

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

JAMES MCGUNNIGLE

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 8th of December 2017, with James McGunnigle.

And this would be done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST). And I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by Jim?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes.

Q: Jim, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

MCGUNNIGLE: I was born in 1936 in a town called Roosevelt on Long Island on the south shore. It was a small working-class town with about 10,000 people. I was actually born at home since it was during Depression, and my parents didn't have health insurance. I grew up there until I was 18. I went to grammar school there, and high school in a town called Hempstead. Then in January 1955, I joined the U.S. Army.

Q: Okay, well let's start a little about the family. What do you know about on your father's side?

MCGUNNIGLE: I know a lot. He came from a large Irish-American family that farmed potatoes in central Long Island in Nassau County. He, his brothers and sisters, were modestly educated. He didn't go to high school. My mother went to high school briefly, and my father did different things to make ends meet. When World War II came along, he managed to find a job in the Brooklyn Navy Yard working on ships. And after the war was over, he opened his own plumbing business. My father came from a family of 11 children--who I grew up with essentially, because my mother's family had mostly moved to Florida. Mostly I grew up with my father's family, with all the traditions that working class, blue collar, Irish had those days.

Q: Okay, let's do your mother's side and then we'll come back to your growing up. What do you know about your mother's side?

MCGUNNIGLE: My mother's parents had separated, but they both lived in Florida. She had a sister and a brother, both of whom moved to Florida and lived in the Miami area.

The brother did very well; a retail business. My aunt Pearl didn't do quite as well, but she was a happy person. They both lived to be in their 90s. But we didn't see much of them. We would go occasionally to drive or take the train to Florida, but we didn't see a lot of them. .

Q: Your mother had just a short bit in high school?

MCGUNNIGLE: One year in high school, and then went to work.

Q: So you grew up in Hempstead?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, it was the town of Hempstead, in the hamlet called Roosevelt, which is named for former President Theodore Roosevelt's son, Quentin, who was killed in the First World War. It was a small town; mostly blue collar, but there were a few exceptions. We were happy. My father prospered after the war. He had his own business, so we didn't go without.

Q: You say, "after the war," this was after?

MCGUNNIGLE: After World War II. I was born in 1936.

Q: As a kid, what was life like for you?

MCGUNNIGLE: Even though we were only 20 miles from New York City, it was fairly rural. There was a series of lakes that ran down. We used to go swimming in lakes. Children were less supervised then than they are now. I had a lot of friends. I was fairly popular. I did well in school; honor rolls and class president. So, I had a pretty good youthful experience.

Q: Where does your family fall politically? Or did they address politics or not?

MCGUNNIGLE: I think like a lot of Irish families, they supported Roosevelt because he promised better things than they'd experienced under Republican presidents. But later in life, as they began to do better--and this was typical of the Irish—they morphed into leaning more Republican. Once they had houses, mortgages, and the kids were going to school, they were more conservative.

Q: How about religion?

MCGUNNIGLE: We were Roman Catholics. There was a Catholic Church in our town, in which I was baptized in 1936. Then I had my first communion and confirmation there. And finally Sally and I were married there in 1962.

Q: Was religion important, would you say?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, it was.

Q: Altar boy and that sort of thing?

MCGUNNIGLE: No, I was not an altar boy. My father was a member of the knights of Columbus, which was a grown-up sort of Catholic group.

Q: Well, in school, let's say an elementary school, what was it like? What interested you or didn't interest you?

MCGUNNIGLE: All things. I was a very good student. I was articulate, did well in all my subjects, and the teachers liked me. I was a very small boy growing up. They sort of looked out for me.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

MCGUNNIGLE: Hempstead. At that time Roosevelt was so small, and other neighboring hamlets were smaller. We didn't have a high school. We all got on this bus and rode to a town called Hempstead, which was a few miles down the road, where there was a high school.

Q: Well you would have been pretty young for it, but still the Depression must have been evident to you. Did it have much of an effect on you?

MCGUNNIGLE: When I was born, my father was working for the WPA (Works Progress Administration), and he was making \$8 a week working on a lot of the big projects, mostly financed by the federal government. We rented a house. I know they didn't have much money. But most people we knew were in similar circumstances, so, I don't think we thought of ourselves as being poor.

Q: I know the same thing. Yeah. Looking back on it, gee, you know, there really wasn't much there, but what the hell? Also, with a nickel you could go to the five and dime and have a great choice of what to buy as a kid. And there was none of this, "My car is prettier than yours," or anything like that.

MCGUNNIGLE: But then, of course, when the war began jobs became more available. My father found a job in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When the war was over when I was nine. Then my father really did well because there was so much going on after the war; all that energy that was released; all that money that couldn't be spent during the war. Buildings were growing up like grass all over Long Island.

Q: So, you were pretty young, but do you have any recollections of following the war or not?

MCGUNNIGLE: I have faint memories. I remember sitting in front of our radio--we had one of those tall floor radios--and listening to my father's concerns about the Germans

invading Poland. I was only a small boy, but I remember that. And I remember the V-E (Victory in Europe) and V-J (Victory over Japan) Day celebrations on the main street of my town when the war was over--very, very big celebrations, horns blowing, people drinking.

Q: In elementary school and middle school, was there much discussion of what the world was about around the dinner table or not?

MCGUNNIGLE: I don't think so. I really don't. It wasn't that kind of community. It was more like gossip or just plain old chitchat. Except the fears that I know my father had about what was going on in Europe. And, of course, I had an uncle in the navy, in the Pacific, and another uncle who was in Germany and North Africa. I remember them coming home, and my one uncle telling me how they used poles to push kamikaze planes off his ship, and things of that nature. But it was just bits and pieces.

Q: In high school. Did you get involved in any special activities?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I had a very unfortunate high school experience, because it was taken as a given that when I finished high school, my younger brother and I would join my father in the plumbing business. I didn't really apply myself very well in high school. I got through; I graduated. But first, it was not in our town, so there were a lot of students I didn't know. I didn't flourish during that period at all. It was not a good time.

Q: You graduated when?

MCGUNNIGLE: I graduated from high school in 1953, and then began to work as a plumber with my father. I learned the business, and then went in the army.

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Q: When did you join the army?

MCGUNNIGLE: I remember reading in December 1954 that the Korean GI bill was going to expire at the end of January, in 1955. I just saw it in the newspaper. I really never thought about going to college, but I thought, "Gee, maybe someday I will want to go." So, I went down to the draft board to volunteer for the draft, which would have been a two year tour, but so many young men had seen that same article that they were booked up. I couldn't volunteer with the draft, so I enlisted and managed to get in right away.

Q: What did you do in the military?

