then-current operational value to the U.S. government. But it was a very interesting tour. As I said, I was given encouragement to be active, to get around. I attended some very interesting events. There were frequent demonstrations in Lisbon and in some of the other university cities. I was never the recipient of a water cannon or tear gas but was always in the vicinity and was able to do some interesting reporting on the actions and mood of the students, who constituted the main resistance group to the regime. I was also fortunate, along with a British colleague,

to attend the "Third Congress of the Democratic Opposition" in the town of Aveiro in north Portugal. Every four years the Salazar/Caetano regime allowed the so-called democratic opposition to meet in a municipal theater. The theater in Aveiro was packed, maybe 1,000 - 1,500-strong, with very hard-left individuals. Members of the traditional Portuguese Communist Party were to the right of most of the people who were there. There were Maoists-Leninists, MLs as they called themselves, anarchists, and various other groups. My British colleague and I, as diplomatic observers, were able to have full access to the theater during the two and one-half days that the Congress took place and we were both present for the almost obligatory confrontation with the police outside of the theater at the end of the conference, when about 2,000 people tried to march to the cemetery to lay a wreath on the tomb of a Portuguese republican notable. The riot police were arrayed in force along with a half dozen dogs. As the marchers approached - we were observing all of this from the hotel balcony rather than the street - the Portuguese demonstrators stopped, unfurled banners with slogans such as "Death to Fascism" and "Portugal out of Africa." At that point, the police charged and handled this group very, very roughly. I went down to the scene and came upon someone that I knew very well lying in the street, head bleeding. That person was the daughter of Mario Soares, who was then in exile in Paris and would later become Portuguese prime minister and Portuguese president. She had been singled out by the police for a thrashing. Certainly, it was a very interesting period, although there were no overt signs that the regime was losing its grip. But for me a fascinating part of that whole period was the fact that here you had Portugal, arguably the poorest country in western Europe, which was simultaneously fighting three campaigns in Africa and seemed determined to go on doing so for some time to come. We would go down to the port and see the troop ships leaving. These would be conscript soldiers, mostly from Portuguese peasant families, probably most of whom had never been more than 10 or 15 miles from their villages, who were going off to either Portuguese Guinea, Angola, or Mozambique. Of course, nearly every day in the newspaper - there were only a couple of newspapers at the time - the Diario de Noticias was the most prominent - you would see under the black banner "*Morte em Combat*," "Killed in Action," the names of several Portuguese. But the Portuguese, being a rather stoic people, soldiered on. But for me at the time - and, of course, we had very great difficulty gaining any access to the officer corps; they were very careful in their dealings with the diplomatic community - what was fascinating to me was the sort of steadfastness in the Portuguese, pouring all of their treasure into trying to hold on to these colonies, suffering grave losses with no end in sight. It was only in my second tour, 1996 to 1998, that I actually spent a great deal of time with Portuguese officers, then admirals and generals, who in the '70s were captains and majors, who gave me, I think, fascinating insight into those times and why and how the coup took place when it did in 1974. The primary factor, according to them, was that the professional officer corps which staged the revolution in 1974 was about to be sent off on their third assignments in the colonies. The procedure, which began in the early 1960s with the outbreak of hostilities in Angola, was that a Portuguese serving officer would be sent, for example, to Angola for two years, would be brought back to the Metropole for a year, then sent to a different colony for his next two year assignment, either Portuguese Guinea or Mozambique, and so forth.

Q: Another two years?

MATTSON: ...another two years, brought back again for a year, two at the outside, and was then sent back for his third tour. At a certain point the Portuguese officer corps realized that this was going to be their lot for the rest of their lives, that while they didn't feel that they were losing the colonial wars, they were not winning them either, so at that point they said, "Well, this just cannot go on." That was the event that precipitated the revolution of April 1974 according to these officers.

Q: It wasn't so much that the colonial wars were becoming more demanding, more difficult, that the strife that they were confronting was growing. It was more just the repetition and having to go back yet again for what they saw was a very difficult assignment and perhaps even one that was very dangerous to them as individuals.
MATTSON: There were a number of factors that combined. I think, as I said, the precipitating event might have been the fact that they had to go back again, now for a third tour. But it's interesting to have been in Portugal before the revolution during the height of the colonial wars and then to go back and get the assessments of these officers, all of whom had been anti-regime. That's why they became generals and admirals. They were not supporters of Caetano.

Q: After the regime.

MATTSON: After the regime collapsed, for sure, and some of them actually were active before the regime ended. But I spent a great deal of time, because of an historical interest, in talking to them and getting their overall assessment of the colonial wars in 1973 and '74. Their sense was that they were barely holding their own in Portuguese Guinea, that the situation was stable in Mozambique, and that they were actually winning in Angola, slowly prevailing in Angola. But, of course, the cost in treasure and in manpower was very devastating and there was a certain resentment about the whole conduct of the war. I remember walking down the streets of Lisbon, which at that time was a very drab and colorless city, unlike the way it is today, and on the walls you would have a poster which was titled "*Portugal Aleme d'Europa",* which meant Portugal Beyond Europe. What the regime would do was to superimpose their colonies on the map of Europe to demonstrate to the Portuguese that they were not living in this small, insignificant country in the southwest corner of Europe but that Portugal with its colonies was about half the size of the continent of Europe. Angola, for example, would cover Germany, Poland and something else, and Mozambique also had a very large area. I think I could not have had a better first assignment.

Q: It seems to me that it was a very unusual first assignment in the kind of responsibilities that you had, the opportunity in terms of reporting, developing contacts. Of course, it became even more useful in the long run because you were able to go back a second time and these contacts had developed. But let me ask you again, thinking in this period in the early 1970s: You were, it seems to me, involved in some rather sensitive activities as far as the Portuguese government was concerned because you were interacting with the opposition, and you mentioned the way the police reacted to demonstrations. To what extent were your activities frowned upon by the government?

Were they fully supported by the ambassador, by the embassy, or were there times when you were told to back away or to be a little more careful?

MATTSON: The Portuguese government, to my knowledge, never took steps to signal its displeasure to the diplomatic community. There were four or five other embassies which were also very active. Of course, Portugal, being a pariah state at that time, knew that it was under heavy international scrutiny, especially from the British, the French, the Scandinavians, the Australians, and the U.S., who were very active in their contacts with the opposition. So far as I know, there were never any complaints registered by the government. In terms of our being present at various demonstrations and other anti-regime activities, again, so far as I know, there were never any concerns expressed on the part of the government. The embassy, which was an extremely active and I think an extremely effective embassy at the time, realized that what was happening in Portugal was significant. We had a high profile in Washington, trying to give both the European bureau and the African bureau the best reporting possible. It was just a fascinating period. Ridgeway Knight and the other senior leadership at the embassy were very effective and very encouraging.

Q: In the United States the election of 1972 took place while you were assigned there and that brought the Nixon Administration to power. Did that have any particular impact as far as you were concerned in Lisbon?

MATTSON: Not really. I think Portugal had been increasingly isolated. There were no signs that the Nixon election was going to really alter that.

Q: You traveled probably extensively around metropolitan Portugal. Did you go to the Azores? I assume you didn't go to any of the colonies in Africa while you were assigned to Lisbon.

MATTSON: Yes, my own travel was, as you say, extensive but limited to the metropole. I did not go to the Azores or to Madeira during that period, but my boss, Wingate Lloyd, the political counselor, did go to Angola and traveled around Angola, including on the Bengala Railway for two or three weeks with the then consul general in Luanda, Dick Post, Richard St. Forest Post. So one of us did get to Angola, but it wasn't me.

Q: I think you said when you were initially assigned to Lisbon you went as a political/economic officer. Did you ever rotate into the economic section, or did you stay in the political section your two years?

MATTSON: I was in the economic section after the initial six months in the political section but only for a few weeks, because the post recognized my interests were in the political arena and also that's where the major work was, so it was a nice confluence. There was very limited work in the economic area at the time.

Q: Is there anything else that we should particularly talk about in connection with your assignment to Lisbon? That's sort of an open-ended question, but let me ask you a little

bit more narrowly: Portugal at the time, of course, was a member of NATO. You talked about its estrangement from the rest of Europe and to some extent the rest of the world for political reasons. Were you involved at all with that aspect of Portugal and the United States at the time you were there?

MATTSON: Well, of course, as you noted about the Azores, we had and still have a very important air base. Actually it's co-located with the Portuguese air base on the island of Terceira in the Azores. It is an ideal refueling spot midway across the Atlantic and has been important certainly since World War II. The Portuguese did negotiate with us an extension of our rights in the Azores during my tour, and an agreement was reached in 1973, I believe, for an extension, and I think I recall the benefits to Portugal that would accrue from that. There was $1,000,000 in scholarship money for Portuguese students to go to the U.S.; a $15,000,000 grant, which was roughly the value of a surplus hydrographic vessel that we were going to provide to the Portuguese; and then over 400 million dollars, a lot of money. The face value of this agreement would be $416,000,000 or $420,000,000, somewhere in that neighborhood. But, of course, the Portuguese never really had access to the kinds of military equipment that we were prepared to give them during that period. I find that curious, because during the latest extension of our tenure at the Lajes base in the Azores which occurred when I was there during my second tour some 20-odd years later, we also provided to them a hydrographic vessel and the offer of excess military equipment - which they found of little or no value - but this time no cash.

Q: As I recall, after the October War in 1973, the Azores base was very important in terms of our resupply operation to Israel, but I suppose by then you had left.

MATTSON: I had left a couple of months before, but, as you note, it was critical. The air bridge, as they called it, to Israel was not going to be possible without refueling in the Azores, which is a very impressive round-the-clock operation.

Q: Okay. Anything else about Lisbon in the early 1970s, or shall we go on to your next assignment?

MATTSON: Well, I might just take one more moment just to describe the stark difference between Portugal in 1973 when I left and 1996 when I arrived back for a second tour. Portugal in 1973 was a truly backward country. The communications were poor, to put it mildly. The only so-called highway in Portugal other than a narrow two-lane road was between downtown Lisbon and the town of Carnaxide, which is about eight miles outside of town. Other than that, the entire country had only simple two-lane roads. It took, for example, some 12 or 14 hours to drive to Porto in the north of Portugal. It was a drab country. There was almost no cultural life. Illiteracy was very high, over 50 percent. The number of university students was probably on the order of 30,000. In 1996, that would be 22 years after their revolution and a few years after the infusion of billions of dollars of EU (European Union) money, Portugal is crisscrossed with superhighways. You can drive now to Porto in three hours instead of the 12. There are about 200,000 university students, many new universities. You have an abundance of newspapers reflecting all political viewpoints. Back then there were only two newspapers. The state-

owned television which featured speeches by Caetano and images of rural Portugal for their two or three hours of television broadcasts per night has now been supplanted by the communications revolution and satellite TV and so forth. So, more than any other place, I think, in Western Europe during that quarter century, the changes and the modernization have been absolutely astounding.

Q: Why don't you say a word further about both the American role in 1973 and maybe the British role. I often, having never been to Portugal, think that there was a particular connection through all sorts of economic and perhaps historical reasons between Portugal and Britain.

MATTSON: You're exactly right. The Portuguese and the British say that they have the world's oldest alliance dating back roughly 1,000 years, and of course the alliance was based on a common enemy, Spain. There's a large British community in Porto. The port wine industry in Porto and the Madeira wine industry on the island of Madeira are essentially owned and run by British families. Cockburns and Grahams and others, Sandemans, these places are all British concerns. The tennis club in Porto is certainly something taken out of the best club tradition of Great Britain. But during the period that I was there, the British were very critical of the Portuguese in terms of their policies in Africa. Britain, of course, was overseeing the dissolution of its own empire in Africa. As MacMillan said, "The winds of change were blowing, and the Portuguese just weren't getting the drift of them." So the British ambassador and the British embassy staff were just as active as the Americans were in doing objective reporting and basically adhering to a very firm policy line condemning the Portuguese actions in Africa wherever possible. There was the complication that we alluded to which was NATO. There were and are interests in the Azores. But, consistent with our interests, we could not possibly have taken a stronger line against them, and the British followed suit.

Q: This was well before the Carter Administration, where we sometimes think that human rights became a cardinal principle and policy in a way that perhaps it hadn't been in an earlier period. But as you recalled it and the way you saw it and the role that you played, you saw very much our effort to try to advance liberalization in Portugal, and we tried to do it in a variety of ways including the role that you played.

MATTSON: I think that's true, and there was a certain tension, let's say, within the U.S. government. On the one hand Portugal was an important NATO ally, Lisbon was an important port, the Azores and the Lajes base factored into our strategic planning, so you had those who were focused on the Soviet Union and were very much of a mindset that we should go soft on the Portuguese. The African bureau, on the other hand, concerned about the colonial wars, was very harsh in approach, etc. Accordingly, the embassy in Lisbon was actually trying to address both of those concerns in doing objective reporting and making policy recommendations. We tried to strike a balance between our concrete operational needs and interests in Portugal and the fact that the Portuguese were doing something in Africa of which we totally disapproved.

Q: What about the role of Spain or the Portuguese-Spanish relationship at that time?

MATTSON: I don't really have a reliable recollection. Not much was happening in an active sense, as I recall. The Portuguese have always resented the fact that they have been accorded a sort of secondary status in the Iberian Peninsula vis-à-vis the Spanish, and there has never been a particularly close relationship between the Portuguese and the Spanish. That was also the prevailing atmosphere in the 1970s. I never really thought about it very often, which means, I guess, it wasn't very prominent.

Q: On the other hand, they both were kind of lagging behind in terms of their economic position, they were both outside of the European Common Market, they had - I don't want to say similar governments, but they were certainly not democratic in either case.

MATTSON: That's true. I think in terms of their systems that they were thinking separately rather than together. I don't think they found a lot of commonality of interest. The Spanish, of course, were not engaged in repressing colonial uprisings, which was the main problem that we had with the Portuguese. At that time, the U.S. had, if I recall correctly, four very important bases in Spain. So I think the relationship with the U.S. vis-à-vis Spain was much smoother than the one that we had with the Portuguese.

Q: You mentioned the city of Porto in the north of Portugal and the difficulty at that time in the early '70s traveling there. I think at that time we did have a consulate there. Do you recall anything particular about how you and the political section benefited from the reporting of the consulate in Porto or worked with them?

MATTSON: All of us in the political section would go to Porto from time to time. I remember visiting Porto two or three times and staying for several days on each occasion. I would often stay at the very nice residence of the consul. It was owned by a German Swiss, a very lovely house. The Porto operation was busy. They did not have sophisticated classified communications, so most of their reporting was done through airgrams and other media that could be hand carried by couriers. But it was an important outpost because a lot of the economic activity in Portugal is centered in the north. Also, the student movement was strong in Porto.

Q: It was a very small post so they also were limited in what they could do beyond the consular responsibilities that they had.

MATTSON: That's true. I believe there were only three or four Americans serving there at the time. I think personally that it was a pity we closed that consulate. We still have a consulate in the Azores, but we closed the consulate in Porto four or five years ago, which I think was probably a mistake because especially now that there is a tremendous amount of economic activity in northern Portugal. But that is the trend these days, closing consulates. The Portuguese have an expression about their various cities: Braga, as the center of religiosity in Portugal, prays; Porto works; Coimbra studies; and Lisbon plays. Porto is the economic center of the country still.

Q: Okay. Why don't we go on to your next assignment? Where was that, and how did that

come to be?

MATTSON: As I was concluding my tour in Lisbon, I received a letter from my former DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), Diego Asencio, asking if I would be interested in joining him for my next assignment in the political section in Brasilia. On that very same day a telegram arrived from the Department asking if I would be interested in the Swahili-designated political position in Nairobi, Kenya. I was really torn, because I enjoyed working under Diego Asencio's tutelage; on the other hand, I thought the prospect of learning another language, Swahili, and going to a very interesting place like Kenya would be a unique experience. And I thought, I could always go back to Brazil, which, of course, I never got to do. So I accepted the assignment to Nairobi via about six months of training in Swahili in Washington.

Q: So you went into the political section then in Nairobi in 1974. What sort of work did you do there, and what was the situation like for the American embassy at that time?

MATTSON: Well, again, my responsibilities focused on something that I always enjoyed, which was domestic political reporting. I had studied Swahili in a tutorial and had done very well. I had a wonderful Kikuyu teacher, John Thiuri, as my instructor.

Q: He may still be here. Was the head of the union for a long time, I know.

MATTSON: Yes, I saw him a year or two ago. John Thiuri and I had a wonderful six months together. We took long walks conversing in Swahili.

Q: You were the only student during that entire period?

MATTSON: Much to my advantage, I was the only student during that entire period. The day after we arrived in Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta, the president, changed the parliamentary language from English to Swahili. So for the next two years, as the only Swahili language officer at post, I had the opportunity to learn parliamentary Swahili along with the Kenyan parliamentarians, who up until that point had all been dealing strictly in English. Kenyan Swahili on a parliamentary level was, unlike Julius Nyerere's Swahili in Tanzania, a little underdeveloped. So it was a very interesting experience. I think of the languages that I've studied, the one that I enjoyed the most, because of the character of the language and because of its utility, was Swahili. Kenya had only one political party, the Kenyan African National Union, KANU. But they had very lively elections. Even though everyone had to be a member of the same party, they had five or six people contesting for each seat. Shortly after my arrival there was a general election, and I traveled all over the country and actually spent significant time in Kisumu near Lake Victoria with several deputies who were out campaigning. Domestic political reporting was deemed significant by the Department because Kenyatta was getting older and weaker and Kenya was becoming an increasingly important country in East Africa. For example, during my period we established our military sales relationship with the Kenyans, persuading them to buy a squadron of F-5 fighters. Even though they wanted more modern attack aircraft, we were determined to offer refurbished F-5s, a fighter

aircraft rather than a ground attack plane, from Jordan or some other country. There were various tensions in the society even then, and the direction Kenya would take after the passing of Jomo Kenyatta was deemed to be important. The single most fascinating aspect of the domestic scene was the murder midway through my assignment of J. M. Kariuki. J. M. Kariuki, a fellow Kikuyu with Kenyatta, was a parliamentarian, and a likely heir to Kenyatta. He was murdered in the Ngong Hills outside of Nairobi. This caused the greatest political crisis in Kenya since the murder of Tom M'boya, which occurred in the late 1960s. Tom M'boya was a Luo, again thought to be a rival to Kenyatta. He was murdered under suspicious circumstances. J. M. Kariuki was also murdered under suspicious circumstances, and there was tremendous tension in Nairobi and throughout Kenya for a couple-week period afterwards. I was very active in trying to understand the dynamics that were at work, had good contacts in the Kenyan army, and also had also regular contact with the Kariuki family. J. M. Kariuki, for example, had a sister who was married to an Englishman and these were long-time contacts of the embassy. Shortly after the murder of J. M. Kariuki, a telegram arrived from the Department asking if I would go to Angola on a short TDY (temporary duty) - I guess because of the Portuguese language - to be the American liaison officer in what was called the Nova Lisboa airlift. This was the airlift of several hundred thousand Portuguese settlers back to the metropole at the end of the guerrilla war. Unfortunately, the post wouldn't allow me to go though I was very keen to go, because of the Kariuki murder and the reporting that I had to do. Three or four months later I was given a similar offer to go as acting consul general in Lourenco Marques, Mozambique, and again was held back. Either of those opportunities would have been terrific in terms of professional growth. As a side note, a fascinating feature of the Nova Lisboa, now Huambo, airlift process, was that I became very friendly during my assignment in Lisbon, the second one, with the Portuguese officer who would have been my counterpart on the airlift operation. So he described to me where I would have lived and what I would have done and so forth, so I felt I almost had been there, even though I didn't get to go. General Rodrigo Gonzalez was his name.

Q: Kenyatta, I assume, not only tried to encourage Swahili to be used during this period but presumably used it himself more than he had earlier and insisted that his cabinet members do so.

MATTSON: Exactly. When they would have their various national holidays, Uhuru Day and Jamhuri Day, in contrast to years past Kenyatta would speak in Swahili. It was difficult for some Kenyans to master Swahili because they all had a tribal language and most of them had English. Swahili, which had been the *lingua franca* among the various tribes, in a way had been supplanted by English. So, they had to relearn Swahili. But this was part of Kenyatta's move toward what he called African socialism, and it was, I think, a step that was welcomed by the Kenyans.

Q: You mentioned that Swahili was also being used in parliament and that the elections for parliament, even though they were restricted to the members of KANU, often were quite competitive because several candidates would stand for one seat. Did that really work, or in fact people knew who was going to be elected and some other names were on

the ballot? Was it truly a competitive election?

MATTSON: Our impression was that it was highly competitive. In fact, what you had in the Kenyan parliament was an interesting dynamic, because the major tribes - for example, the Kisii or the Luos or the Kikuyus or the Swahilis from the coast - would have an important figure from within their community elected and many of those were active critics or even opponents of the regime. I remember, for example, Martin Shikuku, who may still be alive and may still be active. I went to parliament one night at eight o'clock knowing in advance that six or eight dissident parliamentarians were going to be placed in detention. They were going to be taken by the police to a place of detention, not arrested but to a camp in an isolated place because of anti-regime activities. I knew all of them very well, and I remember as the police were leading Martin Shikuku out of parliament, he turned to me and said, "Greg, tell your government that Martin will be back." And, of course, he did come back after Kenyatta's death and became an important opposition figure. So I think the elections were largely free. There were always surprise results. Of course, money helped. They had something called the pombe vote, which was you invited people to a rally and would provide them a beer, pombe, and you would hope to secure their vote through this small bribe. But in terms of the vote counting, it was, I think, very straightforward. And Kenyatta himself was prepared to accept a certain level of opposition, in contrast to many other African leaders at that time or since.

Q: Now your work was primarily related to the internal political situation? You were dealing with the government, the ministries, and such?

MATTSON: No, very little of that, although I did get involved with the defense ministry because they gave me the responsibility for working on the emerging political-military relationship which included greater access to the port of Mombasa, which was a very significant Indian Ocean port, and the largely air force-oriented modernization of the Kenyan military, which we were helping the British to undertake.

Q: Let's talk about the defense role just a little bit more. You mentioned the Port of Mombasa was a popular place to visit for U.S. Navy ships in the Indian Ocean. Later on Kenya ports became even more vital in some of our Persian Gulf and Horn of Africa interests. At this time, '74 to '76, I assume that aspect wasn't particularly significant.

MATTSON: No, although - and we'll get into this a little bit further when we talk about the Seychelles - there were emerging big power rivalries in the Indian Ocean, and we very often had a deployed aircraft carrier in the region. The carriers were beginning to be deployed in the Indian Ocean for the first time in that period, and Mombasa was the only port which was large enough and which had an infrastructure sufficient to handle a carrier task force. There was really no other practical alternative in terms of true shore leave except Mombasa. I actually was given the job of what they called port liaison officer, so each time a naval contingent came to Mombasa, I went to Mombasa, took up residence in a hotel, and tried as best I could to keep the sailors out of jail - if not out of mischief, at least out of jail. So I was present for nearly all of those visits in 1975/76.

Q: And you acted as liaison with the local authorities. How did they feel generally about this? I assume they welcomed the spending and the economic injection, but was there reluctance from a political point of view or otherwise?

MATTSON: The central government in Nairobi was very enthusiastic about the emerging political-military relationship of which this was a component and, I think, gave fairly strong encouragement to the local authorities to be accommodating to these visits. Mombasa was and is very much of a port town with bars and such, and so there was really an economic boom every time these ships would come. Many of the sailors would go off on brief safaris into the Tsavo West game park which was very close to Mombasa, and others would go to hotels on both the south and north coasts. It was a wonderful three or four days for them after long deployments. The infusion of capital into Mombasa was really tremendous. Mombasa, of course, had for centuries been an important town. This was again fascinating for me because the Portuguese had built one of their major Indian Ocean ports in the early 1500s in Mombasa. It was called Fort Jesus and is well preserved. It was interesting for me, having spent my previous tour in Lisbon, to see a remnant of the early Portuguese colonial empire in Fort Jesus in Mombasa. I later learned that all the stones of Fort Jesus are from Portugal itself as the Portuguese used stones as ballast on their outbound voyages.

Q: But they had been supplanted, I guess, by the British. Why don't you talk just a little bit more about the British military/British political role in Kenya at that time. I don't know the extent that you were really involved with either the British embassy or this question.

MATTSON: I've always been interested in military history and military activities. The British were, of course, the primary suppliers of the Kenyan army, and there was a strong British tradition throughout the Kenyan army. You had the King's African Rifles, which was, of course, a colonial unit at the time when Kenya was a British colony. It later became the Kenyan African Rifles. They had British-style uniforms and British marching techniques. The air force consisted of Hawker-Hunter aircraft, British designed. All of their heavy equipment was British. Their tactics were British. There was a very large contingent of British military advisors, and, of course, promising Kenyan officers would often be given advanced schooling in the UK. So, long before we came in largely on a technological basis with our Air Force - and with the ability to actually give them military equipment at rock-bottom prices - the British had and maintained a very strong influence on the Kenyan military.

Q: I paid a brief visit to Kenya in 1965 shortly after independence, but at that time the East African Community was functioning pretty well. I think by 1974 it had essentially broken down. Do you want to say a few words about the Kenyan relationship with Tanzania, Uganda.

MATTSON: During my tour, the border with Tanzania was closed. I don't recall the exact date of the breakup of the East African Community, but it was in the early 1970s, I believe that it literally occurred overnight. The Kenyans ended up with all of the aircraft,

for example, of the East African Airways, at their airports. So they were all expropriated. The Kenyans actually ended up with the lion's share of the capital goods that were in the Community. But the border was closed. I went to Amboseli Game Park many times - and you were close to the border but couldn't cross into Tanzania. The relationship with the Ugandans was better than with the Tanzanians but still not very positive.

Q: Who was the ambassador to Kenya at that time? And do you want to say any more about how the United States saw the domestic political situation? You talked about in Portugal how we were balancing several interests and the embassy was able to report effectively within that context. Was anything similar going on in Kenya at that time, in Nairobi?

MATTSON: With five or six tribes vying for power and resenting the Kikuyus, which was Kenyatta's tribe governing the country, the concern was palpable that there would be an unstable situation after his demise. So we did a lot of reporting on leading personalities, on the tactical alliances and alignments of various tribes, the resentment of the Kikuyus, the position of the Luos, the second tribe, in the society. We felt that there was a very strong central bureaucracy which would help smooth things along, and the assumption, more a hope really, was that it would be a peaceful transition despite pent-up resentments against the Kikuyus. But there was definitely a concern of a destabilized Kenya after Kenyatta.

Q: Kenyatta was still functioning, alive, when you left?

MATTSON: He was very much in control of events. He would take up residence at the various state houses in Nakuru, in Mombasa, in Nairobi, depending on the seasons of the year. Important figures would come and call on him. He was always present at major national days. It was clear that he was making important decisions. There was an increasing visibility of Charles Njonjo, who was the attorney general. Many people thought that he, rather than Daniel Arap Moi, would be the ultimate successor to Kenyatta. But Kenyatta was very much in control. However, most Kenyans associated Kenyatta indirectly with the murder of J. M. Kariuki, and there was a strong tension in the atmosphere for a couple of weeks. At one stage, Jomo Kenyatta decided to have a pass-by of the military in the streets of downtown Nairobi so that he would take the salute of the troops that passed by as a sign of their continued loyalty. This was very close to the current site of the American embassy on Government Road. The army dutifully marched by, several thousand of them. He took the salute. He then got into his stretch Mercedes limousine from which he had the ability to stand up through the roof with his fly whisk and wave to the populace. What was fascinating about all this was that at the end of the parade, in front of a very sullen crowd of tens of thousands of very quiet Kenyans, Kenyatta got into his car and did what he did at all such public occasions, which was to wave at the crowd. Only this time no one cheered, no one waved. They looked menacingly toward him as he drove by. But, of course, he continued to do what he had always done, which was, with fly whisk in hand, he would wave. That night, or the next night, I saw the chief of staff of the Kenyan army, who thought that this was a tremendous display of bravado and courage on the part of Kenyatta. The president was

going to do what he always did, and if the people were not going to applaud, that was their problem rather than his. Whereas many leaders might have gotten down into their car and sped away or had some other overt reaction to the disappointment of the crowd with him, he just did his usual thing. He was a very impressive person, had tremendous presence and charisma. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, visited Nairobi during the period. I went up to State House Nakuru with the Kissinger party for his meeting with Kenyatta. That meeting, which lasted several hours, was by all accounts a very good meeting from the point of view of Dr. Kissinger. The Kissinger visit was probably the highlight of the then emerging close relationship we had with Kenya.

Q: Was the purpose of Kissinger's visit primarily related to bilateral relations and the place of Kenya in terms of U.S. interests in the region, or was it related to Rhodesia or some other African issues, Angola?

MATTSON: No, it was very much tied in with the emerging relationship, and this was going to be a signal to the Kenyans that they had reached a new level of importance for the U.S.

Q: Who was the U.S. ambassador during this period?

MATTSON: Anthony Marshall, a political appointee, was the ambassador when I arrived. He had been previously ambassador in Madagascar and in Trinidad, I believe. He was the son of Mrs. Vincent Astor, a stepson - I think that would be the connection. He was an effective ambassador, relaxed and with good judgment. He was there for the entire period that I was there.

Q: What was Daniel Arap Moi doing during this period, and did you have any particular contact with him? You mentioned that the attorney general was seen as perhaps the ultimate post-Kenyatta leader. Let me just make another general comment. I suppose, a little bit like the embassy in Madrid, always looking at what's going to happen post-Franco and the embassy in Belgrade thinking about who's going to come after Tito, there was a lot of preoccupation with what happens after Kenyatta in Nairobi.

MATTSON: Absolutely. Daniel Arap Moi was the vice president. I attended many meetings of CODELs (Congressional delegations) and U.S. Government officials who would call on Daniel Arap Moi. He was originally a schoolteacher who became involved in KANU politics. Kenyatta had him as a subordinate for many years. Frankly, the overall opinion in the diplomatic community and among other observers was that he wasn't up to the task of succeeding Jomo Kenyatta, that he was intellectually limited. He was inarticulate, didn't speak good English, didn't have a grasp of policy issues, and many of the meetings were very perfunctory. In addition to that, he was not considered a particularly strong person. Moreover, he was from the Kalenjin tribe, which is a grouping of very small tribes in western Kenya, so he had no power base. If you didn't have a power base within an important tribal group, you were thought of as not having much political clout. Njonjo, the attorney general, was a Kikuyu, and there were important Luos, and you had important people in the army from around the Machakos area. So, if

one were to draw up a list of the half a dozen likely presidents five years after Kenyatta's death, Moi wasn't going to be on anyone's short list. It was expected that he would simply be shunted aside very quickly. Of course, what actually happened was that he eliminated all of his rivals and each one of them sank into political oblivion.

Q: And that has happened elsewhere too in terms of what might have happened. Anything else about your two years in Nairobi that we should cover at this point? You mentioned CODELs and a visit by Kissinger. I assume that Nairobi was and is a very popular place to visit because of the game parks and wildlife, the climate, the ocean, beaches.

MATTSON: Well, it's an ideal city from that point of view. It's high enough, nearly 6,000 feet, that the climate is absolutely wonderful. Of course, it's quite cool at night. An interesting aspect is you needed to have a heated swimming pool in Nairobi even though it's nearly on the equator, because the water never becomes warm enough to allow for comfortable swimming. But it was a wonderful city at that time, not as crowded as it is today and not run down as it is today. I was back there a few years ago in the early 1990s. Crime was very limited at the time of my tour. The so-called panga gangs, the machete gangs, were very few and far between, and there were few incidents. Nairobi was a city you could enjoy at night with ease. Now, at sundown, everyone heads quickly for cover. It was a very pleasant city. Of course, everyone who has ever served in Nairobi arrives and people say, "You should have been here before," because it was allegedly so much nicer at an earlier period. When I went there, for example, in 1974, people would say, "You should have been here in the late 1960s." You mentioned, Ray, that you were there in 1965. I'm sure that people in '65 would say, "It was so great in 1960." But it's still a wonderful country, though, and the Kenyans are truly marvelous people. So, however bad it has become, it's still quite a nice place. It's just that it was always nicer some time back.

Q: Or at least it was said to have been so much nicer.

MATTSON: Yes. And the thing about Nairobi, in contrast to the Seychelles, is that the British arrived in Kenya and said, "This is like the Highlands. This is a place where we can have a large and successful settler community, so let's put in a great infrastructure so that we can live here at least as well as we could in the English countryside." So you had, for example, six or seven very good golf courses in and around Nairobi, you had wonderful neighborhoods with beautiful English-style homes, amateur theater, tennis and cricket clubs, even a thoroughbred race track. I think among all the colonies that the British had, certainly the ones in Africa, Nairobi was the one that they put the money and the effort into to make it into something that would be attractive for large British settler populations for many, many generations to come.

Q: And in the mid-'70s when you were there, what was the extent of the British settlers, the white community, both in terms of the numbers and their political significance?

MATTSON: They were still quite numerous. You had the famous Long Bar at the New Stanley Hotel which was crowded every afternoon with the up-country settler types who

were coming to Nairobi for whatever purposes. They had some political clout. Kenyatta himself had spent some years in England and, in fact, had a British wife at one point. He had a very strong affection for the British even though he had been in rebellion against them. He was very tolerant of the British settler community. He was also very tolerant of the Asian commercial community. In fact, during his rule, I think a hallmark, a very successful hallmark, was the fact that it was a successful multicultural African country. The whites still controlled tremendous amounts of farmland. They were still prominent in the government, in advisory positions, and very important in the business community. There was certainly none of the notion that "This is an African country now and we have to purge ourselves of all the British elements in it." That was not at all present during my time.

Q: Where was the American embassy located at the time you were there? I ask this partly thinking of what happened with the bombing in 1998. Was that the location, or was it in a different place?

MATTSON: No, the embassy from 1974 to '76 and for a few years after that was located in a commercial building called Cotts House, which is on Mama Ngina Way. Our location in the '70s was good from the point of view of work, because it was close to parliament, close to the Jomo Kenyatta Conference Center, close to the downtown business area. We occupied several floors of this building, which was similar, I think, to the buildings which were adjacent to the U.S. embassy when it was blown up. One tragic aspect relating to where the embassy was in 1998 and why it was there was the fact that for many years the Kenyans offered the U.S. parcels - land to build a new embassy. These were located in various parts of the city, highly desirable parts of the city. There were at least a half dozen parcels of land which the Kenyans offered to the U.S. Government, but there was always a time constraint: "You have to take this land and build your embassy within a year, start within a year, two years, five years," whatever it might have been. In each of those cases, because of typical Washington inertia, the time lapsed and the land was otherwise disposed of. While I was there, the current site of the American embassy was the one that was on offer, and, incredibly, it was that one that was accepted. I remember those of us in the embassy saying, not from a security point of view because we didn't think of things in those terms in those days, but we said, "Why would we ever want to build an embassy down in that part of town close to the railroad station?" It was a very undesirable location in a very crowded, sort of run-down part of town.

Q: And not close to the parliament, the other places where you at the time saw that the embassy needed to be located in order to be effective.

MATTSON: Exactly, or in the close-in suburb which is where many of the embassies were, where you would have some grounds and some facilities. This was going to be a block structure in a run-down part of town miles away from any other embassy. We would be moving into a sort of industrial park type environment, which we all thought was awful. Those of us at the embassy thought, "What a shame that we didn't accept one of these other parcels of land which were on offer for 10 or 15 years."

Q: I suppose one of the reasons why we didn't accept those various offers is the time that would be involved in getting approval, funding, and so on.

MATTSON: Exactly, that was the reason why they all slipped by.

Q: You mentioned in passing UNEP, the United Nations Environmental Program. Had that already been located in Nairobi, or did that come later?

MATTSON: I don't remember when it was established, but it was already at the conference center in a fledgling state.

Q: But you weren't involved with that at all?

MATTSON: No. Out of curiosity, I would go to their plenaries and so forth just to see an international gathering, but we hadn't had any work to do with them.

Q: Anything else that you want to cover about your time as political officer in Nairobi?

MATTSON: I don't think so. I think that pretty much covers it. It was, again, a very interesting period in Kenyan political history and certainly in the emergence of a much closer U.S.-Kenyan relationship. I feel privileged to have been posted there with the one regret that I didn't get to spend some time in then colonial Portuguese Africa.

Q: Were there significant frictions that had begun to emerge in terms of the U.S.-Kenyan relationship, or were they sort of minor incidents of sailors overstaying their visit and that kind of thing that, I think, could be expected?

MATTSON: Yes, that was really the extent of it. Of course, after my departure there was an attempted coup d'etat in Kenya which was led by air force officers who had had training in the U.S. on some of these aircraft that we were providing, and I think at that point the relationship changed to a certain extent. In subsequent years there has been a lot of criticism of the corruption of the Moi regime. But at the time of my tour, we had a very smooth and positive relationship.

Q: Okay. Where did you go after Nairobi, and how did that assignment come about?

MATTSON: After Nairobi I went to Seychelles. Just in the way of a little bit of background. The Swahili-designated officer in Nairobi had responsibility to report on and generally to cover the British crown colony of Seychelles. I had some interesting predecessors in my Nairobi position who did that job. Ray Seitz, for example, had that position in the late 1960s. He was later to become ambassador in London and EUR (European bureau) assistant secretary. Bob Blackwill, who was another rather notable Foreign Service officer in his day, was a predecessor of mine, actually only once removed. Anyway, each of us had the responsibility to periodically visit the Seychelles, where we had a very important satellite tracking station manned by 120 Americans. Although it was a British crown colony, we had our specific interests with respect to the

tracking station and, of course, Seychelles was gradually moving toward an independent status. I think I made about three trips to Seychelles in the two years of my Nairobi tour. I got to know the British governor and the leaders of the political parties and so forth. Our relationship with the Seychelles was an intriguing one because we established this satellite tracking station in the early 1960s, more than a decade before the international airport was opened in 1971. Throughout the '60s, we had a situation which I always thought was reminiscent of Tahiti during the period of Fletcher Christian during the Mutiny on the Bounty period. You had a small island country, 60,000 people, which was in a time warp. It was visited by a tramp steamer once a month, and the only other contact with the outside world was a U.S. amphibian aircraft which would go from Mombasa on a weekly basis. This seaplane, landing in the harbor in Victoria in the Seychelles with a maximum of eight or 10 passengers and some mail, was the extent of Seychelles' physical contact with the outside world. Cable and Wireless would transmit messages, but it was a true backwater. In contrast to Kenya, for example, where the British poured lots of treasure into building an infrastructure, almost nothing was put into the Seychelles. Seychelles was a convenient place for exiles like Cypriot Archbishop Makarios, for example, but not good for much else. But we had our interests there and we were covering it.

Q: The tracking station was established as part of the space program in the early 1960s.

MATTSON: Correct, and mainly because it was nearly on the equator and exactly half a world away from Sunnyvale, California, which was the headquarters of the military satellite tracking program. So in terms of satellite coverage and downloading material from satellites and then sending it on to the headquarters in Sunnyvale, it was a very important installation. We entered into a relationship with the British to establish this tracking station at just the same time that we were establishing our presence at Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean Territories [BIOT]. We had five U.S. Air Force officers at the tracking station and about 115 or 120 civilian American technicians and support personnel contracted by companies like Boeing and Ford Aerospace.

Q: At that time, at the time you were in Nairobi, we had no Foreign Service post, no consular agent, no consular resident, so to the extent anybody from the State Department, from the Foreign Service, took an interest, covered the Seychelles, it was you from Nairobi. The ambassador and DCM didn't pay visits, or did they also?

MATTSON: During the period that I was there, I don't think either of them paid a visit to the Seychelles though in the past I gather they sometimes visited for a day or two.

Q: And the embassy in London didn't either, didn't take an interest?

MATTSON: Correct. In any event, the political dynamic on the island was very unusual. James Mancham was the head of a party called the Seychelles Democratic Party or SDP. He was a British-trained lawyer, one-eighth Chinese, who was the chief minister having won the election which was contested by the other party which I'll get to in just a moment. He actually campaigned in the last election before independence on the basis of

"British forever." He was not independence minded at all. He rather liked his position as chief minister with very limited responsibilities and a lot of perks. His rival, who is the current president of the Seychelles after the coup d'etat of 1977, is France Albert Rene. He was the head of the Seychelles Peoples' United Party, or SPUP. It was a socialist party, aligned with other socialist parties in the Indian Ocean area, in Reunion, in Mauritius, in Madagascar, and in Tanzania. They were very much in the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace frame of mind and had relations with the independence movements in Africa such as the ANC (African National Congress), SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization), and the Portuguese equivalents. Rene wanted independence; Mancham wanted the situation to continue as before. The British were inclined to divest themselves of the Seychelles, and so brought the two leaders together in London to hammer out arrangements for independence. Mancham, having narrowly won the previous election, was to be the president, and France Albert Rene was to be the prime minister in a coalition government. There were various negotiations as to who would perform which functions and have which responsibilities. This was early in 1976, and Seychelles' independence was fixed for, I believe, the 28th of June of that year. I was then in Nairobi completing my assignment. The Department decided to open an embassy in Seychelles. Congress said, "No, you must first open a consulate," while the British were still present and then that entity would be transformed into an embassy with accreditation from Nairobi. The position was designated at the FSO-1 level, which was two grades higher than my own, and our ambassador, Anthony Marshall, went back to Washington and interviewed a number of officers who were at grade or close to grade and didn't particularly care for any of them. He had liked the work that I had been doing in the Seychelles, came back and, much to my surprise, said, "Would you be willing to go out there? Would you like to go out there as chargé, DCM/chargé, and open this post?" Well, it caused me a certain amount of pause, because it's one thing to go to the Seychelles for a few days or a week, but it's quite another thing to move a family of five into a place which is so isolated, with problematical schooling and so forth. So I said, "I want to go out for one more visit to take a look and see if it's workable as a family enterprise." I thought it was less than ideal, but decided to press ahead because it was such a wonderful career opportunity. So we went out in late May of 1976, opened the so-called American consulate, literally in a broken down house trailer on the grounds of the tracking station. We put up a shield that said "American Consulate," sent a cable, using of course the communication facilities of the tracking station, announcing to the world that we were up and running. Of course, we couldn't perform any consular functions or really do anything, but we were present, as Congress had dictated. Independence week, the week of the 28th of June, was an absolutely fascinating period. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester came to give the country its independence on behalf of the Queen. You had dignitaries from all over the world. The British spent the then extraordinary sum of three million dollars on various independence-related activities, and it was a one week-long party leading up to the establishment of independence, in the stadium where Mr. Mancham became president and Rene became prime minister. They were very affectionate with one another, talking about unity and moving forward and so forth.

Q: Who was the United States representative at this event?

MATTSON: We had a cabinet secretary, and I just don't remember offhand who it was. I was scurrying around just trying to handle some of the logistic matters. Of course, Ambassador Marshall had come out for that occasion. One of the really unique aspects of this particular assignment was that I was there for 27 months as chargé, and the total number of days when we were visited by the ambassador in Nairobi, the total number of days spent by either Tony Marshall or Wilbur J. LeMelle, his successor, were under ten in the entire 27 months. So I had a tremendous sense of personal responsibility, a kind of empowerment, to really be the U.S. representative on an ongoing basis.

Q: What sort of staff did you have, or did you do this pretty much by yourself?

MATTSON: We were only three people: Willard Wynne, who was an East Asia bureau telephone tech who wanted to broaden his responsibilities. He was put in charge of administrative and consular affairs once we got up and running. Then there was a secretary, Joan Pavlik, who was another hearty soul who came out to basically do the secretarial work and be the communicator. Our communications were all transmitted through the tracking station. We prepared telegrams on an antiquated system, what they call poking tape, which is actually typing the coded message into a perforated tape which is then transported to the tracking station, put on their machinery, and sent out to the world, all in all a very laborious process. So there were just the three of us. I was the only officer, and the other two were staff personnel.

Q: You were still in this trailer?

MATTSON: We worked in the trailer for quite a lengthy period. At first, all of us were living in hotels. We had to find, of course, a suitable place for the embassy and housing for the staff. I was getting my kids into Seychelles International School, which is a bit of an exaggeration, as it only had about 60 students in a large island house where the various classrooms were separated by shower curtains one from the other. The teachers, who were superb, were all the wives of British assistance workers. The atmosphere at the school was terrific and our three sons had a marvelous educational experience.

Q: Were there some other American students from the tracking station?

MATTSON: No, because the staff at the tracking station was comprised almost exclusively of bachelors, that is to say bachelors in name only. They almost all had live-in Seychelloise girlfriends, but there were no children. If tracking station personnel were married, their kids tended to go to local schools, but, again, very few of them had children. So, our three kids were the only American children there, and the others were mainly the children of British businessmen, assistance workers, or missionaries. There was, for instance, an evangelical broadcasting operation broadcasting to South Asia from the Seychelles from which there were six or eight kids.

Q: Did you find a location either to live more permanently other than a hotel or to move out of the trailer for the embassy?

MATTSON: Both. We rented a house on a hillside close to the tracking station. The main island in Seychelles, which is called Mahé, is only four miles wide by 17 miles long but is probably 3,000 feet high, so you have tremendous heights for a very small area. We found a house which was close to the top of the mountain overlooking Victoria harbor. It was a rather nondescript sort of plantation house, linoleum floors, of course completely unfurnished. Its attraction was that it was cooler there because it was much higher up. As far as an embassy location, there was a building under construction in downtown Victoria, a two-story building which made it the tallest building in town, and we took the top floor of that building - it's called Victoria House - and set up our offices there. So we were all in permanent housing and in our office building about four or five months after the beginning of the tour. That office remained the embassy until the embassy was closed about 1997 or 1998. But, the residence of the chief of mission was changed to a much more desirable location and to a wonderful home, by far the best in the country. It was a hardship for an extended period because we had no furniture. We had rental cars, and were doing everything with a checkbook. It really took us about six or eight months to be fully functioning, although we never had our own communications.

Q: Did you go directly there from Nairobi?

MATTSON: A direct transfer, arriving just at the end of my tour in '76 and staying until the late summer of '78.

Q: I think you mentioned that there was a coup in 1977.

MATTSON: That's true, yes.

Q: And that was while you were there?

MATTSON: Yes. Let me discuss a little bit of that very first year. I knew President Mancham and Prime Minister Rene very well from my visits from Nairobi, and I had made a very concerted effort to maintain good relations with both of them, especially because they were coming from different political streams. The breakdown of responsibilities between them was that Mancham was in charge of foreign affairs and promoting Seychelles as a desirable island location for investment and tourism; and Rene, in a way the more serious-minded of the two, would be involved in economic development and education. So one was sort of domestic policy oriented and the other one was foreign relations oriented. I made it a point of calling on Rene in his office at least once a month; we always had productive discussions. I also had frequent contact with President Mancham, who was of course in State House just up the hill from the embassy. I would actually be invited for a *tête-à-tête* lunch with him about once every two or three weeks during which we would discuss all manner of developments in the Seychelles; he frequently wanted impressions from me as to how I thought things were going in this early period. Only five countries established a diplomatic presence in the Seychelles, the five permanent members of the Security Council. I was a then mid-30s chargé with an accredited ambassador in Nairobi. The four others were senior career ambassadors from China, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. All of them were in their

mid-50s if not into their 60s. All of them had much larger embassies than we had. The Soviet embassy in Seychelles was at least 30 people. The Chinese embassy was of a similar size. The British had maybe 15 or 20 UK-based personnel, and the French a similar group.

Q: All resident in Victoria?

MATTSON: All resident in Victoria. So we became, as the very able and amusing British High Commissioner John Pugh used to say, the "village diplomatic corps." He used to euphemistically refer to us as that. And, of course, our status gave us tremendous access to everything. For anything that was going on in the Seychelles, we were the natural five people to be invited, and during that first year when James Mancham was trying to promote the Seychelles, he hosted many very interesting visitors. A frequent visitor was Adnan Khashoggi, at that time at the height of his power as Saudi businessman, middleman, facilitator. He would winter his enormous yacht, Kalidia, in Seychelles, would fly in aboard one of his 727s every couple of weeks. He was then heavily engaged in agriculture in Sudan and Kenya and had other enterprises in East Africa. We would have Saudi princes visit regularly. I remember one time a Saudi prince and his entourage met with Mancham. We went to a sumptuous dinner subsequently with all of these visitors and Mancham began referring to Seychelles as the Acapulco of the Indian Ocean. Peter Sellers, the actor, and George Harrison, the Beatle, were involved in a local hotel project. An "Emmanuel" movie was filmed there; Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue was shot there. It became a jet-set kind of spot, very much promoted as such by Mr. Mancham. During the same period there was very little progress made in terms of development. Rene, of course, was tapping into the resentment generated in a subterranean way that we didn't fully appreciate at the time. But overtly it seemed that their relationships were good. We had a very productive relationship with the government of Seychelles under Mr. Mancham. We had frequent visits from COMMIDEASTFOR (Commander, Middle East Force), Admiral Crowe, which was essentially our destroyer squadron in the Indian Ocean. Seychelles was ideally located as a hub for P-3 patrol aircraft based in Diego Garcia roughly 1,000 miles due east of Seychelles. Seychelles was another 1,000 miles to Mombasa, more or less 1,000 miles to Masirah and Bander Abbas in the Gulf area. So we had naval visits coming all the time, we had P-3 aircraft transiting and overnighting in the Seychelles all the time, and we had our tracking station. A lot of interests were at stake and I felt a keen sense of personal responsibility for the success of our Indian Ocean policy.

Q: We may have lost a little bit of the last comments about the use of the Seychelles for the patrol aircraft and also the ship visits. Why don't you go on talking about that.

MATTSON: Okay. Just to recap, of critical importance was the satellite tracking station, which was established during the period of British rule. We also had frequent ship visits. It was our goal for these to be continued. I believe during the time that I was in Seychelles, there were about 30 or 35 U.S. naval vessels that visited. In addition, maritime patrol aircraft were using the Seychelles as a refueling and rest stop between Diego Garcia and Mombasa and between Diego Garcia and the Gulf region. So this was a

very important hub of U.S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean. At that time, you have to recall that there was a true Indian Ocean naval rivalry going on with the Soviets, who had a very large naval squadron in the Indian Ocean. The British and the French had a large naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and there were also some regional players with blue-water navies who were aspiring to play a role in the Indian Ocean, notably the Shah's Iran and India. So it was really, by virtue of its location, an important embassy country despite Seychelles' small size and lack of any economic significance. Within three weeks, for example, of my arrival in Seychelles, we were called upon to assist the USS Ranger, one of our large attack aircraft carriers, in receiving mail, spare parts and other high priority items when it deployed into the western Indian Ocean to counter a threat that Idi Amin had made against a group of American missionaries. So the airport, the seaport, and the tracking station were all very important to the U.S. Of course, the Soviets realized that, and their objective there was to deny us access to the extent that they could and, if possible, obtain use of these assets for themselves.

Q: Let me just ask sort of an organizational, bureaucratic, jurisdictional question. I assume that the Air Force personnel at the tracking station came under your responsibility and authority once the embassy was established and you were chargé. Was there any U.S. Navy presence on any kind of permanent basis within the embassy?