MCGUNNIGLE: I went for basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey; infantry training, and then I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, and went to armored training. Following that, I went to an advanced training course on repairing tanks and small arms. I then transferred to Fort Hood, Texas, where I was in an armored division. And finally, I went to Germany and lived in a town called Mainz for about a year and a half before I came home.

Q: When were you in Germany?

MCGUNNIGLE: I was in Germany from 56 to 57. That was a rich experience. Things happened to me. I often talk to my brother about how lucky I was when things go your way. In my case, I wound up with a very good friend when I was in Texas who actually was going to Yale when he was drafted. When I got to Germany, I was in a headquarters company. Almost half the young men were college students or graduates. So, all of a sudden, I was meeting people that I never would have met in Roosevelt. And that had a positive influence on me. I'd done well on my tests when I came in. I was asked if I wanted to become an officer; I declined to do so. But I was meeting the right people while I was in the army, and I decided, since I had the GI Bill, that once out of the army I would apply to go to college.

Q: So, you got out when?

MCGUNNIGLE: I got out in November of 1957; came home on a troop ship from northern Germany to New York Harbor; got on a bus, went to Fort Dix, New Jersey . I was cashiered, so to speak. And there I was. As it happened, my best friend growing up had gone to college right after high school. He gave me a lot of help, and I applied to go to Hofstra University, which is on Long Island.

Q: And you're there for what, four years?

MCGUNNIGLE: Four years. I did well. I met my wife there. I played Lacrosse for the university. I got good grades. So that was a good experience. I was in a high-class fraternity. It was a good time for me.

Q: What was your major?

MCGUNNIGLE: Political science with a minor in economics. I don't know what I was shooting for, but it seemed like the right thing to do.

Q: Was the Cold War part of your experience?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, I guess. John Kennedy was elected when I was in college, and like so many guys in my generation, I worshiped him. The Cold War was contained. But my wife and I decided that soon after I graduated, we would apply to join the Peace Corps.

Q: Let's talk a bit about what you were focused on. Was there any particular part of the world that was of interest to you by the time you got into college?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, I was interested in history. I read a lot of history books. I was not well disciplined to understand how to go about it, or grasp anything comprehensively. In college I majored in political science and we took a lot of courses in other government histories as well as a lot of economics courses. Of course, it was about the Soviet Union and other cold war issues.

Q: Did you have your eye on doing any particular thing?

MCGUNNIGLE: I did know about the Foreign Service. I learned about it in my senior year at college. But Kennedy was president. We decided that we would join the Peace Corps. It seemed like the right thing to do.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

MCGUNNIGLE: Her parents were college graduates. Her uncle was a dean at Columbia University. Both of her uncles had gone to Columbia. Her family was financially comfortable. We were married in 1962.

Q: The Peace Corps. What attracted you to the Peace Corps?

MCGUNNIGLE: The idea of travelling, maybe doing some good for the world. There were books that were being written then--if you remember them: "The Ugly American" and others that convinced us that we could really make a difference in other people's lives. It seemed more romantic and adventurous to do it in another country rather than our own. So, we signed up, went on a honeymoon to Nantucket, and got a call from my mother while we were there that we were due in San Francisco in a few days. So, we came home and went off to San Francisco and then on to the Philippines.

Q: During your time in Germany did you get out and enjoy it?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, of course. The company unit that I was in was loaded with guys who knew things about Europe, and I could learn from them. And we traveled a lot. I don't know how I did it on \$300 a month, but we certainly could.

Q: I could. I was a GI in Germany just about the same time. Well, you know, there was a book called "Europe on \$5 a Day." And it was true. You could even cut down below that!

MCGUNNIGLE: Absolutely. I traveled a lot around Germany. I went to Holland twice. I went to Paris. I took the train from Germany to Naples, through Switzerland. I flew to London, and took the ferry to Ireland.

Q: Let's talk about--you got to San Francisco for the Peace Corps. What were they doing with you?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well we were going to go to the Philippines. The biggest Peace Corps projects at that time were in the Philippines, Colombia, and Ghana of all places. So, we were selected to go to the Philippines. We had a few days in San Francisco, and then we were put on a plane and sent to the big island of Hawaii, where the Peace Corps had taken over an abandoned hospital for training just above the town of Hilo.

There were 50 or 60 of us that went there and trained in two groups: one to go to Northern Luzon and the other to go to Mindanao. I was in a teacher's group. My wife and

I were to go to Northern Luzon, so we studied a language called Ilocano spoken in Northern Luzon. We made a lot of good friends, and really enjoyed it. The interesting about the Peace Corps in those days is they had set qualifications. We knew from the beginning that 20% of the volunteers were not going to continue on to the Philippines. They were just trying to do the right thing to qualify. So, I was really nervous, because I could imagine the shame of going home, not having made it. But we did okay, although others were sent home. It was eight weeks of training. Our escort to the Philippines was Senator Jay Rockefeller. We flew with him to Japan, then to Manila, and from there to Northern Luzon.

Q: What was Northern Luzon like?

MCGUNNIGLE: Very poor and undeveloped. Our water was delivered from the village well in cans by a neighbor, who we paid. No electricity. There was a part of Northern Luzon called "Ilocos Coast" where Ferdinand Marcos was from, who later became President. So, it was very poor. We flew across the mountains--there is a mountain province that runs through Northern Luzon, north to south--and we were in something called the Cagayan River Valley. And they sprinkled us in different little villages down the valley along the river. We lived in a little house on stilts. The landlord's pigs slept under the house. We coped, as all our friends were doing.

Q: And what were you doing?

MCGUNNIGLE: We were teaching in elementary schools. I had to cross the Cagayan River, which is a big river, every day with the other teachers. We'd go across in a boat and walk about three miles to a small village school. My wife taught in the central school, which was in the town itself. We both taught science. One of our problems was that there was no shortage of teachers, so we served as teachers' aides and advisers, which was not terribly rewarding. A lot of the projects were not well conceived. The early projects were developed very quickly.

Q: No. What were the students like?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was an elementary school, grades 1-6. None of the kids had shoes. They were tough little kids; nice kids from rural Asian villages. We both loved the kids. But, it was sad in a way, as they weren't going to get much of an education there. Nobody went past the sixth grade--or very few; but we liked them. They were cheerful. The dentist used to come to the school every year. Since there was no electricity, he had a foot pedal drill. Imagine having your teeth drilled in the middle of the field by a guy who claimed to be a dentist and pump, pump, pump the drill with his foot. None of the kids made a sound. So, it was one thing after another like that. But that's how it was.

Q: Did local politics intrude on your work?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. Rural Philippine politics were pretty simple. I mean you were either a strong man or you weren't. There were differences in other parts of the

Philippines. In fact, we were there when Marcos was elected. There was violence in the country, but not in our town. There were lots of guns left over from the war. People were killed. In our village there was a mayor--oh, I guess elected--and he was a strong man. The people who ran the school were strong men. There was very little dissent or political activity that we could see, but we knew it was going on because there were a lot of deaths around the country during every political period at that time. It's not an easy place to govern, but it didn't affect us.