MATTSON: There was no naval presence, and you're right, the Air Force people were under our jurisdiction. In fact, after the coup, the then commander of the tracking station, a major, just was not capable of adjusting to the new situation and had to leave, which was very difficult for him and very difficult for me.

Q: Anything more about this first year?

MATTSON: Well, it was a period in which we had, again, a very close relationship. Mancham, who was decidedly pro-West, was having a wonderful time in his first year as president, doing a lot of globe trotting and welcoming dignitaries and personalities and what have you. The embassy was sort of consolidating its presence and ensuring that the access and other advantages the Seychelles had to offer were maximized. Once again, to go back a little, I was only on my third Foreign Service tour. I couldn't believe my good fortune in having been given this degree of responsibility. I was reporting directly to Washington, not going through Nairobi, and quickly came to understand that, even though Seychelles in terms of population and size is one of the smallest countries in the Africa bureau, it was considered by the leadership of the Africa bureau to be one of the most important because of its concrete U.S. interests, which were hard to quantify in many African countries but easy to define in the Seychelles. So I was very conscious of the fact that my reporting and policy recommendations were being read routinely by the assistant secretary, and Seychelles became an important item in AF (Africa) bureau considerations.

Q: Seychelles had quickly become a member of the United Nations.

MATTSON: Immediately on independence.

Q: Did the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs or other people from the bureau try to come early on, or was it so difficult to get to even with this international airport that you were again pretty much on your own?

MATTSON: Pretty much on my own with the ambassador's very infrequent visits. I don't think in that first year we had anyone from the U.S. government of a senior rank come to the Seychelles.

Q: And your successor in Nairobi, as Swahili language officer, no longer had any responsibilities for the Seychelles?

MATTSON: Exactly.

Q: Well, maybe at this point we should talk about what happened in 1977.

MATTSON: In early June 1977 unbeknownst to anyone - coups d'état tend to be secretive affairs - France Albert Rene and his co-religionists within SPUP were organizing a coup d'etat. Now, Seychelles was without an army. Seychelles had just formed a 120-man police force which was armed and being trained by a sergeant major from the Grenadier Guards! I remember his name, Sergeant Major Walker, because his name was frequently uttered on the radio the day of the coup. This was a ceremonial unit which would appear at the airport as a guard of honor when some dignitary came or when the president left the country and that sort of thing. The other police were not armed. This unit of police had all of their weapons in an armory, and the coup, was euphemistically called the "Coup of 60 Rifles." This was, by the way, a massive exaggeration, because it was carried out by a few score people with at most 20 weapons, who took over this armory. The night before the coup - the coup occurred about 3:00 AM on a Sunday morning - I was attending with my wife an Air India party at one of the leading hotels where all of the coup makers were present. Mr. Mancham, the president, had gone off to a heads-of-state meeting of the Commonwealth in London a few days earlier. I remember now in retrospect that they did seem a bit nervous that night. But at 10 o'clock the reception was over, we all went home, and then at about four o'clock in the morning I was awakened when a car came racing up my driveway full of now deposed government ministers from Mr. Mancham's party, shouting up at my window, "Mr. Mattson, we have to speak with you." My wife suggested I not go down, but eventually when I saw who was there, I went down and was informed by these ministers that there was fighting in the capital, in the town of Victoria down below, that Rene "was taking over the government," and they asked me what I was prepared to do about it. I, of course, demurred, and I told them I was going to turn the radio on, because it had been my "experience," which was nil, that whenever there is a coup, the radio, which was supposed to be dark, usually had something on it worth listening to. So I managed, through various comments, to get them off my front lawn and went in and turned on the radio and, sure enough, there was revolutionary rock music at an hour when there shouldn't have been anything at all on air. Within a few hours, the government had fallen, the coup makers had killed three people. They were manning roadblocks all over the island, imposed a curfew, and the

country went quiet. From the morning when I first heard about this coup and for the next eight days I don't think I slept more than an hour or two a night. We had a ship visit due the next day, we had P-3s in the air, and we had sensitive relationships with the previous government which had to be handled with some care. On top of all of that, at eight o'clock in the morning, I received a telegram from Nairobi informing me of a Reuter's article that was in the newspaper, the Daily Nation. This piece I subsequently learned was carried all over the world, front page of the London Times, front page of the New York Times, quoting me as having told Mancham that Mr. Rene was going to overthrow him with "Soviet help." Now, I'll give you a little bit of background on that quickly. I mentioned before that I used to meet with Mancham quite often at his behest for lunch, and we had very interesting conversations. He always harbored some suspicions about Mr. Rene's intentions, which he would occasionally voice. It was normal island gossip, nothing more than that. Well, he was informed of his overthrow actually indirectly by me because the coup makers, of course had taken Cable and Wireless off the air and the only person who could communicate with the outside world was myself through the tracking station. So at five o'clock in the morning I sent the first cable that reported on this coup, and the British High Commissioner, who didn't know anything about it, said, "Oh, by the way, would you mind copying this cable to FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) in London, because they have to know and I can't tell them, and also they're handling Mancham who's in London for this summit." So, Mancham organized a five- or six-o'clock-in-the-morning news conference in which he said that Rene had overthrown him with Soviet help. He was pressed to find a source for that assertion, was reluctant initially but finally said, "It's because Greg Mattson, the American chargé, told me he was going to do it," which of course was a completely false statement. So in addition to reporting on the coup, canceling the ship visit, handling the P-3 visits, dealing with another delicate matter, which I will not go into here, I had the real prospect of either facing recall by my own government or expulsion by the new government. Interestingly, Mancham, in exile, later sent his brother from London with guidance to see me. The brother came to my office and said, "Greg, I had to come to the embassy. Jimmy said that the first thing that you have to do is go to the American embassy and say, 'Jimmy's sorry.'" I subsequently saw Mancham in London. He was living in a small but lovely place in Putney, one of the suburbs of London. He's now back in the Seychelles, by the way, cohabitating with Mr. Rene. But that was a very tense period for me professionally because I had all of these things to juggle and thought that my assignment, if not my career, was going to be terminated by these developments. So I basically did the best job I could reporting on the coup, protecting our interests, and making policy recommendations. It took us actually eight days to recognize the Rene government. This option was presented to President Carter several times over eight days before we actually established relations with the new government. During that period I traveled around. In fact, one incident nearly brought about my demise. The first morning at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, with a total curfew in effect, I wanted to get out and get an appreciation for what the situation on the ground was like. I telephoned the central police station in downtown Victoria where now President Rene was installed running the coup and tried to get through to him several times unsuccessfully, but finally reached him and said that I wanted to travel. I'd drive my own car, fly the American flag, and check up on our tourists who were in various hotels. He said, "Give me an hour or two to send the word out to the roadblocks, and that

will be fine." So I waited the full two hours thinking things might be a little slow, but then when I proceeded into town, two coup makers with Sterling machine guns jumped out from behind a bush and leveled these guns at me. They were shoeless and shirtless with cut-off jeans and were obviously drunk. They hadn't gotten the word that I was supposed to be allowed to pass. It took about 10 or 15 seconds for an unarmed Seychelles policeman to explain to them that I really wasn't going to be a major threat, but that was a very frightening personal experience. Those eight days were incredibly busy for me. My reporting, I later found out, became an AF primer for coup reporting. There were so many coups taking place in Africa at the time, but they thought that this one, in terms of the reporting on what was important and what the Department needed to know and recommendations, was pretty well done. I know I worked as hard as I could. Eight days later we reestablished relations. I went in to see now President Rene, conveying the various messages that Washington was telling me to deliver, and then at the end said, "And there's one more matter that I would like to raise with you," referring to my own being misquoted by Mancham. He cut me off and said, "Greg, I know you for who you are. Please don't even bring it up." So Washington didn't recall me, Seychelles didn't expel me, and, much relieved, I was set for the second year of my assignment.

Q: I think that's probably a good point to stop this session, but just before we do that let me ask you about the Soviet role in the coup, the point that you were quoted on. What do you think the Soviet role, if any, was in retrospect?

MATTSON: There's never been any evidence that surfaced to my knowledge that they were involved, but they certainly benefited from it. Rene, who had been a mild socialist, became a very hard-left socialist for at least 10 or 15 years afterwards, essentially until the demise of the Soviet Union. He aligned Seychelles as one of the most Soviet-leaning countries in the non-Bloc world. Every vote at the UN was along Soviet lines. The Indian Ocean Zone of Peace was promoted. U.S. ship visits were curtailed by the 1980s. The only thing that remained intact was the tracking station, for which we then had to pay many millions of dollars. There's no doubt that the Soviets after the coup gave tremendous financial backing to Rene and to the Seychelles. In fact, Rene's political preferences, I think, would have been much closer to the Soviets than to, let's say, Swedish socialists. With the downfall of the Soviet Union, all of a sudden Seychelles again became a democratic country and allowed a free election. Rene is there still but now as a moderate to left-learning socialist, which is what he said he was during the period when he was prime minister and during his first year or two in office as president.

Q: Okay, let's stop for now, and we'll pick up again next time.

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This is the second session of a Foreign Affairs Oral History interview with Gregory L. Mattson. It's the 30th of January 2001. My name is Raymond Ewing. This is being conducted at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Greg, last time, which was several months ago so my memory's a little bit hazy perhaps, we were talking about your

assignment to open the post in the Seychelles. You served as chargé d'affaires with an ambassador resident in Nairobi, as I recall, and during the first year, right out of the box, so to speak, there was a coup d'etat, the government was taken over, and, as I think we discussed last time, there were articles in the international press attributed to you about who was behind the coup and perhaps some of the ramifications of it. What sort of fallout, if any, was there from that statement later on, either locally with the government or from the State Department? Did they feel that you had misspoken or gone out on a limb?

MATTSON: Well, I felt very strongly supported by the State Department in that regard. As I believe I mentioned in our last session, the statement was made by the deposed president, James Mancham, that Mr. Rene, his prime minister, had overthrown him with "Soviet help," and he attributed that assertion to me. That appeared in the international press the next day. It was also a feature article, actually a full-page article, in Newsweek magazine. Being in the Seychelles, isolated with only a very thin thread of communications capability back to Washington, I was very concerned about the career ramifications stemming either from the now installed government of Mr. Rene or from the State Department. I was very strongly supported, as I mentioned, by the State Department. In fact, it was never mentioned, much to my relief and delight. I, of course, took an early opportunity to disassociate myself from that false statement, and that disassociation was never challenged. As far as Mr. Rene was concerned, when I did go in to see him on the establishment of diplomatic relations with his government, which was about eight days after the coup, I mentioned at the conclusion of our meeting that there was one more matter that I wanted to discuss with him. Knowing what I was about to say, he basically cut me off and said that he didn't care to go into that, that he did not believe the statements that had been in the press, and that he was looking forward to a good relationship with me and with the United States during his time in office. He was, of course, at that phase very much looking toward international acquiescence since this was, after all, a violent coup d'etat against a government that was duly recognized. Even though he may have felt somewhat differently, he certainly didn't indicate other than that we were going to have a good relationship, and in fact we did have a very good professional and personal relationship throughout the remaining year-plus that I was in the Seychelles.

Q: So the coup took place in 1977 perhaps.

MATTSON: In early June of 1977.

Q: And you were there into the following year, 1978?

MATTSON: Right, into mid-August of 1978.

Q: Had the Seychelles by then become a significant tourist destination for Americans?

MATTSON: With the opening of its international airport in 1972 by Queen Elizabeth II herself as it was still a crown colony, it had grown gradually into a sort of high-end

tourist destination. You had none of the backpacking crowd, because there was very limited hotel space and everything was very expensive. It became a very popular destination for European honeymooners, for example. At the time that I left, there were about 40,000 or 50,000 tourist visitors a year, which nearly equaled the island's population. Since then I understand that the number has grown to about 150,000 per year.

Q: I suppose they mostly came from Britain?

MATTSON: Well, many of them were from Britain; there was a direct British Airways flight, not direct but via Nairobi, to the Seychelles. There was an Air France flight via Djibouti, and there was an Alitalia flight. Those three countries furnished the bulk of the tourist visitors. I remember especially that a lot of Italians actually were visiting during that period.

Q: And a few Americans found their way there?

MATTSON: Very, very few: certainly on an annual basis not more than a few hundred.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about the place of the Seychelles in the broader context, both regionally and perhaps... This was the Cold War period. Was it of strategic significance to the West in some way?

MATTSON: I think we covered much of this the last time, but it's worthwhile to recap a little bit. The Seychelles, because of its geographical position and because of the fact that it had an international airport that was capable of handling the largest aircraft, was a hub in a series of spokes which went out from the Seychelles toward Diego Garcia, about 1,000 miles to the east; to Iran and to Oman to the north where we had landing rights for P-3 aircraft; and then about another 1,000 miles due west to the Kenyan coast. So it was very strategically located. It was also a very popular port for visiting naval vessels. We had very frequent visits from the then Middle East Force, which was comprised of the USS La Salle and three destroyers. French ships would come in regularly, and British and Soviet units as well. So in any given week we might have visits by combatants from those countries plus occasional visits from the Indian and Iranian navies, which were then getting into blue-water navy operations in the central Indian Ocean for the very first time. As a former naval officer - I had spent eight years in the Navy - this was, of course, personally as well as professionally very interesting to go aboard these ships and to basically realize that this was almost a throwback to a 19th century sort of naval way station in the middle of nowhere.

Q: A calling station.

MATTSON: Exactly that.

Q: To what extent at this time, not long after independence, were the Seychelles involved with other East Africa countries? The Seychelles were a member of the Organization for African Unity, for example?

MATTSON: Yes, and Mr. Rene's party, the SPUP, before independence was part of that group that included the ANC and SWAPO in Namibia, all of the Portuguese guerilla insurgent organizations from Angola and Mozambique, and so forth. So they would periodically go to these meetings usually held in Africa to strategize about various issues. They became a fairly radical party with ties to all of these insurgent movements, and after Seychelles' independence those party-to-party ties were maintained. After Mr. Rene's coup they were intensified. So Rene had very strong relations with many of the insurgent organizations, freedom-and-independence-seeking organizations, in East Africa and southern Africa and was especially close to Tanzania. Interestingly, that country dispatched a battalion of soldiers to Seychelles within days of the coup to bolster Rene's regime. And that battalion of Tanzanians set up an army camp very close to the airport and were there throughout the time that I was there and for many years after that. At the same time, Rene had very unusual arrangements for his personal security. In addition to bodyguards composed of militia which had helped him in the coup, he had - I forget the number exactly - perhaps 40 or 50 North Koreans who were on the State House grounds providing personal security to him and to the regime. That always reminded me a little of James Bond movie sets with North Koreans doing their various calisthenics and so forth on the lawn of the State House.

Q: Were things pretty stable the rest of the time that you were there after the coup?

MATTSON: Not really. Rene, I think, felt never particularly secure in the early period. He realized that Mancham was plotting to return from abroad. Many of the supporters of Mancham were in Nairobi or in London and other places trying to mobilize support. He felt, I think, personally threatened and, as I mentioned, developed an apparatus for personal security which went far beyond anything the Seychelles had ever seen before. There was a rumored counter-coup which occurred six or eight months later, which resulted in curfews and mobilizations of militiamen and Tanzanians. That turned out to be a false alarm, but subsequent to my departure there was the famous counter-coup attempt in support of Mancham which was organized by Mad Mike Hoare.

Q: A South African.

MATTSON: Right, exactly. Mad Mike Hoare of Congo fame actually landed at the airport with a group of South African mercenaries who were disguised as rugby players. They had already infiltrated the island with another 40 or 50 mercenaries, and they were coming in to basically take over the government. This was a very interesting event. It was widely reported, of course, in the international press. But as Mad Mike and his associates were claiming their luggage, some of which included golf bags, a submachine gun fell. There was a firefight at the airport with the Tanzanians, and Mad Mike and his men finally had to flee the country from the airport - they never got in to perpetrate their coup - aboard a commandeered Air India flight. They all flew off to South Africa where, of course, they were arrested and tried and actually did some jail time. But Rene throughout that whole period was very afraid of a counter-coup. He realized that he had taken power - as I mentioned the Coup of 60 Rifles, really probably a dozen weapons - and that this

was a very vulnerable state which could easily be taken back. There was credible speculation that Rene either organized or countenanced the assassination of at least one Mancham supporter in London.

Q: What overall was the United States' relations with Rene's government in the time that you were there?

MATTSON: During the time that I was there the relations were excellent. We renewed our tracking station agreement. He was very receptive to all requests for ship visits. Our P-3 aircraft visits proceeded as before. There was no discernible difference. His votes in international organizations, especially the UN, were beginning to tilt to the left, and that intensified to a very great extent after I left. In fact, Rene became one of the most pliant non-Soviet Bloc states in the world in supporting Soviet interests in international organizations. He was the recipient of significant aid from both China and the Soviet Union. Strangely enough, even as he drifted further to the left and was considered internationally to be a Communist sympathizer and supporter, our tracking station, which was of course handling military satellites, remained fully functional. So there was a certain disconnect between Rene and his pro-Soviet/Chinese inclinations which developed four or five years after I left and the fact that we had a major military facility still intact and functioning. Just to put a final point on that - it doesn't have to do with my experience but just the history of the Seychelles - with the fall of the Soviet Union, all of that changed. The backing of the Soviet Union disappeared, and Rene decided to hold free elections. Mr. Mancham, in exile for 15 or 20 years, whatever it was, came back from London, contested those elections which were widely regarded as free and meeting international standards. Rene won by, I think, four or five percentage points. Mancham and Rene are actually both in the Seychelles now and seem to have found some *modus vivendi* after many, many years of rivalry and animus.

Q: At the time you were there were there many American nationals present at the tracking station operating that, or was that done mostly by machines?

MATTSON: We had roughly, as I recall, about 120 Americans. About half of them were on the technical side working for one of the contractors - I think it was Ford Aerospace - and then there was a service contract which was at that time administered by Pan American. The facility was substantial in size. It had, of course, round-the-clock operation, processing all of this data and making sure that the satellite control aspects were working satisfactorily. And they had certain recreational facilities, they had a mess hall and sports facilities, and a movie every night in an open-air theater they had set up.

Q: Did they look to the embassy for advice and input into their local dealings?

MATTSON: Yes. Of course, the Air Force station commander from the period from 1952 until we established diplomatic relations in 1976, had been, let's say, the senior American on the island with just very casual oversight from Nairobi. So the base commander had become a certain personage on the island, whoever it might have been, for his two- or three-year assignment. So there were some adjustment problems when diplomatic

relations were established and the embassy became the first contact. But the station commanders were, by and large, happy to be rid of those political responsibilities, especially because they disapproved of Mr. Rene and what he had been doing and saying and were just as happy not to have to deal with him and his government.

Q: Is there anything else we ought to discuss in connection with this very interesting assignment in the Seychelles, anything else about what it is like to open a post?

MATTSON: Well, maybe just to reinforce that Seychelles was only my third assignment in the Foreign Service. I had only been in the Service for five years. I took this as a tremendous opportunity and a great responsibility. I think I worked longer hours in this idyllic island paradise than I had in any previous job or any subsequent job. I was working every day. As a reporting officer I was writing on absolutely everything, was very much encouraged by the State Department, which found an interested readership for these various cables that I was sending in. I would liken it to someone who has his own small shop which is the centerpiece of their lives. They're not part of an apparatus, they realize that, however small the operation, it is theirs and they were going to be responsible for everything - good or bad - that happens. The fact that it occurred so early in my career gave me an added incentive to do the best job that I could. My wife and I also had a very nice time. There was a very interesting expatriate community there, mostly British, and so even though there were but 60,000 souls in the entire country, we had 10 or 12 very good friends with whom we would do sports and go out to dinner and basically enjoy each other's company. So it wasn't quite as isolated as it might have appeared. Our children benefited tremendously by going to school there, even though the school day was only four hours long, from eight o'clock until noon. They had a lot of homework, they did a lot of reading, and all in all, it was a very positive experience for them and for us as a family. They were aged eight, six and five when we arrived, and that was an exciting time for them, even though, as I say, it was very isolated - their school was comprised of less than a hundred pupils.

Q: Was there a U.S. aid program? You mentioned the British development workers.

MATTSON: We had a self-help program which was very useful. It usually consisted of some thousands of dollars for small projects like road works or building a school. We also had a PL-480 food program which we administered, which was beneficial. That was pretty much it. Those small programs, though, showed me that you can have a tremendous impact with just a 5,000 dollar project here and a 10,000 dollar project there.

Q: And you probably didn't have to do much in terms of commercial work, export promotion?

MATTSON: No, very little of that, although we did set up a USIS (United States Information Service) and commercial library when I was there. It became a center for Seychelles high school students.

Q: Did you have to hire local employees, or were they already somehow in place?

MATTSON: No, we hired three local employees, who were very good. Seychellois women especially are very hard workers and were very loyal and very dedicated to their work, so we were very lucky to find three very good employees, who stayed at the embassy for many years after we left.

Q: Okay. Anything else we ought to say about this assignment?

MATTSON: Again, just to put an exclamation point on that tour, it was one of those opportunities that arise very seldom. To open an embassy gives you a special sense of ownership. I was very grateful for it. It certainly won't arise again in today's Foreign Service, but in those days, with limited communications especially giving you a lot of local autonomy, it was just a marvelous opportunity. It was very far off the beaten track but with real U.S. interests to protect and advance.

Q: And, as you said a couple of times, particularly unique only five years after entering the Foreign Service to have an assignment like that.

MATTSON: Exactly. In fact, senior officers traveling through, inspectors, for example, on their way to wherever, would occasionally come and have a meal with us and sit on our balcony overlooking the small port and vast Indian Ocean and would say, "You know, Greg, I know you've only been in the Foreign Service for five or six years, but this is the best assignment you're ever going to have." In many ways, that was true.

Q: Okay. Where did you go from the Seychelles in 1978 or '79?

MATTSON: This was one of those crossroads in your career that you look back on as being very significant. I was actually assigned to the political section in South Africa via Afrikaans language training and very much looking forward to that. That assignment, of course, would have cemented me in as an Africanist within the Foreign Service, because after Lisbon, which also had an African connection with the colonies, and then Nairobi and the Seychelles, to follow with South Africa meant I probably would have spent most of the rest of my career in the AF bureau. But about a week before I was scheduled to leave, I received a telegram from the State Department that said, I can remember it vividly, "We understand that, for a combination of personal and professional reasons, you might welcome a tour in Athens. If so, we're prepared to break your assignment to fill a Service need, because there had been a curtailment in Athens." As my wife is Greek born and I had been a student of modern European history with a focus on modern Greece before entering the Foreign Service, that was an intriguing possibility. Somewhat reluctantly, I have to say, for both of us, we decided to take the Athens assignment. We were conflicted to a degree because we were very much looking forward to going to South Africa. So instead of studying Afrikaans, I studied Greek and went to Athens.

Q: And you did, what, pretty much a full year, 44 weeks here at the Foreign Service Institute? You had a full language program?

MATTSON: There wasn't enough time for that. I only managed to get in about 19 weeks, but that was again one of the more rewarding experiences that I had. I had been to Greece maybe six or eight times, with my wife always doing the interpreting. I had no knowledge of the language but I had heard a lot of the sounds of the language. I didn't know what any of the words meant but I knew the sounds of the language. I actually managed to achieve a high grade in just the 19 weeks, setting me up with a three, three-plus level of fluency to build on during our time in Athens.

Q: And the reason for only 19 weeks was because there was a vacancy in the political section in Athens and there was pressure to get you there as soon as possible?

MATTSON: Yes. So we left in August of 1979. I also needed some labor training because I was also going to be doing the labor work in the political section.

Q: And so there you were a political officer, a labor reporting officer. The political section had about four officers.

MATTSON: We had maybe five officers at that time. I was one of the two most junior officers in the section. In addition to labor work I was also doing most of the domestic political reporting, which in a place like Athens is very interesting indeed, because even more then than now, there were many parties and many strong personalities within the parties and factions within the parties. The American embassy in Greece during that period had a very high profile. Because Greeks wanted to talk to American diplomats and were very loquacious, you had a field day really in terms of opportunities for political reporting and analysis.

Q: This was only five years or so after democracy returned to Greece and political party life was really active and engaged. The New Democracy party was in power, PASOK, the socialist party, was in opposition. You had contacts with all parties, or did you specialize in one?

MATTSON: I had contacts in all of the parties except for the Communists. Contact with the Greek Communist Party was initiated during my second tour as political counselor in 1986. The Communist Party didn't want to have any dealings with us either. But there was a hard-right party, the National Camp, I believe it was called: Ethniki Parataksi. Then there were the New Democracy and PASOK, and those were the two parties with which we had the greatest contact. There was no difficulty having plenty of contacts on the far right or with New Democracy; PASOK was more difficult. Again, they were at that point fairly fiercely anti-American. Papandreou throughout the period after the coup and when he was in exile and then leader of PASOK, which, by the way, considered itself as PAK, a liberation movement during that junta period, was quite determinedly anti-American. And since it was a party which was highly disciplined, it was very difficult for PASOK members to have relations with the U.S. embassy and keep their standing within the party.

Q: We'll have to be sure to talk about that a little further, because they did come to

power while you were there that first tour, and we need to talk a little bit later about how things changed. I know that they did. But let's just sort of set the scene a little bit further. Who was the political counselor, and who were the ambassador and DCM?

MATTSON: The ambassador was Robert McCloskey, former spokesman of the State Department. The DCM was Hawk Mills. Hawk Mills very briefly for a couple of months because he left toward the end of 1979. The political counselor was Charles McCaskill, who had previously been in Cyprus and also in Greece. He was a true philhellene, very interested in Greece.

Q: Had strong language skills.

MATTSON: He did indeed. He had strong language skills. We had quite a dynamic section. My predecessor was the now deceased Towny (Townsend) Friedman. In fact, the irony was that I replaced him twice in Athens, during my first assignment and then as political counselor for my second assignment. And he was, I must say, a very hard act to follow. He was a very capable officer, a gifted writer. We had a very strong section and we worked quite hard, because that was a period where you could see that New Democracy was beginning to lose its luster and its grip. Karamanlis, who had come back to lead the party in 1974, was no longer prime minister; it was George Rallis. Rallis was an uncharismatic figure, and struck many as a sort of place holder. At the same time we saw surging support for the very charismatic Andreas Papandreou. So you could see that, if it wasn't going to be in the 1981 election that PASOK would come to power, they were on the right path to come into power. New Democracy was basically trying to hold on, but you could sense that their time was about to expire, at least temporarily.

Q: Karamanlis by then had been elected president?

MATTSON: Karamanlis at that point had been elected president. No, let me see. That might have come a little later. Constantine Tsatsos was the first president of the Greek Republic after the abolition of the monarchy in the referendum of 1975, and I'm not sure exactly when his term ended and when Karamanlis' began. There might have been a short interval before Karamanlis became president - I've just forgotten when that was. But, of course, he was moving toward the presidency. George Rallis had been one of his loyal lieutenants over the years; he had been foreign minister. We had had very good relations with him. But, as I say, he was not very charismatic, and charisma counts for a lot in Greek politics.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit more about relations with the United States. There was another political officer who handled the external dimension in relations with the United States, with Europe and so on. Why don't you talk a little bit about the work you were doing and how it fit within that framework?

MATTSON: We were, of course, still in a period where there were continuous articles in the newspapers accusing the United States of having been an active supporter of the junta, the colonels' regime, which ruled from '67 to '74. Even more topically and

intensely, there was a tremendous amount of criticism of the United States policy during the period of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. So those were two problems that we had in the background in all of our dealings with Greeks, officially and unofficially. U.S.-Greek relations were also very often a function of how Greeks perceived U.S.-Turkish relations. To the extent that our relations with Turkey were seen to be warm, our relations with Greece were correspondingly not very good. All of this revolved, of course, around the issues of Cyprus; but also, after 1974 and the invasion of Cyprus, the Greeks militarized their islands in the eastern Aegean, the Turks formed the Army of the Aegean based in Izmir, and there was a steady tension over rival claims in the Aegean as well. We had a very delicate balance to maintain. Additionally, Greek-Turkish relations within NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) were very strained. So we were basically trying to maintain our access to four major military facilities in Greece. We had Hellenikon Airport in Athens; we had Iraklion, which is a very important communications listening site on Crete; also on Crete we had Souda Bay, which had one of the best deep-water ports in the Mediterranean, and Nea Makri, a naval communication facility near Marathon.

Q: There was a separate officer, I think not part of the political section, that handled political-military relations. Is that correct?

MATTSON: That's correct, yes. And during the time that we were on that first tour Mort Dworkin, who is currently political counselor in London, held the job. But that was a separate section which dealt principally with the department within the foreign ministry that handled relations with the American bases. Those were quite difficult. Also, I guess, in terms of the atmospherics it's worth mentioning that during that period, from '74 and the restoration of democracy in Greece and the invasion of Cyprus until 1979, you had a series of anti-American acts being committed. The first that springs to mind is fire-bombings of American vehicles. These would be perpetrated by various leftist and anti-American groups. In the period from '75 to '79, something like 800 vehicles, a huge number, were firebombed, almost always in the middle of the night. I actually found an unexploded firebomb under my own car. I was the first one, the only one - an interesting little sidebar - to have actually discovered one of these devices before it went off, and that was, by the way, a fluke. That was in 1981 during the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon. We were living in the Athens suburb of Psychico. My two cars were parked on the street. Our kids wanted to go bowling one Sunday night in June, and so we took the car which was behind the other and went down to the bowling alley only to discover that it was closed, and came right back. As we drove behind the parked car which was left there, one of my kids asked, "What's that under the car?" It turned out to be a toaster-sized device that turned out to be a bomb. It was a firebomb set to go off earlier than most; it was set to go off at about 11 PM. In fact, it did go off at 11 PM, and that's really part of the story as well. Because all of the previous fire-bombings had been successful, the next day an article appeared in the newspaper in which a leftist group claimed responsibility for the firebombing of two vehicles of an American diplomat to protest the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Of course, the two cars being parked together when this fellow put the device down meant that he figured both cars would be destroyed. Anyway, I called the RSO (Regional Security Officer). The Greek bomb squad arrived and

removed the car from its place. It was an interesting device. It was, again, toaster sized with a little watch and wires hanging out of it, a very crude device. Before we knew it, the cars having just been moved away, it actually detonated and went into a fireball, the flames reaching probably about 15 or 20 feet in the air and staying at about 10 feet for about 10 minutes. It had a lot of gelatinous flammable material. Unfortunately, they didn't get to learn very much about this device except perhaps how much fire it was able to produce. Of course, November 17, not the fire-bombers, were our major concern since it was a lethal force.

Q: The significance of the date of November 17, I think, was the date of a large demonstration that was put down during the junta period.

MATTSON: Exactly. On November 17, 1973, during a period when the Polytechnic University in Athens had been occupied by students, the junta decided that they had to put down this student uprising and moved into the university area with tanks. The number of casualties is uncertain, perhaps five to eight students killed. It became a significant date in modern Greek history. Less than a year later in the aftermath of the Cyprus invasion, the Greek junta fell. November 17 became an informal day of commemoration throughout the early period after democracy was restored. Even by 1979, November 17, 1979, I remember I was in the embassy and observed a march-by of the embassy by various leftist groups and others who were critical of the U.S. stance vis-à-vis both the junta and Cyprus. The crowd was estimated that year, six years after the event and five years after the restoration of democracy, at 300,000 plus people. It took almost all night for them to pass by.

Q: Just perhaps to correct one date, I think it was 1982, not '81, when at least the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon took place all the way into Beirut.

MATTSON: Okay, then the bombing would have been in '82, because we were living in that house from '80 to '83, so that could well be the case. It was in June?

Q: Well, it began in June.

MATTSON: So it was June of '82, not '81.

Q: Let's talk just a little bit more about what you're just talking about. To what extent did this very real insecurity that you and all the others in the embassy had to live with, to what extent did that affect your work, your ability to have contacts, your ability to move around freely? Did you have to take all sorts of security precautions that made it very difficult?

MATTSON: I would say, yes, there were some precautions that we took - you know, the usual guidance varying your route and your times and so forth. That constraint actually intensified in the period '86 to '90, both because I was in a higher profile position and because there had been further acts of terrorism by November 17 in the intervening period. I never felt particularly inhibited, however. It was never something that bothered

me a great deal. There were so many targets of opportunity for November 17 and their attacks were so infrequent that you just sort of surmised that the odds of you being the next attack victim were fairly remote. And they sort of shifted around. I remember, for example, during the period that I was there they killed a British man, someone who was a member of the British Council, a UK organization that deals with cultural and educational matters. So you were never quite sure who they were looking for. Of course, they had many targets of opportunity in their minds with respect to the people who were at the American base, and several of the people who were assassinated during the period I was there were enlisted men at Hellenikon Base. But you were vigilant because at that time all of the attacks were carried out by two young men on a motorcycle, both wearing helmets. In Athens, very few wore a helmet when they're on a motorcycle, so if you saw someone with a helmet, you definitely took notice of that.

Q: Let me ask though as a general question, and you can respond in a moment: You arrived in the spring of '79. You talked about the U.S.-Greek relations often being a function, if you will, of the state of the U.S.-Turkish relations. In 1978 the Congress, at the request of President Carter, lifted the embargo restrictions on Turkey, so the bases in Turkey resumed full operation, we were discussing a defense cooperation agreement with Turkey as well as with Greece. Did that change things? Of course, when you arrived, it had taken place six or nine months before, so perhaps it had been absorbed somewhat.

MATTSON: If New Democracy were not being continuously stampeded into positions by PASOK and by the newspapers, probably we would have had very few issues on a day-to-day basis. But Papandreou in all of his public appearances was sharply attacking the U.S., NATO, and the Common Market. The fact that Greece had joined the Common Market under Karamanlis' urging was sufficient reason for Papandreou to be critical. One slogan, for example, that I remember was: *"EOK*" - which is Greek for 'the Common Market' – *"EOK kai NATO, to idio sindicato*," which is "The Common Market and NATO, the same syndicate, the same sort of outfit." He tried to associate the Common Market directly with NATO to which Turkey belonged and which was unpopular for not stopping the invasion of Cyprus.

Q: I'd like to talk just a little bit more about sort of the nuts and bolts of the way you went about having contacts with the New Democracy Party then in government. Were you dealing mostly with members of parliament, party officials, ministers? Who were the ones that you were particularly responsible for?

MATTSON: Well, in Athens primarily with members of parliament. I probably at that time had very close contact with eight or 10 MPs (members of parliament) from New Democracy and was acquainted with two dozen others. One way I found that was very useful for widening my group of contacts and also getting some interesting perspective was proposing myself for a trip outside of Athens at every opportunity. So I would call on mayors and nomarchs, or regional governors. Actually, seeing an MP in his own constituency went a long way toward cementing a relationship. After dinner or lunch or some other event with an MP in Thessaloniki or Larisa or somewhere around the country, you could then pursue that relationship much more effectively in Athens. It became a

more solid relationship. The fact that I had good Greek and that my wife was a native Greek speaker, of course, did help us in terms of representational work with non-English speaking Greeks. Nowadays it's hard to find a young Greek who doesn't speak good English, but in the '70s it was a different story and probably only a third of our contacts were good English speakers. So language facility was very useful. I remember vividly trips to western Greece, to towns like Arta, Agrinion and Igoumenitsa. In those places, I would meet the mayor and he would, of course, show you a little bit of what he was proud of in his town. Those were for me the most memorable times of that tour or any tour. In fact, when I was political counselor, and later DCM, I used to encourage officers to do a lot of traveling, as I had been given the opportunity to do, with the comment that they will be hard-pressed in later years to ever remember a single telegram they had read, probably few of the telegrams they wrote or any day having been spent exclusively in the embassy, whereas if they got out and around and especially out of the capital, not only were U.S. Government interests well advanced but they would have an opportunity for personal enrichment as well. So I built up a very good group of contacts during that period, many of whom of course remained in positions of considerable influence or even increased influence during the period when I went back as political counselor after an interval of only three years. Some of the luminaries on the PASOK side we also got to know very well, people like Gerasimos Arsenis, who was defense minister and education minister of the various PASOK governments.

Q: How about Simitis, who's the current prime minister?

MATTSON: I did not personally know him. I don't know why, but I just never met him. But on the New Democracy side I got to know the emerging leadership of the party. My closest contact in the first tour, the closest contact in my second tour, and one of my closest friends today is Miltiadis Evert, who was for a time the leader of New Democracy and was a near prime minister of Greece.

Q: Let's talk a little bit more about the labor reporting responsibility. You mentioned that just now, but how much of your time did that take? How did you try to do it, labor obviously mostly on the left, PASOK, Communist.

MATTSON: Yes, that's right. Labor at that point in a place like Greece was important because of the strong left influence within the trade union movement. There was a general confederation of Greek labor called GSEE, and I would go visit them perhaps a couple of times a month and see what was going on and would visit some of the larger provincial unions if I was out of town. They were receptive to contact. I didn't find labor work per se to be nearly as interesting as mainstream political work, but very often they overlapped with each other so I didn't mind doing it. I spent maybe 20 percent of my time doing pure labor work. There was an annual labor report that we had to do and we did various other spot reporting. But it always had, in the case of Greece, a strong connection with Greek politics. And, as you mentioned, the strong influence on the left made the non-Communist labor movement something that we were pursuing pretty assiduously.

Q: To what extent did you travel? You mentioned that you did extensive travel within the country, which I think is very commendable, and it's good that there were funds available and you were given encouragement and time to do it. Were you able to travel in the region at all? Certainly Cyprus, Turkey had an important impact on what was happening within Greece and between Greece and the United States.

MATTSON: Unfortunately I didn't. At the end of my tour in 1983 as I was leaving my assignment and going to Personnel to do the European assignments, the Department came up with some limited funds for me to travel. So at the very end of my assignment to Greece, I got to go to both Cyprus and to Turkey. Cyprus was a very interesting trip because I got to the north as well, and had a dinner with some Turkish Cypriots. I think it was unfortunate I didn't get to go earlier. I've always been an advocate of regional travel, especially in a place like the eastern Mediterranean where you have so much interaction between Ankara, Nicosia and Athens in terms of reporting. There should be, I think, in the Foreign Service a systematized program for various people at various levels to compare notes directly. DCMs should get together from time to time, and political counselors and people who were working on particular issues, in order to exchange views and to build relationships, because what was reported from Ankara very often has an impact on what's happening in Nicosia and Athens and it's very important for people to have a very thorough understanding of the other person's point of view and interest. It would, I believe, shape their own approach. I also proposed that when I was in Copenhagen as DCM. There were a lot of issues that were common to the Scandinavian capitals, and I offered to host a first meeting of DCMs from Oslo, Stockholm, and Helsinki and regrettably had no takers. But I think that things like that, if they're systematized, really can pay tremendous dividends. You mentioned the cost. In the grand scheme of things, these things really aren't at all costly. I remember, for example, that the trip that I made to Nicosia and Ankara was 400 or 500 dollars. There should be a budget line item for this, I would go so far as to say, for local and regional travel in each bureau's allocation of funds to its various embassies.

Q: I don't know about that specific suggestion. I think it probably makes sense. And I also don't know really about the Scandinavians. What you say certainly does also make sense. But I couldn't agree more about Greece, Turkey and Cyprus, and I've always been a strong advocate of travel in the region and meetings of counterparts and so on. I especially know about the period from, say, '81 to '83, and there were some unique personalities in some of the posts that made it a little bit more difficult, I think, for that kind of regional get-together than perhaps it had been earlier or it turned out to be later. I think the master in Turkey, Robert Strausz-Hupé, was not too keen on that kind of thing, and I think the incoming ambassador in Athens, Monty (Monteagle) Stearns, for other reasons, also resisted it a little bit, or at least that was my perception from Cyprus at about the same time. Why don't we talk just a little bit more about how things did change toward the end of your first tour in Athens with the coming to power of PASOK. I think Ambassador Stearns did arrive in '81 or toward the end of '81.

MATTSON: Actually he arrived in early August 1981. The parliamentary elections were in September of '81. So he was there for about five weeks during the height of the

campaign in that watershed election when New Democracy and Rallis lost and Papandreou came in. I was particularly busy given the fact that I was doing domestic politics during that campaign. I mentioned before about travel. I had a unique opportunity throughout that whole campaign and was basically on the road for nearly two months. I went, for example, to campaign stops by Rallis and by Papandreou in the same cities. One would appear and a couple weeks later the other would hold a rally, and it was a very good way to gauge local sentiment. These rallies, for example in a place like Kozani, which is in northern Greece and is a small agricultural center, would occur in the town square. Many of the farmers from the countryside would come to town to participate. So even though the town had perhaps 20,000 inhabitants, you probably had 40,000 present for each of these rallies. You could gauge enthusiasm; you could assess the parties' organizational strengths. I went to about five or six of those same sites, Thessaloniki and Kozani and Halkis come to mind, to watch both of these campaigns in action. Then at the very end of the campaign Papandreou took his campaign to Crete. He called the crowd "laothalassa," literally "a sea of people." It was an amazing thing. Of course, PASOK had always had a strong hold on Crete, they get 70 or 80 percent of the vote there, and wherever Papandreou was - and he made four speeches in three days going across the island - I went. He had just the most enormous crowds and tremendous enthusiasm. When I got back to Athens and there were only three or four days left in the campaign, I was pretty convinced, contrary to the views of virtually all of my colleagues in the embassy, that Papandreou was going to win. I think, frankly, there was a lot of wishful thinking in the embassy, hoping for New Democracy to stay on. I was sort of pinned down at a country team meeting on the Thursday before the Sunday election: "Exactly what is your view on the outcome of this election?" That question followed comments by three or four colleagues who said New Democracy was going to win. I didn't want to be stampeded into that view because I didn't hold it, so I basically said that I thought that, if PASOK was ever going to win, that it was going to win in 1981, that they had all of the ingredients for victory in hand. It was not a popular view with the front office. But we, of course, as a government were not very hopeful about a good relationship with Papandreou. We were hoping that New Democracy, even though it was a spent force, was going to hang on one more time. The results of the election came quickly. I remember on election night they had a form of electronic balloting for the first time, and within probably an hour of the polls closing, the result was known, which was rather shocking.

Q: It was pretty decisive for PASOK. I don't remember the figures.

MATTSON: I don't recall either, but especially the way Greek elections go, where you have these two major parties, each of the elections are usually decided by a percentage point or two. This difference was maybe eight points. With the reinforced proportional system, PASOK had a very large majority of seats. There was some apprehension, I think, about what all of this would mean for our interests, especially given this incessant stream of anti-American, anti-NATO, and anti-Common Market rhetoric from Papandreou. In office, he toned that down to a certain extent. There were sort of two levels of operation. On a government-to-government basis, we had a workable relationship. None of our interests were particularly affected. On the other hand, the

atmospherics were terrible. I don't remember exactly when, but he was meeting with all of the people we didn't like, like Ortega, Qadhafi, and various other Third World miscreants. We were very opposed to that from a NATO ally. Of course, the response in Washington vis-à-vis PASOK was very negative because there was a lot of focus, I think, on the rhetoric rather than on what was actually happening on the ground. Papandreou opened the door to the creation of an anti-Greek, anti-PASOK sentiment in Washington because of his inflammatory language.

Q: Particularly in the earlier period.

MATTSON: You mean just after the election.

Q: Just after the election. Did he continue that?

MATTSON: Well, I think what happened basically was because he had such a bad reputation for anti-American attitudes and because the expectations for improvement were so low, Washington developed a visceral negative reaction to almost any circumstances. If Papandreou made an anodyne or even a mildly helpful speech that went on for four pages, and there was the one paragraph where he made some strong statements, presumably to cultivate his left, these comments alone were focused upon. So I think there was a little bit of a disconnect between the perception of Papandreou in Washington as this fire-eating anti-American we can't trust and deal with, and the reality on the ground which was a businesslike relationship.

Q: In terms of dealing with actual issues and practical matters, there were not big problems, were there, about the bases?

MATTSON: No, not during that period. There were some actions that he didn't take. For example, if there would be a labor demonstration at a base that we might have wanted the police to break up or for a court to issue a ruling against, he was reluctant to take those kinds of steps, but the relationship, I think, was not all that bad from '81 to '83.

Q: Ambassador Stearns, of course, had served in Athens twice previously and had known Andreas Papandreou from an earlier, much earlier, period. As I recall, they continued to have a pretty good personal relationship. Is that your understanding?

MATTSON: Yes, I think so. First of all, the relationship that Monty Stearns had with Papandreou was a very interesting one, as you mentioned. Papandreou returned to Greece in the early '60s after 20 or so years in the United States. That occurred during the period when Monty Stearns was in Athens on his first assignment. Papandreou, of course, was married to an American, Margaret, and the Stearns couple got to know the Papandreous very well. In fact, Monty one time mentioned to me that he had kept a journal of various activities and he would occasionally refer back to it. For example, he would say, "Tuesday, August 22nd, dinner with the Papandreous," or, on another date, "a movie with the Papandreous." That sort of thing. They were seeing each other socially all the time during that period. Papandreou was uncertain whether or not his decision to go back to

Greece was a good one - he returned to Greece from being head of the Department of Economics at Berkeley; he had a very successful academic career in the U.S. and went back to an uncertain political future in Greece. His advantage naturally was the fact that his father was the prime minister, but still he was uncertain and a bit ambivalent. The Stearns, also young and attractive, perhaps constituted a link for them to their life in America. Just as a parenthesis, Monty Sterns, as I understand it, is now writing a book on Papandreou, which I'm very much looking forward to reading. I don't know if you're aware of that.

Q: I did know that. I don't know exactly what the status is and how soon it will be published.

MATTSON: One thing about all that past association that's interesting - I admired this about Monty Stearns, while he did have a very close personal connection with Papandreou, I found that he handled the relationship with Papandreou as prime minister, with the government, in a very professional way. He never relied on this close personal relationship. He never called particular attention to it. Most importantly, he never sought to exploit it. I think that he fully recognized that as the American ambassador, with Papandreou as the leader of the Greek government, they had to have a very different, very correct relationship. Not everyone would have viewed it in quite that way, I think.

Q: Yes, that was very professional the way he approached it. On the other hand, it did help that they did have some shared history that was close. Stearns did write and we published in the Mediterranean Quarterly an article a couple years ago about comparing Karamanlis and Papandreou, and a lot of it was from his own experience with the two of them as ambassador. I assume something like that will also be in the book once it's published or when he finishes it. In terms of your work, your political reporting, your contacts, New Democracy was now in opposition. Did you continue to spend much of your time keeping in touch with New Democracy deputies, members of parliament, mayors and so on, or did you shift and spend much more time getting to know PASOK people?

MATTSON: Well, my intention was to shift and to get to know more PASOK officials. It was one of those situations where you spend 90 percent of your time and effort for a 10 percent return. The New Democracy people, I already knew. In opposition they were even more keen to spend some time with me. They had fewer responsibilities and were eager to get their point of view across. So New Democracy was easy. You could spend, as I say, 10 percent of your time and get 90 percent of your reporting, whereas you spent 90 percent of your time getting a 10 percent return from PASOK because you were largely being rebuffed. Most of the parliamentarians were very hesitant still to having any meaningful contact. So I found that a very interesting group to get to know were mayors. PASOK had elected mayors in most of the medium and large towns. They were not under the same restrictions imposed, I think, by the party concerning contact with American diplomats. So I tried to do that as best I could. But I was frustrated, as the others were, by our inability to get as much in the way of meaningful contact with PASOK as we could with New Democracy.

Q: To what extent did you work with or have contact with other embassies in Athens? The degree of American embassy interest in the political system, personalities, and so on was pretty unique, I think, compared with other embassies. How about the European embassies? Greece is now a member of the European Common Market, becoming the European Union. They were much more involved with kind of nuts-and-bolts Common Market issues, or how would you judge other embassies?

MATTSON: In terms of a meaningful sharing of ideas, we spent a lot of time with British colleagues and then, just by reason of personality, the odd Italian, Australian, or Scandinavian, but we didn't spend a lot of time other than socially with other embassies. There was a group of DCMs that would get together from time to time, the NATO DCMs, for example, to exchange ideas, but at my level we had no regularized contact. There were a couple of British diplomats that I was friendly with, several of whom became British ambassadors; as a matter of fact, one is presently in Greece. David Madden was a very strong officer.

Q: Anything else we should say about your first assignment as political officer in Athens?

MATTSON: Again, Greece was one of the more interesting countries politically, certainly in Western Europe. All our issues were on the front burner. You felt that the political work you were doing was important. There are some places in the world where doing political work would definitely not be quite as urgent, like in Denmark or Sweden. And it was very interesting because the Greeks are a fascinating people and the politicians are just a remarkable group. Politics is really a way of life there. It's been an honored profession for several millennia, and they make it very stimulating. It was obviously very different from running your own show in the Seychelles, but I really enjoyed that first assignment in Greece very much.

Q: Certainly the United States, ever since at least 1947, has been very involved, very interested, in the politics of Greece, and the lack of politics, if you will, during the junta period from '67 to '74 meant that the period when you were there was a very rich period, and then you were there for, as you say, a watershed election in 1981, so it was an exciting and interesting period in which not only Washington but, I think, the United States more generally and the Greek-American community and others who've been involved with Greece over a long time were very interested in what was going on in Greece.

MATTSON: It was an absolutely fascinating period. I went into this before, but when I was still in the Navy I was going to graduate school at NYU (New York University) specializing in modern European history. I took all of my coursework, exams, and so forth. I had to come up with a dissertation topic. I thought if I were going into an academic career that it would be nice to have something to do with Greece, where my wife was from, so I came up with a topic on the Youth Movement of Ioannis Metaxas. Metaxas, of course, was the Greek dictator in the 1930s. He had a youth movement called EON which was very much patterned on the fascist youth of Mussolini and Hitler Youth.

Shortly after I was married, in the latter 1960s, I went to Greece several times and interviewed various figures from the 1930s who were then still alive. There was the interior minister, a man called Maniadakis, who was sort of the tough guy in the Metaxas regime, and then there was the head of the EON organization, Alexander Canellopoulos. Even when we got to Greece in 1979 there were still enough throwbacks, let's say, even to the 1930s, to the war period and to the civil war period. The history of modern Greece is so interesting to me, especially the period from 1940 through the end of the civil war. It was great just being in that milieu.

Q: You were there for four years. Did that involve an extension, or was that what your assignment was?

MATTSON: My assignment was three years and I extended for a fourth year.

Q: Did that seem too long, about right?

MATTSON: It didn't seem too long. Of course, the first two years were essentially the New Democracy period. If I had left after one year of PASOK, I would have felt that there were a lot more things that were happening that I wanted to involve myself in, and I had to make that decision about an extension shortly after they had come to power. So to leave after three years, I felt that there were changes coming in Greece, there were things that were happening that were going to be interesting to work on, so the decision to extend was mainly based on what had happened in the election. I just did not want to leave doing domestic politics after less than a year of PASOK being in power.

Q: Was Charlie McCaskill the political counselor pretty much the whole time you were there?

MATTSON: Our four-year tours coincided.

Q: Anything else we ought to talk about in your first assignment to Athens from '79 to '83?