Q: Was there at all a communist insurgency while you were there?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah. Maybe you've heard of it. There was a group called the Hukbalahap (The Hukbalahap Rebellion was a rebellion staged by former Hukbalahap--People's Army against the Japanese--soldiers against the Philippine government). They formed during World War II. But when the war was over, they were still armed. They had gotten some uppity ideas during the war, and decided that they were going to get rid of some of the big landlords, and maybe divide up the land in a more equitable way throughout the Philippines, especially in rich agricultural areas. There was a president by the name of Ramón Magsaysay, who, in an effort to get rid of this group, which was creating problems for the country, settled them in different areas. Some of them were settled in our province, called Isabela. We met some of them; they were nice guys. But they were given land, essentially, by the government to satisfy them without having a revolution and taking the land away from the wealthy. They were given new undeveloped land. There was plenty of undeveloped land in the Philippines at that time. That's what happened to the Hukbalahaps.

Q: They intrude on your work at all?

MCGUNNIGLE: No, no. They were long way from where we were. The mayor would go out there periodically and see them. He took us once to see them. Everybody took guns; Thompson sub-machine guns. But no, they didn't affect our work. What affected our work was the unwillingness of the Philippines school systems to do anything new about school, to really teach kids how to think. It was a lot of just rote learning; nobody had books. The teacher had a book, and would write from the book on the blackboard and the kids would copy it into their notebooks and memorize it. That was how they learned--or rather didn't learn very much.

Q: What was happening to the morale of the Peace Corps volunteers?

MCGUNNIGLE: I think we were just accepting the challenge of being there as adequate. Yes, a lot of people were discouraged, but nobody went home. Some of the volunteers were more clever than I was. Also, we were married; not all volunteers were. The single men and women seemed to do better in some ways because they could be a little more adventurous. I think morale was pretty good. If you take the circumstances, at least in our project, which was education, we weren't getting much done. It just seemed to be enough to be there. We spent a summer in mountain province, and decided to attend an Ilocano language workshop. The altitude made for cooler weather. It also was a lot more

adventurous. We attended a wedding at a remote village. The entertainers in the village did a dance while playing brass gongs with jawbone handles. We asked where the jaw bones came from and they answered that they used to use Spanish jaw bones but now they used Japanese.

Q: How long did you do that?

MCGUNNIGLE: Two years, and then we came home. I took the Foreign Service Written Test at the embassy in Manila before we left. The DCM, who dropped in before the test, was named John Service. He said, "Look guys, don't worry so much about the test. I failed it the first time I took it. But later I passed and here I am". That was a real morale booster. We took it, and I didn't pass that time. Later on, well after I got out of the Peace Corps, I needed a job. I got a job with a company called U.S. Gypsum on Madison Avenue in New York City. I did that for a while. I took the Foreign Service Test again in New York, and passed it. I was transferred to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which was my sales territory. It was terrible because Pennsylvania in the early sixties was really in an economic slump. Coal mines had closed. It was just not doing well. So, I didn't sell my product because there wasn't much going on. But then I was asked to come to Washington to take the oral exam.

Q: On the oral exam. Do you recall any of the questions?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah, I remember. I was so embarrassed because I remember being asked about the braceros. One of the interviewers was a Mexican-American, I guess. I remember being asked to say if I were decorating an embassy with an American artist, who would I choose. I remember those questions. At least I felt I was getting somewhere. I was going through the hour and a half interview process.

Q: Did you pass?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. Here's what happened. It's a funny story. Again, it was another example of being in the right place at a given time. I was 29, and you couldn't come into the Foreign Service then as an officer if you were over 30. So they said, "Well look, we're not going to pass you today to be an FSO-seven. But if you come back next year, we feel you've got a good shot as you've done this." I think they wanted me to come in because there were not very many former Peace Corps volunteers in the Foreign Service then. I said, "Look, next time I might be 30, and I will not be able to enter. I wonder if there's any way at all for me to get into the Foreign Service now. Any way at all." So, they left the room, and came back a little while later, and said, "Well, you know, we've just begun this new program for Foreign Service staff officers. It's just going to be for officers who are willing to do either consular or administrative work, but not for political, economic, or information officers." I said, "Well, how do I do that?" And they said, "First you have to take the federal service entrance examination." I had taken it, and had a very high score. So, they said, "And you have to pass an oral examination." I said, "Well, what about that?" They said, "Well, we've decided you've passed it right here, today." So, I was invited to come in as a Foreign Service Staff Officer.

Q: This was when?

MCGUNNIGLE: This was 1965. It involved attending a regular junior officer class. I was in the 69th class at FSI (The Foreign Service Institute) in October of '65.

Q: What was your class like?

MCGUNNIGLE: Good class. But a bit shocking and indicates how much things have changed since then. No blacks; one woman; one guy with a Hispanic name. Everybody else was a white male. It was strange: 39 white men and one woman, who was USIS (U.S. Information Service).

Q: You did that from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: From October 1965 to April of 1966. I don't know if you remember that we weren't given any choice as to our first assignment. It was a little like the Academy Awards. Our class leaders came in with envelopes and opened them individually. They would open each envelope and tell you where you are going. You were discouraged from commenting. The other thing was that we all had put a dollar in the pot and the \$40 would go to the officer with the worst assignment. So, they opened my envelope, and said, "Mr. McGunnigle, you've been assigned to Ponta Delgada." No mention of the country. The suspense was palpable. They added, "You will have consular training following this course, and then you will have Portuguese language training. So I went home, and told my wife, "Good news, bad news. Bad news is we're going someplace called Ponta Delgada. But the good news is we've got 40 bucks!" (Laughter) So we did that. We did the Portuguese language training and I went to the consulate in Ponta Delgada. It was a four American consulate then, and I was the visa officer.

Q: Tell me, where is Ponta Delgada?

MCGUNNIGLE: It is the capitol of the nine islands of the Azores, which is part of the mid- Atlantic ridge, a long geographic volcanic chain that runs the length of the Atlantic. At that time, it was the oldest consulate in the world--it had been an early unofficial consulate. George Washington appointed the first consul there because of the many American ships that passed through the Azores; whaling boats and others. It was an important consulate, not for immigration, but for trade and the ships that passed through. It was an old consulate, and we loved it.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: We went there in 66, and the idea was that we would spend a year in Ponta Delgada and the second year in Lisbon to get balance as a consular officer. But there was something called the balance of payments freeze (BALPA) going on, and transfers were essentially frozen. And after the second year I said I wanted to stay a third year, as our third child had just been born there. I really liked it. It was inexpensive and a good job. I enjoyed being a visa officer. So, we stayed in the Azores for three years.