MATTSON: I can't think of anything. Athens, of course, in 1983 was a much different city than it became even 10 years later. It was far less congested, far less polluted, but that's another story.

Q: And you came back to what job, your first Washington assignment after 12 years in the Foreign Service?

MATTSON: My career had an unusual pattern. I never did things that most officers did, like, for instance, I was never a desk officer.

Q: Were you ever a consular officer?

MATTSON: I was never a consular officer either. Anyway, I went back to Personnel and

was the deputy in EUR assignments. I mentioned before that I went to Cyprus and to Turkey for Personnel-related visits and also had a very interesting opportunity, again funded by Personnel, just before I left Athens, to go throughout eastern Europe. I went from Athens to Bucharest to Warsaw to Budapest to Belgrade to Sofia and back to Athens in about a two-week period, again to look at the embassies and think in terms of how to staff those embassies when I got back to Personnel. I remember that itinerary, two weeks, all of those stops, and the airfare was only $410 the entire trip. It proved very valuable when I went back to do EUR assignments as the deputy.

Q: And who was the chief of that division at the time?

MATTSON: Todd Stewart was the head of the division at the time, and then after a year he left and I was able to move up to be head of that division.

Q: I think in this oral history program I've probably talked to lots of people about the panel system and assignments. I don't know if there's anything particular you want to say about the two years you spent in that office.

MATTSON: Well, just one comment that I would make is that, as the EUR assignments officer, you had a lot of built-in problems because EUR at that time had a reputation for attracting the best officers and prevailing in seventh floor meetings and getting what it wanted. The panels were fascinating. You sort of went in there armed as best you could for a lot of predictable assaults from your colleagues. But it was an interesting assignment. I think that Personnel in those days was maybe a little more creative and a little bit more collegial than it became in subsequent years. I gather now it's fairly mechanistic.

Q: It was a good tour?

MATTSON: Oh, yes, I enjoyed it. It was a nice change from political work.

Q: I came to the office about two years after you left and certainly enjoyed it for the time that I was there. Where did you go from the European assignments position in Personnel?

MATTSON: In 1985, I went to the National War College for one year. That was again a year very well spent. Actually, just before going to the War College at the very end of my assignment in Personnel, I managed to get my assignment to Athens, my second job in Athens, which I was not expecting.

Q: You were assigned to that even before going to the War College, to be political counselor?

MATTSON: Right. I was encouraged by Monty Stearns, who was still ambassador at that time. He was no longer ambassador when I arrived in Athens in 1986, but he very much encouraged me to do that. I was an O-1, [a] fairly new O-1, and it was a senior officer

position in Athens. In fact, in the old days, political counselor Athens was an MC (Minister Counselor) position. It was still a senior position, and I remember I requested it when I was still in Personnel. Art Tienken was the director of FCA (Foreign Service Career Assignments) and, of course, he noted that this would be a stretch assignment and that these are not things that are usually approved, and so I was on tenterhooks for a couple of months as the Personnel people scoured the globe to try to find a senior officer who would be interested in that job and qualified. The search was especially intense because it was not viewed as particularly seemly for someone serving in Personnel to get a stretch assignment.

Q: And the reason they were making the assignment to take place in the summer of 1986 while you were still at Personnel in '85 is because it was a language position and therefore the assignment had to be made early, particularly if somebody was going to receive language training.

MATTSON: Exactly. Since I was language qualified, I could then have that one year to spend at the War College. So for me it worked out fine. I was glad that qualified senior officers didn't emerge in droves to ask for that assignment. But it was a long time coming. That I was not at all advantaged in getting that assignment by having been in Personnel is worth stating.

Q: Now, again, I think we've covered the National War College pretty well in this program, but I guess I should ask at least: Where did you go on your trip?

MATTSON: Well, they have a system of least regrets. You actually rank order 10 or so trips, and I got my fourth choice. The most popular trip that year was China, but, interestingly, students who went to China had a miserable time, so the lucky ones turned out to be unlucky. Our trip to Brazil, Chile, and Argentina was very interesting. In Brazil we went to Manaus, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasilia. I had had Portuguese language training, didn't remember very much Portuguese after Swahili and Greek, but it was a place that I could have been assigned to. Again, I mentioned, I think, in the last session that you have these points of departure in a career. From Lisbon I was offered an assignment in Brasilia, which I didn't take. I mentioned in that session I was assigned to South Africa and didn't go there. Perhaps I would have become a South American specialist if I had gone to Brazil at that juncture, in 1973. Then on to Argentina and Chile. In the aftermath of the Falkland Islands, Argentina was very interesting. We met, for example, with a colonel who was in his office and who said that he'd taken a 90 percent pay cut, could not wear his uniform on the street without being insulted, and was basically a person without any future. The military was just in miserable shape, and we asked him to what he attributed this condition. He said, "Well, we had of course the human rights charges against us, we wrecked the economy, and we lost the Falklands War." Three colossal failings!

Q: Three strikes and we're out.

MATTSON: Three strikes and they're out, way out.

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Q: This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History interview with Gregory Mattson. It's the 13th of February 2001. We were talking, Greg, when we finished last time about your assignment as political counselor in Athens from 1986 to 1990 following a year at the National War College, and you didn't need to go back to Greek language training so you went directly to Athens. I think Papandreou had been elected when you were there previously. Was he still in power, and what was the political situation? We may be repeating a little bit of what we talked about last time.

MATTSON: He was still in power. He had won the next election - I guess it must have been in 1985 - with a slightly reduced majority but still had a comfortable working margin in the parliament. He had implemented some of his more radical domestic programs in the early '80s, was mellowing somewhat in terms of his foreign policy stances, but was still considered in Washington to be a difficult character.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time when you went?

MATTSON: When I returned to Athens in '86, it was Bob Keeley. I think he arrived that summer or maybe the previous summer. Come to think of it, it must have been in 1985. He, of course, had had one other assignment in the political section in Athens during the period of the junta and in fact had spent a lot of his youth in Thessaloniki, so he had a lot of background in Greece and Greek affairs.

Q: So you had another ambassador like Monty Stearns who was there before who had a very strong background, had been a political officer, spoke fluent Greek. Did that give you as political counselor any problems, or were you able to clearly establish who your main contacts should be?

MATTSON: It was, I think, pleasantly easy with both ambassadors in terms of making and maintaining contacts. I think that was a tribute to both of them, because they were not only old Greek hands but they were also from the political cone. There's a tendency of people to repeat jobs that they have already done or know a lot about, but I was very fortunate that they let me be political counselor rather than that they acted as a suprapolitical counselor, so that was a very good situation. Ambassador Keeley, of course, had a lot of difficulties from the get-go because he had been criticized widely in the Greek press, especially in the conservative press, over comments that he made during his confirmation hearings. So he had a lot of difficulties from the beginning in terms of the conservative press.

Q: Did he also have a problem in the sense that his previous assignment had been during the junta period at the time the United States was supportive of the junta or at least had reasonably good relations? Some Greeks have always criticized the United States for not being more objective, as they put it, about the military government of that period.

MATTSON: His experience in the political section during the junta was rather unique. Apparently he was the only member of the political section and, for that matter, the only member of the sort of substantive side of the embassy who was openly critical of the U.S. policy vis-à-vis the junta. His wife was also quite politically active. She had close contact with Margaret Papandreou, for example, during the period before the Papandreous went into exile and subsequently, so he was actually in good standing with the anti-junta Greeks. His problem was not that he had some legacy or baggage from the junta period; his problem was rather that he was viewed by conservatives and rightists as being much too close to Papandreou.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about the structure of the political section. Was it pretty much the way it had been when you were there previously, or had it changed in that intervening period?

MATTSON: It was exactly the same in terms of the number of officers. We still had, I guess, five political officers: one doing political/labor, which had been my previous incarnation; two basically doing external affairs, one of whom was focusing on Cyprus; and then myself and one other officer, usually a junior officer on rotation with other sections. The grade of political counselor had been reduced from minister counselor to counselor, and there might have been another adjustment downward in terms of the grade of the people in the section, but the number of people was the same. It's since been reduced substantially from that number; I think there might be only three people there now.

Q: What sort of main things did you do other than supervise the section? Were you responsible for contacts with the government or the ministers? How did you organize the work that had to be done?

MATTSON: A significant part of my job was supervising the work of the section and addressing front office concerns. Having been a member of the section, I did not want to siphon off the more interesting work; I wanted each of the officers in the section to be masters of their own portfolio and for each portfolio to be substantively rich. That sometimes was frustrating because there were some things that I wanted to take on that I denied to myself. But my contacts were split fairly evenly between the foreign ministry and the domestic political scene. Because of my previous assignment, I had a lot of contacts in New Democracy, some in PASOK. I was able to increase the number of contacts that I had in PASOK, so that was beneficial, I think, in terms of our reporting efforts. Then the other part of it was a lot of coordination within the embassy, of course trying to be supportive of the ambassador and the DCM in terms of their activities on the political side. So that made for a fairly busy plate. Also, the DCM, Ed Cohen, became ill - he had a very difficult situation affecting his eyesight - so the last year that I was there, which was the first year of Michael Sotirhos, who, by the way, was the first political appointee ambassador in Greece in a very long time, I was serving much of that year concurrently as acting DCM and political counselor.

Q: We'll want to talk some more about that in a minute, but I wonder if you could sort of

review what were some of the main problems that you and the embassy were dealing with in terms of U.S.-Greek relations. You said you had a lot of contact with the foreign ministry, and I wonder if there were unusual problems or were they pretty much the same ones that you had dealt with previously.

MATTSON: I have a theory about U.S.-Greek, in fact Aegean, relations, that the issues are rather predictable and steady. Each time we change our personnel, we naturally begin to think anew about solutions. But very often many of the so-called solutions to intractable problems had been thought of many times before. Basically our approach was to try to maintain a good working relationship with the government of Greece, to maintain the sort of unfettered operations of our military facilities, which we needed, to attempt to get the Greeks and the Turks to work toward a *modus vivendi* between the two of them. We did have a pretty serious crisis during that period. The Turks had sent out a seismic research vessel, which provoked Papandreou to mobilize Greek naval units and basically lay down a marker that if this vessel - the Sismik II, I think it was called - would proceed past a certain line into the Aegean, that would be a *casus belli*. The crisis stretched over one weekend and was very tense. Finally, the Turkish vessel changed course and headed east. Otherwise, the overall tone of Greek-Turkish relations was fairly steady. Papandreou in his rhetoric, of course, was always sharply critical of the Turks. I'm sure the Turkish embassy had a lot of reporting to do every time Papandreou went to parliament on foreign affairs, because he always had a lot of critical things to say about Turks while laying down various markers: if the Turks were to move one further inch on Cyprus, for example, that would be a cause for war with Greece, and that sort of thing. The substance of the relationship between the two of them was, I think, somewhat stabilized, but the rhetoric was still very bad.

Q: You mentioned the weekend crisis of a Turkish seismic vessel in the Aegean Sea, which obviously was a crisis in terms of Greek-Turkish relations. Did the United States, did the embassy in Athens, play a role in smoothing that out or getting through the weekend?

MATTSON: No, not directly. This issue was being worked in Brussels at NATO headquarters. We were carefully monitoring the situation, but we were not given any instructions to take any active role in Athens itself.

Q: Was there an incident involving an island also during the period that you were there? That occurred later, I think.

MATTSON: Yes, that was the Imia incident. That occurred, I think, in the mid-'90s. But it was a similar crisis, and I'm struck by the fact that every time there's a crisis in the Aegean everyone thinks it's the first time. I was rather surprised that there was almost no reference to this near conflict during the time that I was in Athens - I think it might have been in 1988 - with everyone claiming Imia to have been a unique event. We don't have a very good institutional memory. Nor do we at State have the inclination to feel anything significant preceded us.

Q: There were previous crises, too, not just over Cyprus but over at least one seismic exploratory vessel that I can remember in the late '70s.

MATTSON: That was the incident, I think, when Papandreou, then in opposition, had the famous cry, "Sink the Hora," which was the name of the Turkish vessel, and was demanding that the government take stern action.

Q: What about political cooperation in the role of Greece within the European Union? Greece, of course, was a member at that time. Was that something that occupied a lot of your time and attention?

MATTSON: Not very much. Greece was still feeling its way in the Community. We were, of course, encouraged that Greece was the beneficiary of a great deal of largesse from Brussels. I think all of us on the personal side were somewhat troubled that so many major projects which were funded by the EU (European Union), the EEC (European Economic Community) at that time, somehow never reached completion. There was a lot of speculation of outright corruption. And that feeling that funds were being wasted was in sharp contrast to my experience subsequently in Portugal where I was DCM - and we'll get to that another time. Greece was thought of in that period as a very difficult partner for the EU. Politically, the European Community viewed Greece as troublesome, uncooperative on most issues, looking for every opportunity to leverage its membership to make things difficult for the Turks in terms of any accession plans that they had. So Greece was not considered to be a very stable or in fact particularly welcome member, and there were many northern Europeans who regretted that Greece had even become a member. So Greece had a difficult time in its early relationship with the European Community and vice versa.

Q: And it did not fill the seat of president, which is a rotating seat I think every six months, during the period that you were there.

MATTSON: It actually did, though I can't remember precisely when. It might have been the first half of 1990 or the first half of '89. But then their performance improved somewhat during that period. In fact - it's interesting - it's always predictable. When each of these countries becomes a member, there are people in Brussels who fear that the presidency will not go well, whatever that means. And then there's always a collective sigh of relief that the EU somehow survived a particular presidency. Its strange because almost all the work is done in Brussels anyway. But in fact Papandreou was a responsible president. I'm trying to think now whether that was during the period when he was in office or it was during the period of the so-called ecumenical governments. But Greece's performance, in any event, was considered to be quite acceptable during its presidency.

Q: Were you burdened with the need to share information, reporting, sometimes from the embassy? For the country filling the presidency, I know it's been a big burden.

MATTSON: We did. One of the officers was assigned to do that on a more or less full-time basis. There was a lot of political work to be done at the beginning of each

presidency, sometimes in connection with some of the meetings that occurred during the presidency, and then especially at the end. In the intervening period it was rather unpredictable. Some off-agenda things inevitably would come up. Within the EU, more and more work, as I said, became centralized in Brussels or among the political reporters, *rapporteurs*, that each country has within the community. Now, interestingly, I think the Department sends an officer out to each of the capitals for the entire six months to augment the political section, and that person does all of the reporting, so it's much different. But it was an interesting experience for those who were involved. I personally did not have a great deal to do with that on an ongoing basis.

Q: You mentioned that Michael Sotirhos came as ambassador and that he was the first political, not career, ambassador to Greece for a long time. I think there probably had been some in the pre-war period or during the war. He also, I believe, was the first Greek-American to have that position, and he had served previously as ambassador, I believe, to Jamaica and had had some experience in Washington in various ways, so he was not a complete neophyte when he came to Athens. Do you want to say a few words about him? You served much of his first year basically as the acting Deputy Chief of Mission when Ed Cohen had to be evacuated, I guess.

MATTSON: Yes, he was, as you noted, the first Greek-American and also the first political appointee. He was from New York. He had a successful business, basically building or redesigning or refurbishing military officers' clubs. He had been in charge of "Ethnics for Reagan" during the 1984 campaign. As a reward, he then went to Jamaica for three years. He always wanted to go to Greece, of course. In fact, I remember vividly his first speech in Athens after he arrived, especially his introductory remarks. He told the audience of several hundred businessmen that when he was in Jamaica he would have telephone conversations on a weekly basis with Vice President George Bush, whom he called a family friend of 22 years. The conversations, he went on, always ended up with the statement he attributed to the then Vice President that, "If I go to the White House"- this is George Bush, Sr. talking – "then you will be going to Athens," and then he closed those remarks by saying, "And here I am." That, of course, signaled to his audience, which again was full of prominent Greeks and the media, that he had access to the White House. That, of course, obviously helped him in terms of the perception that he was someone who could get things done vis-à-vis Greek-U.S. relations by dealing directly with the President. The first year was, I think, rather successful, especially in comparison with the rest of his tour. He was a bit of a novelty. He spoke good colloquial Greek, fluent Greek. In fact, all of us learned a lot of Greek slang and jargon from him. He also developed the habit of going to a different Greek church every Sunday, and he would sing in the choir. This, of course, gave him what he craved - a tremendous amount of press play. In fact, he had a tremendous amount of press play throughout his time there. He also wanted from the outset to try to establish relations with all sectors of Greek society, so within a couple of weeks he decided that he wanted to meet with the Communists. Of course, we had never had any contact with the Communists since the civil war. Harilaos Florakis, who was the head of the Greek Communist Party, was a civil war veteran and virulently anti-American. The Euro-communists, then a European phenomenon but long since disappeared, were led by a fellow that I knew quite well,

Leonidas Kirkos. They were also very critical, especially of U.S. foreign policy. So he asked me for my opinion, which was positive. I worked with him and together we brainstormed and stage-managed what turned out for me to be a most interesting day. Taking my advice, we decided to call first on Constantine Mitsotakis, who was the leader of the majority party. That meeting would be at 11 o'clock in the morning.

Q: New Democracy, the conservative party.

MATTSON: New Democracy, the conservative party. That was at 11 o'clock in the morning - or maybe it was 10 o'clock in the morning. Then about three hours later we called on Papandreou. I say "we" because I accompanied him on all of these calls, just the two of us: in the early evening Florakis, the head of the Moscow-leaning Greek Community Party, the KKE; and then an hour or two later, we met with Kirkos. It was a fascinating day for me because I thought these meetings were sequenced in just the right way and productive, symbolically and substantively. I accompanied him as note taker and in between meetings was able to draft and dispatch a telegram on the meeting that had just occurred. So we actually had Washington involved via a steady stream of cables. The Mitsotakis cable went in before we met with Papandreou, and the Papandreou cable went in before we met with Florakis, and so forth. I finished up with the final reporting cable at nine or 10 o'clock that same night. We were then able to do an analytical piece on the whole thing the next day. For me, as an old political reporting officer, it was sort of a fascinating day to see how all of these meetings went and then to report to Washington almost in real time.

Q: Did either Mitsotakis or Papandreou have any problem, any objection, to the ambassador seeing the Communist Party leaders?

MATTSON: No, they didn't. At least they didn't voice any objection, and the press attention to that aspect was really quite positive, not only in Rizospastis, which was the Greek communist paper and coverage was therefore predictable, but across the political spectrum, where the prevailing theme was that this was an overdue gesture. That did not mean, of course, we were going to have good relations with the Communist Party after that, but it did open a door so that one of the reporting officers in my section was able to engage with the designated person from the KKE on various issues. I don't think we were able to move them off of any of their positions, but at least we were able to get directly from them their views on various topics.

Q: Did the State Department have any problem with this initiative?

MATTSON: I think this had been worked out prior to his arrival, so there wasn't a sort of back-and-forth in terms of cables saying if this would be appropriate or authorized. It was pretty much settled by the time he got there.

Q: Of course, the period that this took place was approximately the time that the Berlin Wall was coming down and lots of things were changing in Europe.

MATTSON: True. This would have been in maybe September, just to put a month on it, of 1989.

Q: So that was a little before the Berlin Wall.

MATTSON: But things were moving, things were changing.

Q: It's interesting that he was able to do that, and it sounded like it was done smoothly and in a good way.

MATTSON: Yes, and then he basically wanted, as he put it, to raise the profile of the embassy. Of course, again, when you've been around the track a few times, you realize that every new ambassador, or most new ambassadors, somehow see the previous incumbent as somehow deficient and they want to correct things or expand things. I worked for five political appointee ambassadors, and I don't know any of them who really thought that their predecessor had done a crackerjack job. Perhaps we'll get into that later.

Q: Why don't you say a little bit more about how you worked with him on an everyday basis. Did he leave it up to you to kind of manage the embassy and assign priorities that first year, or did he have really strong views of what should be done?

MATTSON: I'd say that in the first six months or so I had a lot of influence over the running of the embassy, maybe even for most of that year. I felt that he regarded me as a competent person. He trusted my judgment, he appreciated my initiatives. So that made things fairly easy. On the other hand, he was a strong-willed person and wanted to have things done in a certain way. There was a lot of personal diplomacy at work. In raising "the profile of the embassy," of course, he was raising his own profile. He wanted meetings with ministers pretty much every day. After the courtesy calls there would be other reasons to go back and see ministers. He was also very free with the press. He gave a lot of ad hoc street corner interviews as he was going into and back out of these meetings. So he was the subject of a great deal of press attention, mostly favorable during that first year.

Q: Did he travel a lot within Greece? You mentioned going to churches.

MATTSON: Yes, he did. He traveled a great deal, and these actually became fairly extravagant operations. He had a set-to with the defense attaché over the use of the DAO (Defense Attaché Office) aircraft. The military had to cable back and forth many times from Wiesbaden or somewhere else in Germany that this was the appropriate use of the plane. In that first year he must have made a dozen trips by air, even to places that were within driving distance. He was determined to maintain a very high profile. I remember the drivers always used to have to set off at midnight or earlier to be in place when the plane set down, and so forth. There was more than a bit of showmanship, rather than expediency, in using the plane. Of course he would call on the bishop and he would call on the nomarch and did the appropriate things in terms of protocol. These activities

would be reported extensively in the Athens press, which dominates the Greek media, as well as in the local papers. Sotirhos had a USIS officer working almost full-time putting together "scrapbooks" of his press attention - every single reference. His involvement in ecclesiastical matters was not restricted only to the time that he was in Greece. He was and is a very active member of the Greek Cathedral Church on East 74th Street in New York. In fact, he has a designated spot to the left of the altar in that church. Interestingly enough, that church pastor is Father Stephanopoulos, the father of George Stephanopoulos, the former Clinton operative. According to Sotirhos, George Stephanopoulos had been a babysitter for the Sotirhos family when they were all living back in New York City.

Q: I was recalling the first time I met Michael Sotirhos was in Cyprus, and I don't really remember whether he came with the archbishop or with Senator D'Amato, or maybe he came a couple of times with both of them. I sort of connect him with the two.

MATTSON: He was a good friend of Senator D'Amato.

Q: Let me ask you one more question about how you came to be acting DCM for that long a period. You mentioned the health considerations that affected Ed Cohen. Was that sort of an abrupt decision and the new ambassador didn't have a chance to pick a new DCM, or was he comfortable with you?

MATTSON: Well, there wasn't a curtailment of Ed Cohen. Ed Cohen had very serious eye surgery, so what would happen would be, for example he had the surgery I forget where and he would be out a length and then he would come back very briefly and have to have another procedure done and that would again take him out of commission. So I wasn't actually formally designated as DCM, but Ed Cohen was often away from post or resting at home during that period.

Q: Were there lots of visitors, official visitors, that came to Greece while you were there this period?

MATTSON: Quite a number, not as many as we encountered later on in Portugal and Denmark. Of course, the embassy was always interested in having senior officials. We never had, for example, a Presidential visit. Secretary Baker came - I guess Baker was Secretary during that period - but only for part of one day. He made a tour of all NATO capitals and actually met with Papandreou in Vouliagmeni, which is close to Hellenikon Airport, for just a couple of hours and then sped off. But he was the most senior official to come, although, come to think of it, Dick Cheney also was there for a couple of days when he was Defense Secretary. We also had a fairly large number of CODELs (Congressional Delectations). But my recollection is that we didn't have as many visitors as the state of the relationship would suggest, given that Greece was a country with which we had a very important strategic relationship, and with which we had cultural ties going back so long. One would have thought that in fact we would have had more official visitors than we did, but we just didn't have that many.

Q: Why don't you say a few words about your relationship with the other members of the diplomatic corps, particularly the Turkish embassy or perhaps the Cyprus embassy? Was that something that you spent a lot of time with?

MATTSON: I had regular contact with my counterpart at the Turkish embassy but not so much with the Cypriots. I thought it was important that we glean the way the Turkish embassy saw things in Athens given the very important and delicate relationship between Greece and Turkey. So Ankara's view gathered from Athens was worth reporting on. Beyond that, again, the British were very knowledgeable about the Greek scene, and the French to a certain extent, so those were our best contacts.

Q: Did we still have the U.S. Air Force base at Hellenikon in that period?

MATTSON: Yes, although it was going to be closed. The announcement that it would be phased out occurred toward the end of that assignment. I forget exactly when it closed. I do remember that the DOD (Department of Defense) had just opened a $3,000,000 commissary maybe a few months before they announced that the base was going to be closed. It's a rather sad situation now because that is sort of derelict land. If you go back, as I have often, you see all of these sports facilities and housing facilities, commissaries, PX (Post Exchange) and so forth. It's all overgrown with weeds and it just looks abandoned à la a place in the Ozarks in the 1930s rather than this pristine, manicured lawn lively base that we knew.

Q: What else should we talk about in connection with this assignment to Athens?

MATTSON: Well, we were in a phase toward the end of realigning our strategic relationship. You mentioned Hellenikon; that was going to be phased out. Also Nea Makri, which was a very important naval communications site outside of Athens. That was going to leave us with just the two facilities on Crete. So our relationship in terms of the political-military aspect was definitely receding at that stage. On a personal and professional basis, it was a wonderful assignment. We had an extremely talented section. I note one thing - again going back to my time as political reporting officer - is that the last year of my assignment there were four national elections in Greece. Papandreou, of course, had become embroiled in a scandal, several scandals.

Q: What was the first scandal?

MATTSON: The first scandal had to do with George Koskotas. George Koskotas was a Greek-American who had come to Greece. Actually he was sort of a fascinating character. Everyday the Greek tabloids would speculate as to where this man had gotten his great fortune. He founded a bank called the Bank of Crete; he bought Olympiakos, which had the most important soccer and basketball teams in Greece. I actually met him a number of times. It turned out, of course, that he was a scoundrel and an embezzler and so forth. He has been in prison for years though. I think he is now about eligible for parole.