Q: What was the post like?

MCGUNNIGLE: We had a principal officer an admin officer and two consular officers.

Q: Yeah. Well the Azores were pushing people into Massachusetts and California.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, we issued, during the three years I was there, about 12,000 immigrant visas a year.

Q: Where did the people come from, I mean, was the island that populated?

MCGUNNIGLE: Not so much. Up to that time there had been strict t national quotas. I think the quota for Portugal was 475 or something along those lines. So, when President Lyndon Johnson signed a new immigration law in the '60s, it opened the quota up to as many as 20,000 immigrant visas a year based on relationships, almost exclusively. As it happened, a lot of Azoreans had relatives in the U.S. because they'd immigrated over the years long before there had been the restriction. Azoreans had brothers, uncles, and aunts in the US, so they qualified as immigrants, and we started issuing the visas. They were good people. The Portuguese are very thorough record keepers. Many of them, as you say, went to New England and California.

Q: Cranberry farmers.

MCGUNNIGLE: Textile workers and dairy farmers mostly.

Q: Did you get island happy there?

MCGUNNIGLE: I think there's a condition in the Foreign Service, often, that you love your first post. We used to call it "first post-itis." I loved it there. We loved the island. In fact, jumping ahead a few years, we bought property there, and when I retired we lived there for 10 years. We had a lot of Azorean friends because we were sort of still more like Peace Corps volunteers than other Foreign Service Officers. We were very chummy with the Azoreans.

Q: What was going on in the Azores?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, Portugal, of course, was going through a crisis because of its African colonies. The U.S. had a base in the Azores on the next island, 90 miles from where we lived-- Lajes Air Force base was very important. So, our relations with Portugal were both good and bad. Good in the sense that we had this healthy good relationship, but bad in the sense that we didn't like what they were doing in Angola, Mozambique, and other places. But it worked out okay. Eventually there was a Portuguese revolution (Carnation Revolution), the Portuguese Prime Minister António de Oliveira Salazar died, and his replacement was knocked out of the box. And before you know it...

Q: So, the revolution came after your time?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah, it came in 1974. And then they quickly gave independence to Angola and Mozambique and other colonies.

Q: I would think that you would find yourself really rather restricted in your life, and everything else, sitting on the island, particularly because you didn't even have the airbase.

MCGUNNIGLE: No, but we didn't mind. It was 40 miles long. But it's beautiful there. It's just gorgeous. We just had a good time.

Q: I have steamed past the Azores, but have never been there.

MCGUNNIGLE: No, lots of people haven't been there. As you said, you go to Fall River, New Bedford, and places like that; you'll find lots of Azoreans. We loved it. We lived in a big old house. Our third child was born there at the base hospital. I decided while we were there that I didn't really want to be a consular officer, so I decided to shoot for the administrative cone.

Q: Then how did you make the switch?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, I took some government correspondent courses, and then after the Azores I was selected for the administrative officer training course. As you remember, there was an economics course because there were so many Foreign Service Officers who didn't have an adequate background in economics. So FSI decided to also institute an Admin officers' course, which was 17 weeks of learning how to be an Admin officer. I was accepted into the first class, and benefited from it greatly.

Q: How was, how was the course?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was good. I mean, I'd had never done it before. I think the Department had trouble deciding who would be in it, and what the contents would be, but it worked out pretty well. We were getting the best top guys in management and administration from the State Department to talk to us. It worked out fine.

Q: The course was how long?

MCGUNNIGLE: 17 weeks. A senior officer named Findley Burns, who was the ARA/EX (Executive Officer for the Bureau of Latin American Affairs) spoke to our class. He knew, but we didn't know, that he was going to be our next ambassador to Ecuador. So, during the course of the program, Joan Clark and a guy named Sheldon Kryss came to see me. I was assigned to Brasilia because I had my 3/3 (speaking and reading scores) in Portuguese. And they asked me if I'd rather go to Quito. I didn't know why, but I agreed because I was flattered to be asked. Later Findley Burns showed up as ambassador in Quito. I think he picked me for the job. _

Q: You were in Quito from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: From '69 to '72. I was a GSO (General Services Officer) for my first admin job. I thought I did pretty well. At least I enjoyed it.

Q: What was the situation in Ecuador at that time?

MCGUNNIGLE: We were okay, but there were a few issues that weren't okay. West coast fishermen came down from San Jose California to fish for tuna in waters the Ecuadoreans regarded as theirs. The Ecuadorians decided That American fisherman couldn't come within 12 miles off the coast of Ecuador. So they started picking up our fishermen. We had a real crisis. In retaliation we closed our military support group.

Q: It was the so-called "tuna wars" or whatever. Did you get involved in that?

MCGUNNIGLE: Only marginally. One day soon after our longshoremen in California declined to unload bananas a mob of several hundred appeared in front of the Embassy in Quito. Fearing the worst we went near the front gate only to be surprised when the mob threw a lot of bananas onto the front courtyard. No harm done.

Q: Did you have any other problems in Quito.

MCGUNNIGLE: No. Findley Burns, our ambassador, did a lot of things. I think he liked me. First thing he did--he arranged for me to be interviewed in Washington to become an FSO, me to the Department where I was interviewed in a perfunctory 15-minute interview. Then the next thing I know, I was an FSO; I wasn't a staff officer anymore. He did other things too. I found him to be a bit of a tyrant but he knew his business. He took care of me, and got me some good assignments later. He was not as kind to all. He would just fire guys in the embassy--he fired the Economic Counselor; just got rid of them. I don't know how he did it. It was magic. He got rid of the B and F (budget and finance) officer. And he got rid of the admin. And I was still there. So, it was a strange, strange time. But the group that was still there with us in Quito was the closest group I have known in the Foreign Service. And we still have friends from that group are still among our closest friends.

Q: Did you get down to Guayaquil?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. I got down there because Findley Burns would send me to check on thing. Even in Quito it was also strange times because a lot of senior admin guys then could do things they could never do today. And I always felt that I was morally on the right road.

Q: No, you're right. I mean, as a consular officer, if somebody was a problem, and they were a little bit batty, we'd arrange for a doctor to give them a shot, put him on a plane, and send him off. Never do that anymore. But, you know, there are a lot of things that actually worked much better than staying strict to the rules. Because a person that has

got mental problems shouldn't be fiddling around a foreign country, and we would ship them out.

MCGUNNIGLE: I did that in Quito. Paris. We had some real crazy stories. The oil companies had discovered in the Amazon Basin of Ecuador- And so, a lot of people came in from Oklahoma and Texas--rough guys--to get that oil and pump it out to the coast. I don't know if you remember, but at that time most of the marines were veterans of Vietnam, so they weren't the nice, quiet kind of marines that we found later in my career life. They were the marines, who had been on the battlefields and in the brothels of Vietnam, and they were sometimes a problem; and there were few regional security officers then. I was the security officer at the post because the only professional security officer was in Lima The young son of an oil worker was found dead, stuffed upside down in a manhole downtown. And he had been seen that night with one of our marines. I was summoned by the police. We heard about it. They arrested the marine. So, we got the regional guy from Lima, we got a marine officer from Panama, and the head of the consular section. The four of us went down to talk to the Ecuadorian police about their suspicion that this marine had killed this young man/d. And the Marine was a nice kid. I mean, there was a tough group of marines, but he was one of the nicest of them. So, the Ecuadorians said to us, we don't really want to prosecute this kid because we really don't have much of a case against him, but also, we're not sure if he has immunity of any kind. . So, they said, "If you'll just take the marine, put him on a plane, and get him out of here, we'll be satisfied," Of course if an Ecuadorean had been murdered, it would have been a different story. So, we did, and we never knew who killed that American. And there were a lot of mysteries like that. I mean things that just happened. As you said earlier, in those days in the Foreign Service, you made moral judgments more often than is probably the case now.

Q: Well, I mean, in other words, you did what you should--which common sense would tell you to do. Yeah. Now it's by the book.

MCGUNNIGLE: We had another sort of consular case. Our children were in an international school in Quito; Good school. And some of these kids of the oil workers were also in the school, and they were from oil producing states. And remember, this is in the '60s, and one of the teachers was a Baha'i. They had double desks in the classrooms, and when the kids came in, the first day of school one of the students was an American black girl. And the Baha'i teacher made her sit in the double desk, which really offended the oil kid I guess. He went home and told his parents. So, the mother, the father, and another guy came to the school and beat the hell out of the Baha'i teacher; beat him up right in his own classroom. As the security office and I had on my staff a retired Ecuadorian police colonel and an active duty police captain who was permanently assigned to the embassy. So, I told him what had happened and that the man was beat up pretty badly. And so, he said, "Let me look into it." And they went over to the house of the parents who had beat up the teacher and they were gone. Apparently, they had their own plane, and they had flown away. And he called me and said, "I'm here, the house is empty, but all the stuff is here. What do you want me to do?" And I told him, "Take all

their guns. I don't want to ever see them again." They never came back. It was the strangest story, and we had a lot of that.

Q: Did you get down into the oil producing region?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. Others went down more often, but I just went down with friends to see it. But the roads were very primitive, and during the rainy season it was hard to navigate the roads.

Q: Well did you get any feel for the relationship between our consuls general in Guayaquil and Quito?

MCGUNNIGLE: I think it was pretty good. There weren't any special problems.

Q: As GSO did you get involved in housing? The care and feeding of housing can be the biggest headache for an administrative officer.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, but it wasn't in this case because most folks were on private leases, and we had housing allowances. And, of course, at many of my later subsequent posts we didn't have that. But you leased your own house and took an allowance. And so, you decided what to do with your money, and there were no big issues that I recall. I didn't have to worry about that. There were other things, but that wasn't one of them.

Q: What were your biggest problems?

MCGUNNIGLE: Do you remember when the Department decided that Embassy staffers in Service should not profit from the sale of personal vehicles?

Q: Oh yes. This came when I think somebody in Saudi Arabia...

MCGUNNIGLE: Some of the most outrageous cases were in Brazil. There were guys who were taking cars down and making \$50,000 to \$60,000 on them. And so, the State Department decided that was obscene. So we were told that you couldn't sell your car, and make money. So we decided with the Ambassadors blessing we would control the sales of cars. If you were transferring, we would not let you sell your old car. So, we would auction the car. . And then we would require the seller, the owner, to tell us how much he paid for the car. And we would review those prices, because we knew what the prices were. We would then say, "Okay, here's what you get. This is what you paid for the car." He did okay because the price stayed the same. You might've bought it four years earlier, but you got that back. And we would ask, "Where do you want to send the rest and more?" And he said, "Well, I want it." We said, "No, you can't have it. You can donate it to a charity." So, there were a lot of problems with that. People threatened my life a couple of times, but that's what we did. And if you gave it to a local charity, which you couldn't use as a deduction on your income tax, then we would give you 10% of that. If you give it to a U.S. charity, you could take the deduction. But we just did it. It seemed

like the right thing to do. So, we had that problem. And the Marines, of course, marines wrecked the cars on us all the time. It was a fun post.

Q: Were the marines a problem with the local ladies?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I don't know why that didn't happen in Quito, but it didn't. You would loan them a car to go out for the evening, and they would come back the next morning with the car windows broken. They did outrageous things, and we had to send some home--and the one that was suspected of murder and others. It was just a strange time as a result of Vietnam, I think.

Q: Was there any sort of reflection about our involvement in Vietnam?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. We were beginning to hear more about it. But it seemed so far away. There were rumors that some of the Peace Corps volunteers were there to avoid Vietnam but it may not have been true...

Q: How was the Peace Corps doing there?

MCGUNNIGLE: They were teaching. We had the Peace Corps there, and then later on in Chile we had them as well. Mostly village teachers and that sort of thing. We knew a lot of them because of having been former volunteers ourselves. We were very chummy with the Peace Corps staff and volunteers. We would see them socially.

Q: How'd your wife do there?

MCGUNNIGLE: She loved it. It was a very good post. She bought a horse; we had a garden we could keep a horse in, and she used to go riding in the Quito suburbs.

She was part of the local women's group. The late sixties and early seventies were an interesting time, socially. I think many of the women in the embassy were very smart; it was not easy for them to work. So, they formed a lot of discussion groups, and actively discuss things about women's rights. She was one of the leaders of a group of women who most of their spouses were political and economic officers--younger officers like us. They were very active, and she made some very good friends. Many of them are still good friends all these years later. She still sees them. So, it was an interesting and rewarding time for us.

Q: Well then you left there when?

MCGUNNIGLE: We left in 1972, and at that time, as I recall, if you wanted to work in the operations center, you had to have been recommended by the last ambassador or the last office director you worked for. I don't think any admin officer had ever done that. So, Ambassador Burns recommended me for an ops center job. .

Q: I mean, S/S was known as sort of the recruiting place for higher things.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, I met many young officers who later became ambassadors. So here I was--a humble guy from Roosevelt and I was really hobnobbing with some of the top guys in the Foreign Service. I loved it.

Q: Do you want to say what you were doing first and while working your way up in the system?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, I was a watch officer. There is a senior watch officer, and then there's a number two. I was often the number two, and then there was an editor who would do the morning summaries for the Front Office for the Secretariat. I worked there, and it was really great because exciting things happened. It was a real good place for me.

Q-: Can you think of or mention a few of the issues that you came across at least for the time you were involved in S/S?