Q: Is he in the United States?

MATTSON: No, he's in a Greek jail. So that was a very big scandal, the Koskotas scandal. And then there was Papandreou's personal scandal in terms of his very public infidelity and divorce. So he had fallen from power, and they had a series of what they called ecumenical governments, multiparty governments, one led by a very nice man, Yiannis Tzanakakis, who was a New Democracy stalwart, the most able conservative politician. Mitsotakis was emerging on the scene. So that last year was very interesting in terms of the move into the post-Papandreou period. That was clear, though what was to come after Papandreou was unclear because there was a lot of maneuvering within PASOK. He wasn't quite ready to abandon the field yet. Of course, during that period he also had this heart surgery in London. So there were a lot of soap-opera aspects to the end of the Papandreou era. He attributed the fact that he hadn't died on the operating table to Dr. Yakub, his Egyptian heart surgeon, and to Miss Liani, the woman who was his mistress and later became his wife and his widow. It was a very interesting period, full of scandal, and you knew that you were moving into a new period in terms of the political dynamic. You just weren't sure quite what that would look like. Of course, that was the beginning of the end of the period of the mass campaign rally in Greek politics. In each of those four elections, for example, New Democracy and PASOK would have their rallies at the very end of the campaign. Balloting was always on a Sunday; the opposition party would have its final rally on Thursday, and then the government party on Friday. In Constitution Square in downtown Athens each of those parties was able to assemble a crowd of perhaps 1,000,000 people. Since then, of course, all of that has changed. It's now concentrated on television. They still have their rallies but not at all the way it was. It used to be thrilling to be at the Grande Bretagne Hotel on the balcony overlooking the crowd. Of course, you couldn't see all of the 1,000,000 people because they were down all the side streets, but you could certainly see a few hundred thousand of them packed into Constitution Square. There were the chants and slogans, then the responses from the clack that gathered below the speaker. These were massive undertakings in terms of logistics and bringing people in from all over the country. So that was, again, sort of the passing of an era, but it was really quite fascinating, that spectacle. At that point, of course, with the passing of Papandreou and then the subsequent failure of the Mitsotakis government - because both Papandreou and Mitsotakis were extremely talented orators and they could get crowds really excited - with their passing, Greek politics became a little more Europeanized and a little less passionate and a little less interesting to the observer.

Q: To what extent did you have contact with some of the new generation, both in New Democracy and people like the current prime minister from PASOK, Simitis, or George Papandreou, the son of Andreas, the current foreign minister?

MATTSON: I had a good relationship with George Papandreou. We met several times at commemorative events outside of Athens. One was at the town of Kalavrita, the site of the Nazi execution of an entire village in reprisal. There is an annual remembrance there and I represented the embassy. George Papandreou was also present. We spent quite a bit of time together that day. Alluding to what I had mentioned the last time, if you see

Greek politicians outside of Athens, it's very good for maintaining relations with them in Athens. Mr. Simitis I did not know personally, but the younger people in New Democracy I got to know well. Of course, in New Democracy you had two factions. One was the old war horses, people left over from the last time that New Democracy was in power, and many of these were in their 60s and 70s. The younger people were much more dynamic and you could see that they already had a strong influence in the party. The period of the ecumenical governments was very beneficial, because it was so fluid that you really got to see a lot of these politicians up close and to do a lot of the reporting. It was interesting, if somewhat exhausting, that every time you turned around, another government was in crisis and was going to fall. I was very proud of the political section. We fully earned the Superior Honor Award we received from the Department. The section was particularly strong during the last two years when Brady Kiesling, Ellen Boneparth, and Wayne Merry were there. Before, the section contained what I would call "careerists" less interested in the work and more interested in moving up the ladder.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time either in parliament or thinking about parliament when it was in session, when it wasn't in crisis, on the eve of an election?

MATTSON: I actually did. My Greek was good enough to follow the main points in the proceedings. It depended mainly on the speaker and the way he articulated. If you had a clear-speaking and not overly fast speaker on the floor of parliament, I could easily follow what was going on. And I thought it was very useful. The diplomatic corps tended not to go. There were two days during the year when the diplomatic corps was expected to show up and they did, for the opening of parliament and some other event - I don't remember exactly what it was. But I used to try to get to the parliament, which was in Constitution Square close to where all of the reporters' offices were and close to government ministries, on a regular basis. I used to make it a point to try to combine a drop-in at parliament - and I had a parliamentary badge and could sort of walk in and go right up to the diplomatic gallery or go to their team room - and then do something else useful while I was downtown. I think that was very much appreciated in terms of showing an interest in their proceedings. But I have to say that very few diplomats did that.

Q: What about the role of women in Greek politics at the time you were there? Was that beginning to change? It had been very male dominated.

MATTSON: It certainly was. Well, it was, and one of Papandreou's first acts when he came to power, probably within a month or two of coming into office in '81, was to basically pass legislation which was going to equalize the rights of men and women, which were very unequal up until that point. For example, there were still laws on the books, I believe, as late as the 1970s and '80s, up until 1980, let's say, that, for example, a Greek woman could not travel abroad without specific permission of her husband, that sort of thing. So he did a lot in that regard. Of course, Margaret Papandreou, his American wife, was a strong feminist, and she was very involved in that as well. More and more women were being elected to parliament. Interestingly enough, up until, let's say, 1985 or 1990 the party that had the most women and the most visible women was the

Communists, and then PASOK, which also had some influential women from the left wing of the party - they could have almost been comfortable in the Communist Party. So now, although it's nothing like the situation in Scandinavia where 40 or 50 percent of the parliamentarians are women, there's a very good representation of women. I think that women are considered attractive candidates in Greece. Many Greek voters feel that they're a little closer to real issues, they're a little less given to flamboyance and a little more interested in hard work, so the women, I think, are generally regarded as very good if not better parliamentarians than men.

Q: You mentioned the role of Margaret Papandreou. Did she have much contact with the embassy in this period? She, of course, knew Mrs. Keeley well for 20 or 30 years, but how about others in the embassy?

MATTSON: There was one event I remember at the DCM's residence for senior embassy wives that Mrs. Papandreou attended. We have a picture at home of my wife and other women from the embassy, five or six of them, with Margaret Papandreou. But there was not a great deal of contact there. She was, of course, obviously considered to be a contact of Mrs. Keeley. There is one other comment that I would make about the sort of MO, the *modus operandi*, in the embassy in terms of the Sotirhos era. I mentioned that I had a lot of autonomy during the whole period that I was there, and was gratified that when we left we were able to attend some farewell parties and dinners where ministers were present. There were five or six ministers during the ecumenical period from different parties at the reception that we hosted. But, we were within the last few months of our departure and Ambassador Sotirhos could not really have much impact on me directly. As soon as I had left, he made it known very clearly that there would be no contact with any minister or other high official in the government other than himself, not even by the DCM. I felt sorry for my successor, Sam Fromowitz, who basically was relegated to contacts with much lower-ranking people.

Q: I don't think we can leave this assignment to Athens without asking about November 17, terrorism, security. How different was it for you than when you'd been there previously? What impact did that have on the work of the embassy?

MATTSON: During the previous period that I was in Greece, from '79 to '83, as I mentioned before, there were a lot of fire-bombings and some assassinations. Nonetheless, there wasn't the sense of dread pervading the atmosphere that was apparent when I arrived back in 1986. I was struck, for example, by the fact that, when we drove from the airport to the house that we were to occupy, an embassy-owned house in Psychico, there was a guard box outside of the house with an officer inside. A policeman was stationed there 24 hours a day, every day. My first day at work, I was met not only by a driver who was to take me in, but by a follow car with a driver and two bodyguards. I found this personally to be rather disconcerting. When I would come back home from work, the car would stop, the follow car would stop, and the bodyguards would jump out and sort of canvass the street with their weapons drawn and that sort of thing. This made me feel very uncomfortable, and I asked that the bodyguard detail be removed. That had been something that my predecessor, Towny Friedman, had had in place for some time. I

signed documents that I was taking responsibility for their withdrawal. But there was a lot of concern throughout that whole four year period about November 17. I was identified in some of the proclamations which followed their terrorist acts as a likely target or as someone who deserves to be a target. Of course, it was during the period that I was there that Captain Nordeen, the naval attaché, was murdered. He was traveling to the embassy from his home in an armored car, and a bomb was detonated in a vehicle which was parked on the street as he passed by. He was killed instantly. That was the most serious successful terrorist attack against Americans in the period that I was there. There were several near misses. On the Greek side, the husband of Dora Mitsotakis, Bakoyannis, was killed, shot, with the signature .45 weapon in downtown Athens. And there was increasing frustration on the part of the U.S. that the Greek police were unable or unwilling to devote the resources necessary to penetrate and to break up November 17. Most sensible people recognized that it was most likely a very small operation, but here it was, having carried out its first terrorist act in 1975, now into a period a full 15 years later, and they're still committing these crimes with no arrests and really very good clues. The newspapers, of course, were in a feeding frenzy over this, not that they were condemning November 17. They actually gave a lot of attention to the proclamations that followed, because the proclamations usually dealt with social ills or failures of the government or failures of the government to stand up to the Turks, and they actually touched on some sort of popular themes. So November 17 was doing well, and of course most people speculated that there had to have been, at least in terms of the shooters, a second generation of people who were coming along. But in the period when the Red Brigades went out of business and the Red Army faction was rolled up, people just couldn't believe that November 17 was able to remain a functioning organization for such a long period. It's now, I guess, celebrating - if that's the right word for it - its 25th anniversary in existence. I imagine there's going to be a very interesting story to be told at some point when, we assume - not if but when - November 17 is finally cracked open.

Q: You mentioned the frustration that was growing at that time and of course has continued to grow in the subsequent 10 plus years. Was that frustration something that you as political counselor expressed to your contacts, or was it pretty much handled by the security officer or by others, other than your own personal security and the measures that were taken? To what extent did that affect either our policy or things that you were doing?

MATTSON: As DCM during that period after Sotirhos arrived, I used to have regular meetings with the minister of justice. These had to do with various issues relating not specifically to November 17 but to Greece's poor performance in terms of extraditing seized terrorists to other countries. There were a number of Italian, for example, and other terrorists who were in Greek jails. Then there was a very famous case of Mr. Rashid, who was captured in Greece. We wanted him extradited for a death that occurred when a bomb exploded over the Pacific on a U.S. aircraft. Greece wouldn't hand him over. I had a lot of very testy and difficult work to do with the Greek Government, mainly the minister of justice but also the minister of foreign affairs, concerning these various terrorists who were in Greek jails but who were being sought by other countries including us.

Q: Did we get any satisfaction while you were there on any of these extradition questions?

MATTSON: No, not while I was there. Rashid was tried and sentenced to a prison term in Greece.

Q: In Greece?

MATTSON: Yes, in Greece. I think that of all of the Italian terrorists who were imprisoned in Greece, none of them was extradited. So especially during the period when Papandreou was in power prior to his last year, in '87 to '88, we were very, very distressed over Greece's performance in terms of extraditing terrorists to stand trial outside of Greece.

Q: Was Ambassador Sotirhos able to express this kind of displeasure, frustration? He had these good contacts with the White House and longstanding interest in U.S.-Greek relations. Some of this was bad news, this disappointment, frustration. Could he express that also effectively?

MATTSON: Although he indicated at the outset of his tour that he had a personal, family-oriented, friendly, etc., etc. relationship with President Bush, my experience was that he didn't or, perhaps, couldn't, go to the White House directly during his period in Greece. What the reason for that might be I'm not quite clear. But he did take the opportunities when he would meet with government ministers to convey U.S. displeasure, always in mild tones in my experience. Since he was very interested in sort of upgrading the profile of the embassy, and his own persona in Greek society, that often meant that he was not willing to tackle the really difficult issues between us.

Q: Did he try to make effective use of the U.S. Information Service, public affairs people, in this effort to upgrade the profile and American presence?

MATTSON: He did. The two sections that were hardest working on his behalf during the period he was there would be the Foreign Commercial Service - he looked to get a lot of new business into Greece; many political-appointee ambassadors have that inclination - and USIS. But again, it wasn't so much for the promotion of U.S. foreign policy objectives. There was a monumental effort made to plan, carry out, and then chronicle his own activities. A lot of self-serving speech writing and a lot of what one would call personal PR (public relations). It was a very frustrated shop, as I recall, and I had to do a lot of hand-holding with USIS personnel because they were very upset and frustrated with the amount of work that was levied on them to advance Ambassador Sotirhos' personal agenda.

Q: They being the...

MATTSON: The USIS staff.

Q: Anything else we ought to say about this period from '86 to '90 in Athens as political counselor and acting DCM?

MATTSON: My only parting thought, and I've referred obliquely to this already, is the difficulty of running an embassy when saddled with a self-oriented political appointee. And I regret to say Sotirhos ruined several careers, especially junior officers, after I left. I think it is unconscionable for the State Department to allow political appointees to exercise that kind of power over personnel, especially vulnerable junior officers. But then, the Department has seldom shown any backbone in dealing with political appointees.

Q: And where did you go from there?

MATTSON: I was assigned back to Washington. I was still an O-1; I felt pretty certain I was going to be promoted to OC. I didn't know it at the time, but I left in the summer with a good feeling. I was promoted that fall of '90. I was not looking for a traditional O-1 job since I had been for the previous four years encumbering a demanding senior position. I did find an interesting and very challenging assignment working in an office that dealt with continuity of government in the case of a national crisis, and I was the chief of operations there, which covered the next three years of my career. I am not otherwise at liberty to discuss that tour.

Q: Then where did you go from there, from Washington?

MATTSON: From Washington I thought I would be going to Lisbon as DCM. I had had a previous assignment in Lisbon, and I was the EUR candidate for Lisbon. This was a period when the European bureau thought it had the major voice in DCM positions because there were a lot of vacancies coming along, with no ambassador in place. So my name went forward as EUR's choice to the DCM committee. I, along with five or six other prospective EUR-designated DCMs, were, however, unceremoniously shunted aside in favor of higher priority candidates, all of whom were women. So I thought I was going to a job that I was very much looking forward to - and was well prepared for - and now was without a landing spot. I had to scramble fast. I heard that Copenhagen DCM had not quite been settled and managed to get an interview with then Ambassador Stone, former Democratic senator from Florida, who, through a change of affiliation on his part, remarkably became a Republican appointed ambassador in Denmark. When he was in Washington, I had an interview, actually a very long interview, about an hour and a half with the desk officer taking copious notes of my responses to eight very serious questions that Ambassador Stone had carefully prepared. They were penetrating and difficult questions. But I managed to get his approval, so instead of going to Lisbon, where I thought I was going, I received an assignment to Copenhagen. Not going to Lisbon in 1993 adversely affected my career, however, because of the difficult time I had with Ambassador Elson in Denmark.

Q: And that was your first experience in northern Europe. You didn't have Danish.

Maybe that didn't matter.

MATTSON: Well, I went to FSI for a few weeks of Danish, but it really didn't matter, that's right. In fact, I always felt sorry for the officers in the embassy who took Danish, because Danish is a language which is fairly easy to read but is almost impossible for a foreigner to pronounce, unlike Swedish or Norwegian. So it was a very frustrating experience for language designated officers. I remember one of them had received a grade of three in Danish after 20 weeks and on his first day in Copenhagen went to the train station and in his best Danish said, "I'd like a ticket to" whatever the town was, and the man responded, "Please, just speak in English." Virtually all Danes speak excellent English, and none of the Americans was able to properly pronounce Danish. But a couple of weeks of Danish was useful in terms of getting a little bit of an orientation and a feel for the written language.

Q: Was Ambassador Stone still there?

MATTSON: He was there.

Q: This was early in the Clinton Administration, the summer of 1993?

MATTSON: Exactly. As a former senator from Florida, a Democrat, Stone still had some friends back in the Senate, so he was able - I think maybe uniquely - to stay much longer than is the norm when administrations change. He was able to stay until December of 1993 through, I think, the good auspices of former Senator Metzenbaum and others who lobbied the White House to enable their former colleague to stay on. So I had about six months, six very positive months, with Ambassador Stone.

Q: You were doing primarily kind of traditional political ambassador/career DCM work, kind of running the day-to-day of the embassy primarily?

MATTSON: Yes. During that period when Ambassador Stone was there, I spent a fair amount of time getting familiar with the scene. But it was a traditional DCM role with the political ambassador. He was, of course, moving toward the end of his time there and focusing on a couple of legacy items, especially relating to the 1943 escape from Nazi-occupied Denmark of Danish Jews. Beyond that he left the operations of the embassy to me.

Q: In contrast to Greece, relations with Denmark are pretty smooth, not quite as many challenges, and the question of profile probably doesn't come up to the same extent. Why don't you talk a little bit about the general framework of the relationship in that early period.

MATTSON: Of course, as you say, we have a very strong relationship with Denmark. We always have. It was not entirely without issues, however. One perennial issue was our base at Thule in Greenland, northern Greenland. We have had a checkered history in Greenland. The major political issue that occurred during the time I was there was the admission that we had routinely overflown Greenland with nuclear-armed bombers

during the Cold War, something that we had told the Danes at the time we were not doing. And then there was a lot of residue from the crash of a B-52 on the Greenland icecap, which was carrying four nuclear weapons. This was in the early 1950s, and people were coming forward with various illnesses and claims, and that made for a lot of very difficult negotiations and bad press. Then we had the ongoing problem of compensation for the Greenlanders for our presence at Thule, whether this was in terms of the number of Greenlanders who would be employed at the base or alleged misdeeds relating to Greenlandic villages, Inuit villages which were close to the base. But one thing in our favor was that the Danish government maintains a control over foreign and security matters for Greenland that actually sticks. While the Greenlanders would be present at our every-six-month bilateral meeting, they were kept in check in terms of those issues. Of course, Denmark subsidizes Greenland to the tune of, I think, about $500,000,000 a year for these 60,000 Inuits, so they do have a lot of influence over things in Greenland. Greenland was something that was always, even on the back burner, rearing its head. We also had a serious issue at the time with trade matters, especially related to environmental factors, things like genetically modified organisms in the form of various grains and feed corn which Monsanto was attempting to move into Europe. The Danes, of course, were very much opposed to that. But overall we had a very harmonious, comfortable relationship with the Danes. It was a pleasure, really, to work with the Danish foreign ministry, for all of us in the embassy, because we had access and they were knowledgeable about their portfolios and they were able to actually articulate the governmental position. And this was in sharp contrast, for example, to Greece, where you would be very hard pressed to get any sort of an authoritative statement out of anyone below a minister in Athens. In Denmark, a young deputy office director would be able to give you precisely the government's position on Issue X within their portfolio. That certainly streamlined reporting and made communication with Washington very timely and productive.

Q: A lot of these trade issues certainly were European Union issues that Denmark played an important role in as a member state of Europe. So you were in a sense lobbying for U.S. positions that then might not take fruition until the meeting in Brussels?

MATTSON: Correct, and all of the U.S. embassies in member countries were doing the same thing. We just found it a little bit tougher sledding than many of them because of the rigid position that the Danes took against genetically modified organisms and on various other environmental issues. Sven Auken - I remember now - was a hard-left minister in the government of Prime Minister Rasmussen, and his control over the environmental portfolio was near-absolute and very much against all kinds of issues that we wanted to move along.

Q: I suppose on other issues Denmark, as a small country that does a lot of trade, exporting as well as importing, sometimes would be on our side, wouldn't they, as opposed to another country that might have a more protectionist attitude on the matter?

MATTSON: In terms of free trade, that's absolutely true. And the Danes, amazing for a small country, are the fourth largest food exporter in the world, which is truly striking.

It's such a tiny country. In fact, any Dane that you meet, with typical modesty, will tell you a couple of things about their country: it's a small country, it's an insignificant country, and it rains a lot. But, of course, it was a great empire at one time and is a very admirable country. There's an expression that I heard in Scandinavia which is kind of interesting. It describes the perfect Nordic economic unit. The Finns design a product, the Swedes manufacture it, and the Danes sell it, and the Norwegians buy it. That would be addressing the strengths of each of those societies. Certainly, the Danes were very skilled in mercantile activities.

Q: How about the NATO issues? Did that take up a lot of your time in the period, particularly this early period, that you were there?

MATTSON: During that period we were working the issues around ex-Yugoslavia. The Danes, for the first time really in a century, sent their armed forces abroad. They sent a tank unit to Bosnia which actually engaged a Bosnian Serb unit at one point. There were some fatalities on the Serb side. This was the first time that shots had been fired in anger by Danes since the Second World War. They also dispatched a small naval vessel to the Persian Gulf. So Denmark was becoming a little less pacifist, if you will, and a little more engaged with security issues. They still had a very small military establishment, but that military establishment was beginning to be used in ways that the alliance would approve of, this for the first time. I remember reading that in the 1950s there was public debate about what Denmark should do - and Denmark, of course, was a NATO member - in the event of a Soviet attack in Europe. It was proposed in parliament that the Danish defense budget consist of no money whatsoever and one recorded message which was "We surrender." That was the prevailing attitude in the '50s in many quarters. But by the early 1990s, they were beginning to, as I say, assert themselves. We were also quite involved with upgrading their forces. They had F-16s, and during the time that I was there we worked very hard to get them to buy the AAMRAM, which was a sophisticated air-to-air missile, much more sophisticated than the Sparrow or the Sidewinder. And they were, I think, the first country in the alliance to actually be equipped - or maybe with the Dutch - with this weapon. So they were upgrading their military, and again were using it in ways that the alliance would strongly approve of. Plus, the Danes were taking a very active role in the Baltic states. The new Baltic countries were sort of divvied up among the Danes, the Swedes and the Finns in terms of support. The Danes had involvement, I believe, in all three but their strongest focus, I think, was in Lithuania. The Swedes, I know, were primarily involved in Estonia. But there was a lot of activity relating to the Baltics. Then during the time that I was there, we undertook an initiative, because of the geography - it was kind of an interesting experiment - for Copenhagen to be the hub embassy for other activities, U.S. Government activities, in the Nordic/Baltic region. For example, we established an EST officer, Environment Science and Technology officer, under OES (Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science) and that position was based in Copenhagen with coverage over the Baltics and the Nordics. There was also a Legat (FBI Legal attaché) office set up with coverage through the area. So we kind of took the lead in establishing Copenhagen as a regional center for activities which would not justify a person in place in each capital.

Q: How were Denmark's relations with its sort of immediate neighbors in the period you mentioned, the Baltic states, Germany, Sweden?

MATTSON: Those are two large countries that are close by and with which the Danes had bad relations in the past. I guess one of the worst things you can do is to pronounce Denmark's capital the way the Germans pronounce it; they don't like that at all. Of course, there was a lot of resentment over the loss of territories in the 19th century and then the occupation of Denmark during the war, although in comparison with others it was a far less harsh occupation than, for example, even in Norway. Although the Danes do not wish to acknowledge the point, the Nazis viewed Denmark as "a model protectorate" for several years and, if I recall correctly, the first resistance casualty did not occur until 1943. Sweden is Denmark's historic rival in the Baltics. The average Dane did not particularly care for the inhabitants of either of its larger neighbors. They got along much better with the Norwegians than they did with the Swedes or the Germans. The bridge which now connects Sweden and Denmark, the Oresund Bridge, was being talked about as a project but it was not underway then. In fact, now, I think, it's very interesting, because the southern part of Sweden, which was historically part of the Danish kingdom, even when there was a separate Swedish kingdom based on Stockholm, is probably going to become much more oriented toward Copenhagen with this bridge and with the various satellite industries that will be created between Copenhagen and, let's say, Malmo and Lund in southern Sweden.

Q: I'd like to talk just a little bit more about how Denmark at the time you were there saw its role in the world. You mentioned that they dispatched forces to Bosnia and so on under NATO. I seem to remember in the early '80s that Denmark had, I think, a small contingent of volunteers also in Cyprus as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force. I guess I always think of Denmark as being a staunch supporter of the United Nations idea, peacekeeping, aid, although there they tend to focus on a few recipients. Is that right? How do they see themselves in sort of a broader world horizon?

MATTSON: You're right, and I should have mentioned that earlier. They were always very much in the forefront of UN peacekeeping, and they furnished peacekeeping troops, I think, maybe even in the Congo back in the 1960s. They thought they were very good at peacekeeping, and they were. They had a very good school for peacekeeping where their soldiers would be sent for training, and a large portion of their military was always deployed overseas as peacekeepers in Cyprus, the Middle East, and in other places. They had various army officers in places like Georgia in the former Soviet Union. And they were always very much involved, of course, in foreign aid. They were striving for one percent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to be given in foreign aid, and it was either between them or the Swedes as to which country actually was the biggest proportionate assistance giver in the world. I think right now Denmark is in first place with 1.0 and Sweden has dropped down to .9 percent. The foreign ministry was structured in an interesting way. You had a north group and a south group. The north group was involved in traditional diplomatic relations with its various directorates dealing with Europe and NATO and the United States and so forth, and the south group was essentially an AID (Agency for International Development) operation supporting Danida. This Danish aid

organization populated this south group with officers who were very often from other ministries or who became career aid people. They did not come along the traditional diplomatic track. Danish embassies which are present in countries other than the major countries are usually staffed by an ambassador who is from the south group, not a traditional diplomat. Danes tend to open and close embassies in the developing world depending on whether or not they have a significant aid project going on in that particular place. It's true that they focused on some countries, but they moved that focus around to a certain extent. They always had a stronger concentration in Africa than anywhere else. Perhaps you had the experience in Ghana of a Danish embassy with an aid official as ambassador.