MCGUNNIGLE: I remember the ambassador's home in Porte-au-Prince had been invaded by terrorists, and they were holding the ambassador hostage. William Rogers, who was the Secretary, came in and stood right in front of my desk as we were talking to the embassy DCM, I think, about what to do. We went through all of that. I remember, I think, that we bombed Libya at that time. That was the beginning of us getting out of Vietnam, when there was something called "Operation Enhance," and then "Enhance Plus," which were to give all the Vietnamese soldiers our weaponry, and they would then defeat the north, which of course didn't happen. I remember the president of Chile was dying, and the embassy in Chile called us because they wanted our help and getting some medication that would keep him alive for a while. We did that. It was just one thing after another. For about a month I worked in the National Military Command Center where they had CIA, NSA, and State desks.

Q: Did you find a different set of either problems or attitudes at the military command center?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. I think that first of all, it was patently clear to me that they were exaggerating our success in Vietnam. Especially during these briefings in the morning, which we would go to, for the senior-most generals. Some of the things that were being said couldn't be true. But other than that, I found it was generally boring, I couldn't wait to get back to the State Department where things were more exciting. S/S was a good place to be.

Q: Well S/S really teaches you what the wiring pattern is within the State Department. Who does what--

MCGUNNIGLE: Exactly, and you could pick up the phone and you'd get attention all over the building. We just got a lot of that. And then, for the second year, (I was in Washington on a three-year stay) I worked for John Thomas. He was then the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Operations. Then he moved up to become Assistant Secretary for

administration, which was a big deal. He got a lot of power, and I worked for him, and we would do presidential visits and other things.

Q: Let's talk about that job. What did it encompass?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, the first job I went on--I was still in S/S--was a 26-day trip with Secretary of State George Schultz, Arthur Burns from the Federal Reserve and Paul Volcker. We took a plane and made a 26-day trip. I was the S/S guy on the plane that controlled the communications for Schultz and everybody else who was on the plane. Then I did a trip to South America with Pat Nixon. We went to the inaugurations of the presidents of Brazil and Venezuela. I spoke both Portuguese and Spanish, so that was good. Later, I advanced Nixon's last trip to Israel and Brussels. So yes, it was very exciting stuff.

Q: Did you have any opinion about Pat Nixon, the president's wife?

MCGUNNIGLE: Very shy woman. I think very decent. We celebrated her birthday on the plane, and I made, in Spanish and Portuguese, all the little name tags for everybody. But I liked her. I think she was okay, but very shy. It was hard to get to know her well. She mostly stayed in our own little cabin, on what was then called Air Force Two; it was a 707. She seemed pleasant.

Q: How about the Nixon trip to Israel and Europe? I mean this was his, sort of, farewell?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, it was his farewell. I don't think he'd announced that he was resigning yet, but he made it plain--it was fairly obvious to everyone that he wasn't going to be around long. I did Israel, and that was fun. We took over the King David Hotel. The internal police--called Shin Bet-- they were like the FBI. These guys were giving me goosebumps because they were so good at what they did. I was always nervous because I was working in the control room in the hotel. I remember watching television in the control room, and Nixon was arriving at the Ben Gurion Airport, and it's just down the road from Jerusalem where we were. The Shin Bet come to us and they said, "We're going to shake down the whole hotel before Nixon gets here; to look for bombs." I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" They said, "Don't worry; we'll take care of it." They had not done it yet. And I'm sitting in the control room, and here he is coming down from the plane, just down the road. All of a sudden, here they were! They blitzed the hotel, going through every room turning over beds, turning over sofas. Right behind them, a platoon of Palestinian maids came, putting everything back in order. When he pulled up, the hotel was fine. But I almost had a nervous breakdown. (Laughter) It was a lot of stuff like that. But it was interesting, and I enjoyed that. It wasn't too long before Nixon resigned, because my next assignment was graduate school in Syracuse--I went to the Maxwell school. On the way to Syracuse (we went up with another Foreign Service Officer), we learned of his resignation on the radio.

Q: Well sometimes the tone of dealing with the White House staff on a presidential visit is a pain in the neck.

MCGUNNIGLE: Oh, it's awful. That's the bad part. Yes. Arrogant and pushy. But we controlled the funding. The White House didn't have a budget for travel--and maybe they still don't. I don't know. We had the budget. So, there was a super fund that was controlled by John Thomas that was used to pay for things that couldn't be picked up by the military or other. We carried the money, but they were always trying to get us to give them more money than they needed. Or permission to fly first class whenever they wanted to. It was a constant struggle. They were secretive and only told us what they thought we needed to know. .

Q: So, were you able to out tough the White House?

MCGUNNIGLE: To some measure because we had the funding and knew better than they did how embassies work. A lot of them were just guys who were brought in from nowhere. They were just donors or people who had worked on a campaign in some remote town in South Dakota. This was their payoff for having helped Nixon get elected. The payoff was: do you want to go to Brussels for an advance trip? But John Thomas had a stable of young officers who he regarded as good admin officers, many of whom were very good admin officers. He brought them in to be his team to manage these visits. The kind of job where you could be taken out at any time and go off on those six-week presidential visits. I was part of that crew, loved it, and felt lucky to have it.

Q: Well then, after dealing with the Nixon visits is there anything more we should talk about?

MCGUNNIGLE: Are we going to do this again? I'll think of some more stories. I have so many stories. I have others.

Q: I do want, you know, the stories are what make these interesting and also worthwhile. People better understand how things work.

MCGUNNIGLE: I've just remembered three or four stories from the Azores. Do you want to hear them?

Q: Sure.

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, at that time there were groups of ships would stop by on their way to assignments to the Mediterranean fleet. The ships would change about every three or four months. The destroyers would come back, and they would all stop in the Azores to fuel. Whenever they did, there was always some problem. I remember one story where there was an officer who was newly appointed to grade commodore. Commodore was just above a captain, and the commodore commanded the three destroyers. They came in, and I was acting principal officer in the consulate because the Consul was on leave. So I took the Commodore to meet the Portuguese authorities as is customary protocol. Then he went back to the ship, and said, "We're going to be out of here during the night." So, during the night, the phone rings. It's two o'clock in the morning, and it's this commodore. He said, "Jim, I've got a real problem here. The pumps for the fuel just aren't

working fast enough. They're going to delay my departure, and I'm a little pissed off. I'd like you to do something about that." Oh really? So I walked down to the port and into the port command, and said, "What's going on?" He says, "Well these are the pumps we have. Everybody knows what size these pumps are and the speed at which they operate. That's all we can do." So I told the commodore, and he told me how disappointed he was in me. I should have done a better job and blah blah blah. The next morning at nine o'clock, -because I had been up all night, I'm strolling to work in the consulate. I looked down, and the fleet is still there! I went down. What had happened was that one of the fuel tanks was full of sea water, but they had put this big hose on that tank and kept pumping oil into the tank--it's a black oil that they burned in the ships in those days--the tank had leaked and the oil had flooded the whole port. It was awash in black water. I said, "What are you going to do about that?" He said, "I don't know, but don't tell anybody." He got his men out and they put down lines to contain the oil, so it would stay in one corner of the port. They actually got out there in small boats with pails to pick this stuff up. They hired tanker trucks to take it away; it took them a couple of days. So, we were giggling a little bit about that. Another destroyer came in and hit a container ship and knocked a hole in the side--that had to be settled. A ship came in during a storm, an American freighter, not a warship. One of the members of the crew was having a heart attack. So the captain of the ship decided to not wait for the port pilot, since it was during the night. He was just going to charge in and get that crewman on the shore so he could get to a hospital. Well, he went up on the rocks, right on the sea wall of the small town. Standing on a sidewalk, and you could look up and see the ship. Then the man died. Also, they used to station a Greek sea-going tug in the Azores year-round, just to wait for something awful to happen. Then the tug could charge you a lot of money for a rescue. So, the ship is on the rocks; can't get off; the rudder is broken; the dead guy is on the ship. The crew all get off the ship and fly home. They put the dead guy in the freezer, and then the Greek tug tows the ship to Lisbon for repairs; total disaster. We had a lot of those. We had a ship blow up right off the port once—broken into two parts. The Greek tug went out, brought one half in, and docked it. The tug went out for the other half of the ship, but then the Portuguese port authority said, "Whatever was on that ship that caused the explosion is still on that ship. I don't think we want to bring any other parts of that vessel in here." The Greek has already gone out and he has a rope tow on the other half of the ship, which is still floating. They said, "You can't bring it into port. It's bad enough there's one half here already. So then the tug owners decided they had to sink it. It's a law of the sea that once you've got a ship under your control, you can't let go of it; then it becomes a hazard. So they asked the U.S. Navy if they would sink, but the Navy refused. They put a bomb on it, but the bomb was a dud. So finally a British submarine comes in, and they sink it, you know, right down to the bottom.

Q: Dealing with ships is a different world.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah. Anyway, I remember those, and I have more war stories from the Azores, because, as you know, if you were in a port, there's just a lot going on.

Q: Well you think maybe this is a good place to stop?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes.

Q: And if you want to make notes to yourself about anything else of what we've already covered. And so, we're going to pick this up after you left S/S--the operations center.

Q: Today is the 30th of January 2018, with Jim McGunnigle. Jim, where did we leave off?

MCGUNNIGLE: I think I had just gotten to Quito, where I was going to be the GSO. We sailed from New York in the days when Grace Lines still operated ships from New York to around the Horn of South America. We went to Guayaquil, I was met there by someone from the embassy, and we flew up to Quito. I had a wonderful tour. Later I worked for Ambassador Findley Burns. When I first arrived, it was Ambassador Sessions who was a good pal of Everett Dirksen--the senator from Illinois--but he was a political appointee. When Dirksen died, he got the boot. Findley Burns had been Ambassador to Jordan. He was essentially an administrative officer, and had been admin counselor in London and other places. He sort of handpicked the embassy staff. A lot of us were taken out from other assignments. I was scheduled to go to Brazil because I spoke Portuguese from my first post. Joan Clark came over to FSI, where I was taking the first administrative officers' course, and persuaded me to go to Quito. I didn't know why until later. I learned that they had been handpicking Findley Burn's staff for him. He transferred out the budget officer, and the economic counselor. He got rid of the political counselor and others. He just decided what staff he wanted, and by some magic, he was able to do that. I never understood how he did it, even today.

Q: Well he was a name that you could conjure with at the time.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. I came into the Foreign Service as an FSSO--a class they had just created for worthy aspirants to be FSOs, but who were restricted to working in consular or administrative affairs. I had picked the admin function, and that accounted for my taking the Admin course, in which he lectured a bit and selected me. As a result, halfway through my Quito tour, he sent me back to Washington and had me blessed as an FSO. He arranged for that. He was a tough guy to work for, but if he chose you, you were almost anointed.

I really enjoyed Quito, not just because of Findley Burns looking after me, but because--having been in the Peace Corps--I felt that I had an affinity for working with nationals. Actually, your first admin job as a GSO you tend to deal almost entirely with the host nationals, and I felt good about doing that.

Q: What was the situation in Ecuador at the time?

MCGUNNIGLE: We had a good relationship. There was an issue of fishing boats and territorial waters. Oddly enough, my first tour was in the Azores, and a lot of former Azorean fishermen lived in California and used to come down and fish in the rich waters off of the coast of Ecuador. Ecuador had imposed a 200-mile limit off the coast to include

fishing rights. As a result, they were picking up our fishing boats. Findley had to deal with cooling of relations because of that. Fishermen were always picked up and then released, but it was a tough situation. As a result--I'm not sure who did it, whether it was the congress or the administration--we closed the military group; sent them home. That was one of the jobs they gave me: to help them go home, get rid of their things, transfer all their people. We did that. In some kind of clumsy retaliation, the longshoreman in California would not unload the banana boats that came to US ports, Ecuador being the largest exporter of bananas in the world at the time. So, one day about 200 protesters came to the embassy and stood outside our gates--and their hands were behind them, and we didn't know why--until they threw 200 bananas at us. The whole front courtyard of the embassy was full of beautiful yellow bananas.

Q: Why were the longshoreman protesting?

MCGUNNIGLE: Out of sympathy to the fishermen who were not being allowed to fish in very rich waters; they lost out on tons of good tuna as well. But the relationship wasn't hostile. We kept the Peace Corps. The mission continued to function. We just took the military away. At the same time, oil had been discovered in the Amazon basin part of Ecuador. If you go up over the Andes and back down towards Brazil, they found rich deposits of oil, which then was being exploited by American companies. Ecuador liked that; they were making a lot of money on it. So, it was a mixed relationship--cool in some things, but pretty good in other ways. A lot of oil workers from the southwest came to Ecuador to manage the enterprise...

Q: They're usually a difficult crew to deal with. I mean the name "roughnecks" is the technical term for an oil worker and also describes their actions often.