Q: Yes, I think in both Ghana and Tanzania, too, as I recall. I think they and some of the other Scandinavians have always thought that Tanzania was particularly worthy of support and programs. Let's come back a minute to Greenland. You said there was a meeting every six months between the United States and Denmark to talk about Greenland?

MATTSON: Well, political-military issues in general, but they tended to boil down to the state of relations at Thule and various construction projects that were ongoing. We had to seek Danish approval for road building and various other projects, and this gave the Greenlanders the opportunity to weigh in with their concerns directly with us. This was something that had been established, the political-military consultations, for some time, and they were alternately held in Washington and in Copenhagen.

Q: When they were held in Copenhagen, the embassy would do it, some people from Washington?

MATTSON: Yes.

Q: They were never held in Greenland itself?

MATTSON: After I left, one meeting was going to be held in Greenland, which would have, of course, been appropriate.

Q: You did not get to Greenland yourself?

MATTSON: No, unfortunately. My travel orders, blanket travel orders, included an annual trip to Greenland. Of course, the wonderful thing about going to Greenland is that after visiting Thule - and that would, of course, have been very worthwhile - you would call on government officials in Nuuk, the capital, which is in southern Greenland, and that's very close to the fjords and Jacub's Haven, Jacob's Harbor, which is one of the great natural wonders of the world. But, the ambassador didn't want me to go; he considered it as his own preserve. I never got to exercise my blanket travel orders.

Q: Maybe we should move ahead and talk about what happened after Ambassador Stone left. I think you said that was December of '93.

MATTSON: Yes, and his successor, Ambassador Edward Elson, arrived two days later, maybe three days later. It was actually quite an interesting experience for me to preside over the departure of one ambassador on day certain with the arrival of his successor imminent. There was a lot of coordination work to be done there. Ambassador Stone, who was an effective ambassador - the Danes liked him very much; he had a very low-key, self-effacing manner which the Danes very much appreciated - had been there just two years and he was very comfortable. In fact, he still goes back to Denmark every summer for a month, rents a house north of Copenhagen, and has a lot of Danish friends. So he was not quite ready to leave. Ambassador Elson was very anxious to arrive, so it was the predictable sort of back-and-forth on establishing various travel dates. That occurred in December. Ambassador Elson was from Atlanta, was very prominent in Democratic activities as a supporter and heavy contributor. He had acquired a large fortune from various newsstands in airports, hotels, train stations and that sort of thing, which he then sold to W. H. Smith in London. He spent a lot of time in London; had homes in Florida, New York, London and Atlanta. Elson was there for the rest of my tour, essentially two and a half years.

Q: You really were not chosen by him. Ambassador Stone had interviewed you and selected you to be DCM.

MATTSON: Correct. What happened was that he was already in the pipeline to go to Denmark. I met with him before I went to Denmark. He seemed to like me and my wife. The Office of Nordic/Baltic Affairs was very supportive of my continuing on in that job. I don't think Ambassador Elson gave very much thought to looking around for someone else.

Q: Well, the fact that he had met you probably should have helped. He knew who you were, even if you didn't have too much contact.

MATTSON: Exactly.

Q: So how did things work with him those next two and a half years? He was a different kind of ambassador.

MATTSON: He was. He was an extremely charming, very humorous person. You learn a great deal from people from other walks of life; I certainly learned a lot from him. He was a very good public speaker. He was kind of unpresupposing physically. He used that somewhat to his advantage and was just extremely good in social situations and again had just a wonderful sense of humor. I remember one story which he mentioned publicly - and maybe I should throw it out here; it's kind of worthwhile: He was at a dinner party just a couple of months after he arrived. The Danes are known to be very direct in their remarks. This woman was seated next to him - he told me this story the next day in the embassy and subsequently, as I say, told it to others - and the woman said, "Tell me, Ambassador, do you like being here in Denmark?" and he was somewhat perplexed but he said, "Well, I told her, of course: 'The Danes are wonderful and caring and considerate

and concerned, and the country's lovely and so green and so nice, and so forth.'" He was going on extolling the virtues of Denmark and the Danes when she abruptly cut in and said, "So tell me, did you have to pay a lot of money for this job?" He was taken aback by that remark and replied, "Madame, let's look at it this way: I'm not in London and I'm not in Rome and I'm not in Paris. I'm sitting here in Denmark having dinner with you. How much money could I have paid?" He was unusual to say the least. Whereas Ambassador Stone was sort of deliberately low key, Elson came with a Bentley. He had both a Rolls Royce and a Bentley. He asked me which of these vehicles he should bring, and I said, "Well, I don't think you should bring either one of them, because the only Rolls [Royces] and Bentleys in the country are in the royal household." He said, "I think I'll bring the Bentley." So he would travel around Copenhagen in the Bentley. The Danes, of course, got sort of a kick out of that. He gave wonderful dinner parties and was enjoying himself tremendously. He had many experiences in his life, I'm sure, but I don't think he ever did anything that he enjoyed more than being ambassador to Denmark.

Q: And how did he interact with the rest of the embassy, and how did he see your role?

MATTSON: Actually, I'd have to break my time with him into various periods. The first year and a half were very productive as he settled in and got acquainted with the issues. Later things became less harmonious. Unfortunately, he was of a type of political ambassador, and he is not alone in this regard, who has, even before they arrive at a post, a visceral antipathy toward the State Department. The State Department for many of these people - and I don't know whether it was someone in the Clinton White House who feeds them this sort of thing - these individuals come out thinking of the State Department as sort of a rival operation and an organization that is inclined to say "No" too often with respect to budgetary issues. He, for example, had a tremendous back-and-forth over a replacement vehicle for a Cadillac that had seen better days. He was not going to accept, for example, what the State Department was offering all posts, an upgraded Chevrolet. The idea of him traveling in a Chevrolet was so beyond the pale that he spent about six months with a rented BMW while the State Department tried to sort out if they could possibly satisfy him with something else. He was going to have a Lincoln Town Car or nothing else. Of course, the State Department was saying "No." He's insistent, he's the ambassador, he's a big contributor to the Clinton-Gore campaign, he knows Terry McAuliffe and he knows Peter Knight and he knows all of these insiders, and he's not going to take "No" for an answer. Plus, as an entrepreneur with his own business, he wasn't accustomed to people saying "No" to him. He was actually not the only Clinton appointee who fell into this category. I think one of the more unfortunate aspects of the political appointment process is that the White House does not instruct an ambassador to respect and to try to work harmoniously with the State Department rather than to regard it as some sort of a hostile organization, an organization to be resisted. So the fundamental problem was that we had a situation where he didn't care for the State Department and I was regarded as the representative, the senior representative, of the State Department. He often wanted to show his disdain for the State Department by playing one group off against another and trying to work directly with other agencies at post without coordination with me or State.

Q: He worked with the heads of other agencies at post directly rather than expecting you to coordinate?

MATTSON: Exactly. That developed as a pattern during the last year of our time together, and that proved to be very, very difficult. He also was a person who thought that a mild misstep would qualify a person for a curtailment. So basically there was an intensifying battle throughout the time that I was there. After the first six months, there were about 10 or 12 instances when he wanted to curtail four or five different people, sometimes they were repeat candidates, but he was very determined that staff should be sent home for minor misdeeds. I was successfully resistant to that, and so that also was a problem area for us. The only curtailment that occurred while I was there was of the information officer, and that was done in the dead of night directly with USIA. I was made aware of it after the fact.

Q: So you really didn't have a chance to resist that?

MATTSON: Right.

Q: Was he suspicious in general, not just maybe of you as representative of the Department of State but of other Foreign Service personnel who came from the Department of State as well, or you took the brunt of that connection?

MATTSON: I tried to act to a certain extent as a buffer. But, given his attitude, the administrative section would always come in for a lot of criticism because there were certain things that he wanted, and these involved large sums of money, large expenditures whether it was at the residence or with his vehicle. Some of these things were the Department's fault; they should have insisted that he not be allowed to rent, for example, a BMW. I forget exactly, but that item cost 20,000 or 30,000 dollars in lease costs, for nothing. I tried, to the extent possible, to protect the State Department staff, for lack of a better word, or at least to let them know that they had someone in me who was not going to pile on in terms of his dealings with them. Unlike me, he is still in the Service on active duty. He was a very demanding and difficult person and was not inclined to accept anything other than a quick salute to carry out his orders. I understand my successor had a different, more compliant approach toward Elson.

Q: Did he try to get rid of you for resisting these things?

MATTSON: Not to my knowledge. We actually had a very unusual and interesting relationship. We saw each other throughout the day every day whether our relationship was good or bad. He was somewhat older than I was. Actually, I think one side of him liked me a great deal, because I kind of always noticed where he was headed with his three-angle bank-shot approaches to life. So one side of him liked me a lot; he felt that I had street smarts, was effective, and that sort of thing and was not very bureaucratic. His approach, essentially a zero sum game where for him to win everyone else had to lose, kept everyone on tenterhooks and morale was low.

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Q: This is the 5th of April 2001. We're talking about his assignment from 1993 to 1996 as deputy chief of mission in Copenhagen, which we discussed at some length when we last got together almost two months ago. Greg, I think we were talking about your relations with the chief of mission. I think you were with just one ambassador, or was there more than one? I think you had talked a little bit about some of the problems, but maybe you want to finish up on that.

MATTSON: Just to recap for a moment, I was actually offered the position as DCM by Ambassador Elson's predecessor, Ambassador Stone. Ambassador Elson was his successor, arriving about six months after I arrived in Copenhagen, and we spent the next two and a half years together. As I've mentioned, he was a very intelligent, very charming, interesting person. I had contact with the political appointees at European posts, and many of these shared some not altogether laudatory characteristics. These individuals - and I met probably five or six of them - were largely motivated by the personal glory aspects of being ambassadors. The notion of service was not, if not tertiary, certainly clearly of secondary concern. They all tended to be competitive with one another in terms of getting more high-level visitors, having more frequent contact with the White House, seeming to have more clout, even competing in the extravagance race, if you will, of the Fourth of July celebrations. All of them basically hit up American businesses which were resident in their countries for large donations. They were, again, very competitive with one another. One individual might say he had 5,000 people in Brussels and someone else would say they had 6,000 people in The Hague and that sort of thing. In any event, Elson was very activist, had a certain hostility toward the State Department. He viewed me as the protector, if you will, of the State officers who were at post, and that put me in an awkward position and frequently we came into conflict. Ours was a mixed relationship because I think intrinsically he rather liked me but institutionally we had some clear differences. In any event, he tended to leave the overall management of a significant number of issues to me. He was very heavily into the Copenhagen social scene and wanted, as he often put it, "to be close to the royals and aristocrats," a phrase that I remember him using quite often. He would spend a lot of time with the "royals and aristocrats," go on shooting weekends with them and that kind of thing. Fortunately, Denmark is an Atlanticist-minded country, looked to the United States as its primary ally, had some ambivalent feelings toward Germany and Sweden, its two large neighbors, but was very close to the United States and American policy. That was manifested in a number of ways, including the establishment of a Danish immigrant museum in Iowa during the time that I was there and in an annual celebration on the Fourth of July at a small town on Jutland called Rebild. A prominent American would be invited each year. Janet Reno was there one year; Garrison Keeler, the Minnesota radio humorist, was there another year; and Sam Nunn a third year. So every year there would be someone prominent in the hills above this town where there was a small memorial to the ties between Denmark and the United States and extolling Danish immigration. They put on a show composed of musical events and speeches, and usually a member of the royal family would show up. The Danes were, as I say, very cooperative. We did have some tensions because there were some declassified documents coming out concerning

the crash in Greenland of a B-52 bomber carrying four nuclear weapons. There was some delicacy because there were a lot of very critical press accounts concerning that incident, possible contamination of workers involved in the clean-up of the nuclear weapons. Two of the bombs apparently were under an ice shelf, and it was a very large undertaking to clean up the residue of that crash. That was sort of the main problem that we had. We also had some issues related to Monsanto and all of the genetically modified organisms and "round-up ready" soybeans and what have you, which we were pushing on the European Union countries both in Brussels and in capitals. We ran into a lot of stiff resistance from the environmentally and genetically pure Danes on that score. But, by and large, we had a very cooperative relationship.

Q: You mentioned the celebration, national celebration, if you will, in Denmark on the Fourth of July. What effect, if any, did that have on the embassy celebration, the ambassador's reception? They had to be coordinated so they didn't take place at the same moment, I suppose.

MATTSON: That was rather complicated. One year the festivities at Rebild took place from early morning to late afternoon. The ambassador managed to host a diplomatic-style reception in the early evening of the Fourth. On other occasions, because that really didn't work too well, we had to have the in-Copenhagen reception for the Fourth of July a day earlier. But Rebild was such an important event in terms of the coverage of the public and also the press that it was a modification we really felt was necessary. There were literally 5,000 to 15,000 people, mostly Danes, but some Danish-Americans would come over every year. Many would arrive from Nebraska or Iowa primarily, and they would plan their summer holidays to be in Denmark at that time.

Q: You mentioned that Ambassador Elson was interested, as were several other political appointees of the Clinton Administration and elsewhere in Europe, in trying to have as many high-level as possible visitors come as evidence of their influence and perhaps the state of good relations between the United States and Denmark. But other than the visit in connection with July Fourth, did you have a Presidential visit or were there other significant visits that took place while you were there?

MATTSON: Janet Reno, as I mentioned was a cabinet officer who came for Rebild. Beyond that, we had Secretary of Defense Perry; we did not have a Secretary of State visit. Both Hilary Clinton and Vice President Gore came to Denmark for the UN's World Summit for Social Development, which took place in 1995. That was a major event, a UN summit. Up until that time it was the largest gathering of world leaders in history. I thought the dictates of protocol were rather interesting because you had all of the tin pot dictators from around the world show up. At the main dinner, which was hosted by Queen Margrethe II, the seating was according to UN protocol, meaning that whoever had been in office the longest had precedence. So, the Queen of Denmark had at her table only dictators like Castro and Mobutu and several other Africans; I think President Moi from Kenya was also at her table. It was ironic that Denmark, which prides itself on being a democracy of longstanding, was forced to have its queen surrounded by a bunch of thug presidents. So we did have those visits, and there was a bilateral aspect to that in each

case, which we exploited, I think, fairly well. Hilary Clinton came early in the week of the summit. There were a bunch of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) there, Bella Abzug and that crowd, and she spent a fair amount of time with them, delivered a major speech, and basically got to see a little bit of Denmark in the process. And then the Vice President came as the official U.S. representative to the summit later in the week and over the weekend.

Q: Okay. Is there anything else we ought to cover talking about the assignment in Denmark, recognizing that the first part of this conversation took place a while ago and there may be a little bit of overlap or maybe some gaps, too?

MATTSON: Yes, there may be some gaps and I may be a little bit repetitive. I would say that one initiative that we had - I'm not sure if we covered it before - was to basically try to make Copenhagen into a regional hub for the rest of Scandinavia and for the Baltic states, the new Baltic countries: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. We may have covered that, but that was kind of an interesting concept. As you would downsize certain agencies in embassies, you could actually have one person who would cover issues on a regional basis based in Copenhagen. We had a new position from OES, an environmental science officer position established there, which covered mainly the Baltics but also Oslo and Copenhagen and Helsinki. Stephanie Kinney, an outstanding and extremely hard working officer, was the first incumbent and did a fabulous job.

Q: Were there any other agencies that were doing that too?

MATTSON: The FBI also lobbied successfully to establish a two person office there with regional responsibility. The agriculture attaché position sort of flipped back and forth between Stockholm and Copenhagen, with that person covering both countries.

Q: The Baltic states.

MATTSON: No, just between Sweden and Denmark. We had an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) security presence reporting to Brussels. That individual also had regional responsibilities in Scandinavia. Those were the principal ones. Oh, the naval attaché was also accredited, I think, to Lithuania. But Copenhagen, which has a wonderful international airport and a lot of connections to all of these countries, was ideal from that point of view. Expansion of the U.S. presence also made the Danes feel good. I might just add a postscript on the visitor side. Again, subsequent to my departure there was the first ever Presidential visit to Denmark. It seems strange that there had never been one, but President Clinton was the first sitting president to go, and, of course, Ambassador Elson regarded this as a great personal triumph. He was duly given credit by the Danes. That solidified his position as *primus inter pares* of ambassadors to Denmark. In point of fact, that visit really had nothing to do with his own efforts. It was a rather interesting story. The sequence was that President Clinton was going to meet with the Soviet leader, Yeltsin, in Helsinki, and it was thought that he should stop over in a Nordic capital en route. Well, that meeting in Helsinki was canceled. I forget exactly what were the circumstances for that. Then Copenhagen was rescheduled as a separate visit later on at a

time that would be convenient. It turned out that Clinton visited there after the June NATO Summit in Madrid - I guess it was 1999. But Denmark was never originally on the radar screen as the place that President Clinton would visit en route to Helsinki. He actually wanted to go to Stockholm. The State Department said, "Well, Sweden is a neutral country. We would rather that you went to a NATO country en route to Helsinki," and the one that they were steering him toward was Oslo, in part because they did not want to have him in Denmark as long as that particular chief of mission was there. His relations with the State Department, at least on the working level, were that bad. But through just sheer luck, President Clinton said, "No, I don't really want to go to Oslo. I want to go to Stockholm, but since I can't go to Stockholm and I don't want to go to Oslo, where else can I go" and Copenhagen was the obvious choice. So that's how he ended up going to Copenhagen, which was a wildly successful visit. They had something like 10,000 or 15,000 people waving Danish and American flags in Town Hall Square. They say it was the largest gathering in Town Hall Square in downtown Copenhagen since the British liberation in 1945.

Q: While you were there, did Denmark hold the EU Presidency?

MATTSON: No.

Q: Okay. Why don't we go on to your next assignment then, unless there's something else. Where was that?

MATTSON: That was back in Lisbon. Earlier on we covered the fact that that had been my first assignment in 1971 to '73. I didn't know the ambassador in Lisbon, and I didn't have to go there for an interview. I sent her a letter of interest, I had about a 10- or 15-minute telephone conversation with her, and I got that job fairly easily in contrast to Copenhagen, which had been a real struggle. I was looking forward to a second tour in Lisbon because we'd enjoyed our first assignment so much.

Q: You were there from 1996 to '98. Who was this ambassador?

MATTSON: Well, the ambassador who hired me was Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, who was a political appointee, an interesting and able person. She started a professional career in Washington working in the office of Ted Kennedy. Her educational background was at Georgetown Law. Her family was from upstate New York. Her father was a judge and had a large number of kids, all of whom were quite successful. Elizabeth Frawley Bagley was very active in Democratic circles; married Smith Bagley, who was an heir to the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco fortune; and became extremely active on the Washington social scene. They were heavy contributors to the Democratic Party, and she was appointed by President Clinton to Lisbon. She arrived, I guess it must have been, early on in his Administration, the second term.

Q: So she was near the end of her time when she chose you to be DCM?

MATTSON: Yes, she had a year left, and she knew that. We had a very good, solid year

of accomplishment together. She was not at all pleased with my predecessor, the woman to whom the job was going in lieu of me in 1993, which always helps. She was an extremely intelligent, very active person. We talked, I think, before about how these political appointees especially want their personal legacies and, in fact, they want to pursue their legacies before they even get started working. But she actually achieved something which was rather remarkable, which was securing for Portugal a second squadron of F-16s, used F-16s which were to be refurbished at an aircraft repair facility in Portugal. I was very close to that whole issue, and this is one case where, if it hadn't been for her pushing the bureaucracy, her contacts in DOD, her relentless pursuit of this objective, that particular development would never have occurred. Then, of course, the very attractive thing was she never particularly called attention to that, in sharp contrast with most of these political appointees.

Q: These were aircraft that came from the U.S. Air Force or from a third country?

MATTSON: They had been retired from the U.S. Air Force. I think they actually referred to them as carcasses. The fuselage and all these basic components were all sort of stockpiled in an Arizona desert somewhere and had to be restored to serviceable condition and then were flown to Portugal and then reengineered and updated.

Q: Do you want to say a little bit about the state of overall U.S.-Portuguese relations at the time you went there in 1996 compared with when you were there 25 years earlier?

MATTSON: Of course in the early '70s we had a very formal relationship with Portugal. Portugal was actually a bone of contention within the broad bureaucracy of the U.S. Government between the Africanists and the Europeanists, the Europeanists wanting Portugal to be a more active NATO member and the African crowd wanting Portugal to be regarded as a pariah state as long as it was continuing to pursue the colonial wars. And then there was the issue of the dictatorship, really an authoritarian government, which of course was displeasing in and of itself. But by the time 1996 rolled around, the relationship had opened tremendously. My second tour occurred in the aftermath of the Portuguese revolution, so-called revolution, of 1974 and the defeat of what appeared to be a genuine Communist threat in the late '70s largely through the efforts of the U.S. Government in terms of assistance, economic and military, to the socialist leader, Mario Soares. The relationship was very close. Portugal became more active internationally, participated with us in Desert Shield, sending a vessel, as the Danes did; they both sent escort vessels to participate in the blockade, showing their flags. They were very engaged in the development of their former colonies in Africa, which we supported. We worked very closely with the Portuguese government, especially regarding Angola, which was then still in the midst of civil war. There were only two irritants. The main irritant in the relationship was East Timor. The Portuguese felt very protective of the East Timorese, and there were periodic reports of atrocities perpetrated by Indonesian forces, police and military forces, in Dili and in the areas around Dili in East Timor. Our stance was somewhat complicated because of our very important strategic ties with Jakarta, so we were not as forthcoming as the Portuguese would like in terms of criticizing the behavior of the Indonesians. That actually continued all the way up through the UN, the issues

relating to the elections and for autonomy and self-government and the sending of an international peacekeeping force. I wasn't there, but there were thousands of people outside the embassy protesting in the early days of the massacres which occurred after the elections a couple of years ago. This was, of course, the one issue at the UN that the Portuguese were always pushing, East Timor. The other semi-irritant was the relations that we had on the island of Terceira in the Azores with respect to our base at Lajes, which was a very important base midway across the Atlantic. It was co-located with the Portuguese air base. There were 250 or 300 workers, Portuguese workers, at our facility. Each time a person would be discharged for theft or being absent from work would be a cause célèbre. One redundancy or one firing could cause a major issue with the Azoreans, and the Azoreans would then transmit that heat to Lisbon, and so we always had an issue which was involving our political-military officer endlessly in this sort of very small, low-level irritants relating to the base. On the operational side things went very well, but the labor relations were very, very poor. Then there were also very peculiar issues. There was a very nice golf course, for example. There are two golf courses in the Azores, and one is on Terceira very close to the air base, and the other one is on the island of San Miguel. The one on Terceira that was close to the air base had certain privileges for American personnel. They could import, for example, duty-free golf equipment. Then the Portuguese Government got wind of this, and even though the turnover was very small, that then became an issue: why weren't they paying duty, and who's shopping at the golf shop, and that kind of thing. We would have meetings every six months with the Portuguese and the Azoreans, alternately between Lisbon and Washington, to try and settle issues that were remaining. Obviously, at a meeting like that you want to settle as many issues beforehand and then simply announce either a postponement for another meeting or some sort of a resolution. As chargé I participated as the principal American in a couple of those meetings, one in Lisbon and one in Washington, which went well.

Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about the structure of the United States Mission in Portugal, again comparing it with the earlier period. Was the embassy much larger, about the same size? Did we have a post, a consulate, in the Azores? Porto, was it still open?

MATTSON: Well, first of all, in terms of Lisbon, when I was there the first time, the embassy was located on Avenida Duque de Loule, which is near the center of town, the square of Marques de Pombal. It looked like any other five-story apartment building. The entire embassy was located in that building. On the top floor, which only contained about six or seven offices, was the ambassador, the DCM, and the political section along with secretarial staff. Everything, the consulate, administration, the cafeteria, post office, was within that building. I mentioned earlier that after the Portuguese military staged a coup d'état in '74, which became known as the Portuguese revolution, there was a large influx of American aid. So, for example, the military aid group went from maybe four or five people during the period that I was there the first time to, as I understand it, as many as 40 people. A new embassy was constructed, one of the most beautiful embassies, I think, that we have in the world. One of the large Portuguese banking families, Espiritu Santo, had a large estate between downtown Lisbon and the airport. Quinta das Laranjeiras, or Estate of Orange Trees. He sold us this very large property, which contained an early

18th century manor house and an old garden, just a beautiful old building. It is now used as the Marine house, representation rooms, and the cafeteria. The Espiritu Santo family sold that property for 2,000,000 dollars, which has to be maybe only one-tenth of its current value. And we constructed a very large, very secure embassy with tremendous setback and beautiful grounds. It was a very complex facility. At one time, I believe we had in Lisbon - when I was there there might have been 40 Americans - more than 300 Americans. So the building that was built for 300 Americans plus 400 or 500 Portuguese now has at best a quarter of that population. It is one of those rare cases where we have a large, modern building where you have tremendous space for all kinds of activities. Everyone has a spacious office, and there's a daycare center for five or 10 kids which probably stretches across half a floor, and it's just a tremendous facility. Interestingly enough, the building had bulletproof windows and was built with reinforced concrete. It was built at a time when people were imagining the worst that could happen to that building in terms of actually having to withstand an assault on the building from Communist mobs or whatever. We, of course, more than met all of the security requirements that were not in existence then but are in place now.

Q: Did we have other facilities in the country besides the air base?

MATTSON: When I was there the first time, we had a consulate in Porto in the north and another in Ponta Delgada in the Azores on the island of San Miguel. Porto was closed about six or eight years ago. The last consul, Robert Illing - I don't know if you know him - actually retired *in situ*. He still lives in Porto. It's a wonderful town. Porto is a major commercial and industrial center and probably would fully justify continuation of a small consular presence, but with cutbacks that post went away. Ponte Delgada, which is mainly a consular post, exists because of the large Azorean population in New England. It has remained open on somewhat shaky justification, but Representative Kennedy, Patrick Kennedy, Barney Frank, and others in the New England area who represent the large Azorean community ensure that that post, I think, will remain open indefinitely. It has only two Americans currently.

Q: You've pretty well covered the main bilateral issues that came up, East Timor and the situation at the base in Lajes as it spilled over into the local community. Do you want to talk a little bit more about sort of the economic/commercial side as well as Portugal as a member of the EU? Did that occupy a lot of your time while you were there?

MATTSON: A fair amount, and I must say that I enjoyed that work. We had, I mentioned before, the important F-16 program. On the truly commercial side there were a couple of interesting projects involving major US defense contractors like Lockheed. Lockheed was involved in a worldwide effort to promote its new military cargo aircraft, the C-130J, which is an upgraded version of the old C-130 Hercules. They visited Portugal to demonstrate that aircraft. Also, Lockheed was a participant along with the Dutch in an effort to sell the Portuguese three submarines. The Portuguese submarine fleet consisted of three outmoded, very small French submarines, which must have been 30 years old, and they decided to upgrade their submarine fleet by purchasing three new submarines. There was fierce competition. The Swedes, the Germans, the Dutch, and the Italians each

had a medium range diesel-powered submarine. Lockheed was hooked in with the Dutch offer, so there were quite a few visits by Lockheed, which provided the electronics and fire control systems for the submarine. There wasn't as much direct U.S. investment in Portugal as one might have expected considering the fact that it had registered such tremendous economic growth. One of the reasons for that, I think, was the fact that Portugal, after it acceded to the European Community in 1986, was the recipient of a tremendous amount of EU infrastructure funds. The country was literally transformed. A highway network which would be the envy of any country in the world was built crisscrossing the country. It is now about to be extended all the way to the south and the Algarve. Telecommunications were also developed. The Portuguese who, like the Danes, think of themselves as trans-Atlanticists, actually are not nearly quite so committed to the U.S. They're very oriented toward Brussels and toward Paris and to other European capitals. So when there were commercial opportunities, usually they went to European countries.

Q: How about London? One always thinks of Portugal and Britain as having longstanding connections.

MATTSON: Well, they certainly do. The Anglo-Portuguese alliance is reported to be the oldest continuing alliance in the world. It dates back to the 12th century. But I think what has happened in the aftermath of its accession is that Portugal, which wants to be a very good European Community member, has begun to look more to Bonn and to Paris because Britain was very often the odd man out in European Community councils. It was the one major country that wasn't going to join the EMU (European Monetary Union); it was the one that has had various reservations about a number of issues. So the Portuguese, I think, are now much more interested in currying favor on the economic side with the French and the Germans.

Q: How about dialog with the Portuguese about their legacy in Africa? You mentioned that. To what extent was the embassy or was the United States, the Africa bureau, continuing that regarding not only Angola but the other Portuguese former colonies as well?

MATTSON: Because we had our embassies in Guinea-Bissau, in Luanda and in Maputo, most of the cooperation involving the Portuguese was done in place between the Portuguese ambassador, for example, in Mozambique and the local American ambassador. The Portuguese continued to be very interested in training military officers from their former colonies and in providing limited economic and cultural assistance. There were many university students from these countries. They were very supportive even when they didn't have a great deal of money for assistance purposes. During the period that I was in Lisbon there were a couple of negative developments. There was an attempted coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau; there was fighting throughout the country. It's still very unstable; I don't think we have an ambassador in place even now. Peggy Blackford, who had actually started in the Foreign Service with me in Nairobi in the early '70s, was our last ambassador. So that went awry, and of course the problems have continued in Angola. I think the hardest working person, at least in terms of the volume

of telegraphic traffic that I've ever seen in my career, was our ambassador in Angola. We would receive four or five telegrams a day, all of which appeared to be drafted by him. They were voluminous accounts of his meeting with this minister or that minister, because he was very involved in trying to finally bring to an end the struggles between UNITA rebels and the MPLA government in Luanda. That is a very tragic situation, of course, which has been widely reported, but when you read about it every day, it's just absolutely horrific that such a rich, underpopulated and generally promising country could fall into such turmoil and such poverty.

Q: Were you involved in talking about Angola with the Portuguese? Not much really?

MATTSON: Not too much. There were occasional initiatives that would float up in Lisbon, or we would have a visitor, for example, as you alluded to before, from the Africa bureau who would come out and we would have some meetings to get the Portuguese viewpoint on various things, but on an ongoing basis there wasn't very much.

Q: You indicated that Ambassador Bagley came to the end of her time. It must have been about 1997. What happened then?

MATTSON: Well, she left in September of 1997, and I was chargé for four or five months. That was a welcome development. I always enjoyed the responsibility as chargé. I was chargé in Copenhagen 44 times in three years. Incredible, but true. And then the last six or seven months of my tour we had Ambassador Gerry McGowan, now coming to the end of his tour. He was also a Clinton political appointee, a Washington lawyer who - he was a widower - had just married Susan Brophy, who was the deputy at the White House for legislative affairs. He himself was a classmate of Clinton's at Georgetown in 1968, so that couple had more than enough hooks to get that position. Plus, he was a contributor in the hundred thousand dollar range. He arrived in December or January, stayed till the end of my tour, with his new wife and six or seven kids and his Suburban which couldn't pass through any of the narrow streets of Lisbon.

Q: And your relationship went pretty well?

MATTSON: It wasn't bad, but not warm by any means. Again, I was appreciative of the responsibility and authority that I had within the embassy. He had not prepared himself at all well for his assignment. He knew that he was going to Lisbon for six or eight months, but did not read any of the voluminous briefing materials which EUR had prepared. He had a very steep learning curve. He was not acquainted, for example, with any of the officials' names or backgrounds. He was a little unclear in terms of whether this person was prime minister or president, that sort of thing, so there was a lot of tutoring that had to go on. As I mentioned, he had a large family and took his time settling in. It was the first time he had ever been overseas, he said, so he was a bit distracted in the early part of his tour. And, he was not very interested in the substance of the relationship or in working to learn it.

Q: Did he speak Portuguese, or was that really an important factor one way or the

other?

MATTSON: He didn't speak Portuguese. It would have been relevant during the '70s at the time of my first tour. The younger generation of Portuguese are absolutely remarkable in terms of their acquisition of English. Unlike the Spanish, the French or Germans, for example, all of whom have a distinctive accent in English, the Portuguese language is sufficiently different that the Portuguese can actually learn American-style English or very British-style English quite easily, and they were very keen to do that. It used to be French; now English is the primary language. For example, everyone literally in the foreign ministry spoke fluent French and English. Ambassador McGowan was not particularly adept at pronouncing Portuguese, so that too was a real struggle for him.

Q: Certainly in connection with your assignment in Denmark, you had a number of important visitors. Did they find their way, some of them, to Lisbon as well or to Portugal?

MATTSON: Yes, Secretary Albright came when Ambassador Bagley was still there for a NAC (North Atlantic Council) ministerial, which went very well, an interesting experience. She had only been Secretary for a couple of months, I think, when she came. We also had a visit from Vice President Gore while we were there. I'm trying to think in what connection that was. Oh, that was an OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Summit which occurred in Lisbon. Then there were a lot of visitors in connection with the World Exposition in 1998. This four month event was hosted by the Portuguese in the summer of 1998 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of India by Vasco da Gama. It was called "Expo 98, The Oceans, A Heritage for the Future," and had a maritime theme with a communications sub theme. The Portuguese poured about two and a half billion dollars into the site, built the largest oceanarium in Europe, some beautiful buildings and a wonderful modern stadium, all of which, of course, remained at the end of the Expo, unlike other expos where most everything is torn down. It was not a financial success, and there were a lot of charges of corruption afterwards. In fact, our own commissioner general, the former California Congressman Tony Coelho, was investigated by the State Department's Office of the Inspector for various financial irregularities relating to our presence in Lisbon. That's another complicated story, because Congress after the exposition in Seville mandated that no public funds should be used for U.S. participation in a world exposition, and Tony Coelho was asked to come on board because they felt that as a veteran rainmaker on the Democratic Party contribution front, he could get corporate sponsorship. He tried hard but failed, and ultimately the Navy and NIH came up with some limited funds - the NIH (National Institutes of Health) funds were actually from the environmental side of NIH - to at least pay the eight or nine million dollars that it would cost to have our pavilion. It's good, of course, that the funds were made somehow available, because there were 120 countries there, even the Seychelles was there, and it would have been really quite obvious if we didn't have a presence. But anyway, that exposition did bring a lot of congressional delegations and cabinet officers for various events. Secretary of Education Riley and Secretary Daley from Commerce came on different occasions. In addition to those visits, we had a fairly extended visit from Hilary Clinton...

Q: Let's just back up for a second. You were talking about Hilary Clinton's five-day visit to Portugal following a summit in Madrid.

MATTSON: It was after the NATO summit in Madrid in June of 1997, I suppose. Mrs. Clinton went to Budapest to deliver a speech on women's issues and from there came to Lisbon. She knew Ambassador Frawley Bagley from Democratic circles. She came with her daughter, Chelsea, gave a speech at the Gulbenkian Institute, visited Fatima, and made a courtesy call on the Portuguese president, Jorge Sampaio. The rest of her time was occupied with seeing Portugal. We had occasion to have a lot of contact with her during those five days, and with her staff of course, and that was a very interesting experience for me. She gave, I think, a fairly standard speech at the Gulbenkian but delivered it very persuasively and received a very positive reaction including in the press. Otherwise, her visit, though paid for by the American taxpayers, seemed pretty much the same as many others she and her daughter made during her husband's presidency. It was short on substance but not without value. I would leave to others to do a cost-benefit analysis. Such visits are draining on post resources largely because of the institutionalized pattern of costly, time consuming and unnecessary advance teams.

Q: Why don't you say a few words more about the Gulbenkian Institute? What does it do, and to what extent were you and the embassy involved with it?

MATTSON: Well, the Gulbenkian Institute, Foundation, and Museum are very interesting. The founder was an Armenian who, in the rush for oil in the Caucasus and Caspian area early in the 20th century, became extremely wealthy. He was casting about in the '50s and '60s for a place where he could set up a foundation and a museum, because he had been a tremendous art collector who had gathered masterpieces from all over the world. The Salazar regime made him an offer that he couldn't refuse, and so very close to the present American embassy is the Gulbenkian Museum, which is absolutely world class. You can go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as I did last weekend, and see wonderful art obviously, but you can also do that at the Gulbenkian. For example, they have the world's greatest collection of ancient Greek and Roman gold coins; they have Islamic art, glass vases, that sort of thing from the Middle East dating back to the 12th and 13th century, which are absolutely magnificent; carpets; and Chinese art; also great paintings and great statuary. So he built this museum and established a foundation, and that of course has carried on to this day. Gulbenkian himself died many years ago. Its assets, I don't know what they are, but certainly well into the billions of dollars. The Foundation supports education and a lot of scholarly research. They also support an orchestra and a ballet company. It's really a marvelous and unique institution in Portugal. We did have some collaboration with them on visitors. For example, Elie Wiesel came to Portugal, had a program there that we co-organized. There were a number of cases like that.

Q: Does the Gulbenkian Museum/Institute/Foundation have an American connection, or do they have an office in the United States?

MATTSON: They do have an office in New York, I believe. I don't know what that office actually does; I just know that it exists. And they have offices in Paris and some other major cities. I think probably they supervise the carrying out of various grants that the Gulbenkian funds.

Q: Could you come back for just a minute to the Expo preparation period. Did Commissioner Coelho and his staff primarily take care of preparations for that, or was the embassy quite involved at least to make sure that we were represented and that we did the right thing as far as the Portuguese were concerned?

MATTSON: That was actually a very interesting aspect of my job in Portugal because, as I mentioned, the Expo opened in the spring of 1998, and for a year plus, really from about the time that I arrived in '96 there were periodic meetings of commissioners general from around the world. Tony Coelho actually received the position as U.S. representative only, I think, in January of 1998. So the embassy and I personally took it upon ourselves to go to meetings, report back to Washington on the preparations, and made recommendations. So, we were very heavily engaged. I was working very closely with an officer in the economic section, David Norland, and we were sort of double-teaming that whole proposition up through the opening of Expo including, of course, a lot of contact with Tony Coelho and his group after he was appointed. So that was something that took a fair amount of time. It was absolutely fascinating for me because one of the reasons why Portugal wanted to host this world exposition was as sort of a coming-out event for Portugal as a modern nation. They spent two and a half billion dollars on the site, they spent another two billion dollars on a large bridge, the Vasco da Gama Bridge, which is an alternative to the already existing bridge over the Tagus which dates from the 1960s. It's one of those bridges that go on for about 15 or 20 kilometers in various forms, and it's an absolutely magnificent structure. Expo '98 was a signal to the world that Portugal had arrived back on the scene, that it had rehabilitated itself economically and politically and it was willing and able to host a major international event. I mentioned the OSCE summit, the NAC ministerial; all of these events the Portuguese were very eager to host because, even though it's a small country, they did want to reassert their presence on the world stage. The world exposition was a public relations success but a financial flop. They were expecting something like 30,000,000 visitors and perhaps had 20,000,000 and of that number maybe 15,000,000 or 16,000,000 were from Portugal or Spain. It never quite got the resonance internationally that they wanted; there was a lot of press coverage, but not very much in the United States. For me personally - I was chargé throughout most of that summer - each day was exciting because there would be a national day. The Austrians brought the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and the prime minister, for example; the Swedes an excellent opera company and the king. The emperor of Japan came for the Japanese national day, Prince Charles for the United Kingdom national day. So you had an opportunity every day to go to very interesting events and meet some very interesting people. I even saw some of the coup makers from the Seychelles that I had known from the 1970s when they came for the Seychelles national day. Our national day was a poor cousin, really, because, in contrast to the Bolshoi Ballet and the Vienna Philharmonic and the Swedish Opera Company and that sort of thing, we ended up with Secretary of Commerce Bill Daley, the Commandant of the Coast Guard,

and for entertainment the blues guitarist B.B. King. That was not quite in the same league as some of the other countries. Tony Coelho thought it was great because he happened to like this particular performer and it was his idea, but it was not the same thing as the Bolshoi Ballet.

Q: You mentioned the significance of Portugal hosting the NATO ministerial meeting, the NAC, North Atlantic Council, and also the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We talked a little bit about Portugal as a member of the European Union. This sort of network of organizations, some of which were members of NATO, OSCE, and some of which were not, like the EU, sort of keeps a country like Portugal very busy, and to some extent, I suppose, the American embassy tends to have to focus on not just when a meeting is taking place in the capital but on the work of the organization in general, whether it's in the Balkans or in the Caucasus or whatever. Do you want to comment on any of that in terms of the DCM's work and responsibilities?

MATTSON: Yes, again, as in the case of Denmark, we were fortunate in having in the Portuguese foreign ministry a group of very talented, very open and very competent officials who would speak authoritatively. A very good friend of mine - he died recently at the airport in Athens of a heart attack - was Quintela Paixeo, who was the political director. We had all manner of discussions on Portugal's relationships with all of these organizations and their activities, and I would report that back to Washington. Portugal was becoming activist, they were sending observers to all kinds of places, Georgia, and sending troops to Bosnia. I think they were aligned there initially with the Italians. Anyway, there were productive consultations along those lines, and again the Portuguese foreign ministry was absolutely first rate. Not necessarily to be expected. But, they were very hard working. Most of the diplomats who are now in positions of authority had been recruited just after the revolution and had grown up with the new, more vibrant Portugal. Portugal is regarded, I think, as a model new member of the EU because of its spirit of cooperation, the way that they use EU funds, and I think they're a welcome member in all of these organizations. So we did have several meetings every week on various out-of-area topics, so to speak.

Q: And I assume it was primarily you with the political and maybe the economic section on occasion who were doing this dialog. I assume that the two ambassadors you worked for were probably not all that interested in these topics as opposed to things that were commercial or more bilateral.

MATTSON: That's true, again with the distinction that Ambassador Frawley Bagley was much more focused and engaged than her successor. The only good thing about being a DCM for a political appointee is that you can get much more involved, often in substantive issues also, than is the case if you are in a post with a career person who may want you principally to deal with management. I think under the right circumstances a DCM for a political appointee can both be a hands-on, in-house manager and get involved much more in substance because, as you note accurately, political appointees don't have the background or the inclination very often to feel comfortable in settings where they would have to go to the foreign ministry and talk in depth about certain

issues. When absolutely necessary, they tended to go in with briefing points and to stick closely to the script.

Q: Anything else we ought to say? You were there about two years in Lisbon as DCM.

MATTSON: Not really except that I've always remained very fond of Portugal. I think of it as a country with such a rich history during the Age of Exploration. Its navigators discovered much of our world. It's one of those few countries in the world, and now I am thinking of Sweden, Greece, and Portugal, as countries of 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 inhabitants, which have had a tremendous influence in the world far in excess of their size or population. Whether it's in terms of the diaspora of the various countries or just the creative juices within the country, those are three countries that I always think of in terms of carrying much more weight than their size would indicate. And the Portuguese have made such great progress in the last 25 years going from really an early 20th-century country to a 21st-century country in just one generation.

Q: The Portuguese-American population is primarily from the Azores?

MATTSON: Principally from the Azores. The Portuguese population in New England is principally from the Azores, and still more particularly, from the island of San Miguel. Several hundred thousand Azorean-Americans are in New England. The total Portuguese-American population is estimated at something like 1,000,000. There are pockets of Portuguese immigrants from the island of Madeira - they're mainly in California - and there are some pockets of Portuguese from north Portugal who are in Newark, New Jersey, and in other places. But I guess well over half of all of the Portuguese immigrants are from the Azores. We did have a serious ongoing issue in Portugal because the Portuguese who came to the United States were largely uneducated. They tended to continue in the same fields - of course, this is a generalization - overwhelmingly they continued in the same trades and fields as their predecessors. For example, if an immigrant arrived in New Bedford and was a fisherman, maybe two or three generations later his descendants could well be fishermen or construction workers, manual workers of some kind. Also, many of those individuals never acquired American citizenship. For example, a large number of Azoreans showed up in the United States as infants. They never became American citizens, their parents never became American citizens, and one of the issues that we had were deportations, because these people in their early 20s would be involved in criminal activity in the U.S. They would go to jail, and when they came out would be deported back to wherever their parents came from, in this case mainly to the Azores. They were frowned upon as pariahs because the Azorean community was very conservative. The deportees didn't speak Portuguese, they had no roots, and in a small remote village on some island in the Azores, in some cases, they reverted to crime. It was a very sad situation. In general, the Portuguese-Americans have not made the kind of progress in the United States that many other ethnic groups made, and they have often not made as much progress as the Portuguese who stayed back in Portugal.

Q: Growing up in a coastal community in California, I can remember some people of

Portuguese background whose families were either involved in fishing or I think maybe in agriculture - to confirm your point from my experience as well. Okay, anything else we ought to say about Portugal, or do you want to go on now to wherever you went next after Lisbon? That was in the summer of '98.

MATTSON: Yes, summer of '98; well, actually I left in October of 1998, came back without an assignment. I did a couple of sort of short-term things. I was State representative on the senior promotion panel for the Department of Commerce and that sort of thing. I was retired involuntarily in January of 1999. Shortly thereafter, I was asked to lead a delegation for a SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement), a bilateral SOFA, with Greece, which I did from March of 1999 until June as a WAE, 'when actually employed.'

Q: Did you negotiate a completely new SOFA?

MATTSON: We never had a bilateral SOFA with the Greeks and we still don't. We had meetings throughout those four or five months and got to the point where it appeared in June 1999 that we were going to have an agreement, although there were a couple of issues which were still pending but seemed to be on the way to resolution. So I actually left that position with 95 percent of the job completed but two possibly thorny issues remaining. My position was taken over by a regular State person in the PM (Political-Military) bureau. A new office was established to do all of these negotiations. Those negotiations foundered for whatever reason, and there's still no bilateral SOFA with Greece. It was an interesting experience for me to be back in Greece doing something useful and even creative.

Q: I was named in 1984 or early 1985 to negotiate a Status of Forces Agreement with Greece, and you got much further than I did, because at the time fairly quickly it became apparent to me that neither the Department of Defense nor the government of Greece was really very interested in having a negotiation, so I never even got to Athens and we never had any meetings, but I had the designation for a few months.

MATTSON: It was interesting the way this case developed, because it was a Greek initiative. They wanted these negotiations. My counterpart was a gentleman named Lysandros Miliaressis-Phocas, who was the head of the American division in the foreign ministry, and probably the negotiations were launched at his initiative. He had been very close to Foreign Minister Pangalos and had somehow persuaded Pangalos that this would be a good idea. They asked for the negotiations. He was a very good counterpart; we worked very cooperatively together. But toward the end of the negotiations in Athens, he was fairly rough on representatives from the finance ministry. In our meetings he would be rather dismissive of their concerns. Meanwhile Pangalos had left office, to be replaced by George Papandreou as foreign minister, and all of a sudden one day Miliaressis woke up - this was in June after we had completed all the work on this 95 percent, whatever, large percentage, of the agreement - and he was dismissed from his position. So they went back to square one with someone new in that office. He may have gotten a little bit ahead of himself on some of these issues. So the reason you didn't go and I did go is at

least the Greeks in this case wanted to have an agreement, in theory at least.

Q: As I recall, our embassy, Ambassador Stearns, thought that it was important that we have somebody named, ready to go if the government of Greece showed an interest or willingness at the time. The prime minister was Andreas Papandreou, and his government was not in fact at all interested, but the embassy thought we ought to be ready to proceed if the opportunity arose. Okay, before we finish, I wonder if you have some overall impressions about your Foreign Service career or some other thoughts that you want to mention at this point? Is there anything else we ought to cover before we finish?

MATTSON: Well, I might just sort of cap this very fulfilling set of interviews with a couple of remarks. In 1971 I left the Navy, where I had a promising career as a line officer, joined the Foreign Service with a wife and three young children, took a $1,000 pay cut - I think my salary was $11,500 a year - but I couldn't have been happier. I was just so pleased that I had passed the written exam. I was even more relieved that I passed the oral examination. At that time entrance into the Foreign Service was, if anything, even more competitive than it is today. There were so many people sitting for the written exam. And I felt very, very fortunate to be entering into a profession for which I had such a high regard, and for which I had had some training. I was, I think, blessed overall by having a series of very good posts, a lot of responsibility, very good colleagues and, at least until I became a DCM, very good supervisors, people whom I respected and who valued my own contributions. As I got closer to and into the front offices of three embassies, I came to see some negatives. The system of political appointees, with rare exception, is appalling. Our European counterparts can not believe we, as a professional service, allow this. They do not and would not accept such a development. It is demeaning to all our preparation and experience. If someone can take the top job with absolutely zero background, then what does that say for all our years of service? And those selected are unworthy for the most part. Their motives are base. They may say they "want to serve, to give something back," but in practice they want to be served, taking advantage of all perks plus more. And as I mentioned earlier, the State Department kowtows to them, accepting behavior that would never be tolerated in a career officer.

On a more positive note, let me say it was a wonderful experience to raise a family in the Foreign Service. Many of our 28 years were spent overseas. Our oldest son attended, I believe, eight schools in five countries before he went to the university. The other two had similar experiences. They became flexible and interested in the world around them. Thankfully, they are all well launched into interesting careers. The Foreign Service experience was a beneficial one for them to be sure. That lifestyle has a down side, of course, but it also prepares people very well for the rest of their life in terms of adaptability and maturity and social skills, all kinds of important lessons to be learned. So I think from a family point of view it was a wonderful opportunity for all of us. My wife, Nitsa, did a fabulous job for our family, for my career, and for all the American communities where we served. She was such a wonderful representation asset; she enjoyed people and always gave more than she received in return.

My work was very challenging. I got to open an embassy in the Seychelles early in my career. I managed to become the senior professional diplomat in several large embassies. I was sorry when my career ended when it did. Just for the record, I was retired at the end of my time as an OC, not having been promoted to minister counselor. One rather distressing component of all that is the fact that during three years, including my last year of eligibility for minister counselor, there was a dearth of promotions. I remember that in those last three years combined there were something like 40 promotions in three years; the next year alone there were over 50. Poor work force planning.

Q: To minister counselor.

MATTSON: ...to minister counselor, and the second year after I left, and this past October there were over 60. So the timing was not felicitous from my point of view. I feel, even now retired two years, that I wanted to have done more. I think maybe almost everyone in the Foreign Service feels that way in one way or another. Maybe those of us who had an ambassadorship or two wanted a third or a fourth. But I really felt that I had much more to contribute and that I had become a very capable senior diplomat and manager of people and resources. Leaving at age 59 with the kind of background that I had which had prepared me for very challenging jobs in even more senior positions, I was disappointed at the end that I didn't have that opportunity. But I am thankful for the rest of it. As I said to Ambassador Stone when he interviewed me for Copenhagen, and he asked, "Tell me, what do you really feel that you got out of the Foreign Service so far?" I thought about it for a moment and I gave him the following answer. I said that all of us have a certain number of chronological years on the planet - we're going to live to be 50 or 80 or 90 years old. But the Foreign Service, because you learn a foreign language, you become involved in a different culture, you live overseas, you come into contact with so many different people - all of that and more give you the opportunity to cram into one lifetime more than the experiences that would normally accrue to that number of chronological years. And I do feel that way, that for those 28 exciting and fulfilling years we Mattsons benefited tremendously. I hope I gave enough back in return. I know I went to work each day thrilled to be serving my country in such a responsible professional.

Q: Thank you very much, Greg. I've enjoyed this, and I appreciate particularly your last comments. I thought that was good. Thank you.

End of interview