MCGUNNIGLE: Remember this in the '60s--at the principal international school in Quito called Cotopaxi Academy--one of the teachers asked one of the boys from one of those families to sit next to a black girl, who may have been an embassy dependent, and the boy's family didn't like that. The parents came to the school and beat up the American teacher and then fled the country. I was also the post security officer, and I remember I sent a police colonel to their house to see if the family was around so we could have them arrested. They had fled, leaving the house and all their things, including a lot of guns. I just had the police confiscate everything. The family never came back. We had incidents like that. We had a murder. One of the boys from the oil company was murdered. They accused one of our marine guards of doing it as he had been the last person seen with the boy. It was kind of a traumatic episode because they arrested our marine. The security officer, a regional guy, came in from Lima. A Marine officer come in from Panama, plus a consular officer. We went down to talk to the police. They were pretty convinced that the Marine had killed the student. But they didn't want to mess with it, so they told us to just make the Marine disappear. And we did. Sent the marine home. It was an unsolved murder. Still, we don't know what happened. But the Ecuadorians didn't want to deal with it because it wasn't clear what kind of immunity the marines had. There were a lot of strange things that happened during that three-year episode with Findley Burns.

Q: When you say Findley Burns was hard to work for, what do you mean?

MCGUNNIGLE: He's very demanding, and he made his own rules. You essentially had to ask him what the rules about that were. You didn't go to a copy of the FAM [Foreign Affairs Manual] because he made his own rules. If you screwed up, he would let you know in no uncertain terms.

What was the embassy staff like? Because particularly as GSO you would have an awful lot of dealings with them.

MCGUNNIGLE: We had all top guys. The political counselor was a guy named John Shumate, who later went on to become the head of American Foreign Service Protective Association. We had a guy named Andy Winter, who was the B&F Officer who'd been recruited from Columbia Univ. by friends of Findley's when Andy came in the Foreign Service. Later, Andy became an ambassador. We had a really top-notch crew. Burns got rid of my boss, the administrative officer. He just arranged for his early transfer. He brought in everybody that he either knew from his European experiences or had known when he was ambassador to Jordan. It was a really first-class crew. Over the years I've had nine overseas postings, but I've never had been as close to my colleagues anywhere as we were in that particular embassy. We still see each other as friends. Maybe it was Findley's domination, or that he made us all work hard and do strange things, but we have kept in touch.

Q: Did you have much observance of the political world in Ecuador?

MCGUNNIGLE: No, I didn't. I didn't choose to. I tried to be the best administrative officer I could be everywhere I went. Not in Ecuador, because there I was a GSO, but everywhere else I sat on a country team. So I knew what was going on from then on, all the way until my last post: Paris, but I kept my place, which is I tried to be a good administrative officer. There were issues of course; the political issues and other issues bumped up against what I did, but I didn't get directly involved. Frankly, there wasn't much going on in Ecuador. .

Q: How did Guayaquil fit into the picture?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was a fairly large consulate; terrible place to live. I got along pretty well with the admin officer who would spend time with me in Quito. I had a good friend from my junior officer class who was stationed there as an economic officer. It was an active consulate. But there's a big difference in Ecuador between people who live on the coast and those that live in the mountains and Quito itself. The Andean Mountain regions are dominated by many people of European descent, although the large majority of the population are native Ecuadorians. So, I didn't get involved with Guayaquil very much; I supported them, but that's all.

Q: Were drugs an issue when you were there?

MCGUNNIGLE: There was a small DEA office; but no, it was not a major issue to my knowledge. The big issues were in the neighboring countries: Colombia had a big issue with it and to some extent in Peru, but not in Ecuador. I mean it was very minor.

Q: How did you--as a Peace Corps alumnus--view the Peace Corps operation in Ecuador?

MCGUNNIGLE: Favorably. We had an affinity for them. We spent a lot of time with the Peace Corps staff and volunteers. We would have volunteers over when they came to Quito from the provinces. Remember that we were among the very early volunteers. There weren't all that many former volunteers. So, we were chummy with them and liked them. They were like us. It was a good Peace Corps staff. Later on, when we were in Chile, we had the Peace Corps too.

Q: Did you get involved with American tourists or particularly young student adventurers?

MCGUNNIGLE: Not so much. We had a good consular section, so that would have been their function. He was a good consular officer. There were not many issues. Of course, everybody in Ecuador wanted a visa. They were kind of tough on that. But, by and large, no, I didn't get involved much with consular work.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: 1969 to 1972. At that time, for my next assignment Findley Burns recommended me for the Operations Center.

Q: Yeah. Well this is considered one of the ways youth can move into the senior ranks.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. There were many who later senior officers became. Officers like April Glaspie, Ray Seitz, Kim Pendleton, whom I knew later in Paris, and others. But there were some really good officers, and I felt honored to work with them. At that time I was beginning to feel pretty good about myself.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

MCGUNNIGLE: At that time the operations center had a senior watch officer, and associate watch officer, and an editor--they were all three FSOs. In addition to that, in the center itself there were others representing INR [State's Bureau for Intelligence and Research], someone from the military, and some good communications clerks.

The editor wrote the summaries for the Secretary based on cables and stuff from INR--agency stuff. He had to be code word classified. I was number two to the senior watch officer, who was the most senior officer. I was editor. We sort of switched around doing

that. We worked shift work: six days straight and three days off. You would work midnight to 8; 8 to 4; 4 to 12. We each got a parking space which I really enjoyed. That was the first time that I wasn't an admin officer or a consular officer.

Q: Did you get involved--even if it was a snippet--in historic incidents while you were there?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, I remember the first time I met the Secretary of State, Bill Rogers. A group had kidnapped our ambassador to Haiti, and we were handling it from the operations center by telephone with the DCM and others in Haiti, in Port-au-Prince, when Rogers came in. It was during the night, and he stood at my desk and talked to the post and discussed American policy and the hostage taking. Another time, the president of Chile was dying, and I was involved personally in getting the medicine that they couldn't find in Chile from a hospital in Washington, D.C. and sending that down. There was always something going on, like U.S. aircraft bombing Libya. Almost every day there was something in some part of the world, and especially if it happened after hours, it would be managed often from the operations center.

We would also established periodic task forces for different issues as they came up, and if they were big enough, they required a group. It was a lot of stuff, and it was heady for me. For a month I worked in the Pentagon, in the military command center, where there were representatives from State, CIA and DIA, and NSA (National Security Agency). That was good; different exposure in the Pentagon.

Q: Well, and then what?

MCGUNNIGLE: I went to work for John Thomas. He was deputy assistant secretary for operations. He reported to the assistant secretary, who reported to M (Under Secretary for Management). I worked for him as one of his three or four staff aides, and we did all the White House travel.

Q: Let's talking about the John Thomas operation and all. What were some of the issues that you would get involved with?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, he ruled over what was then the computer operations in the State Department--much simpler than today. He ruled over communications and things like building maintenance. But his real strong issue was White House travel, and he was very chummy with the guys in the White House during the Nixon years when I was there. We would go out on these trips with them--one of us, or more, depending on what kind of a trip it was. So that was the major focus of what we did. The rest of it was pretty trivial and pretty routine.

It was just, you know, "What goes on in this department? Who makes the posters? Who cleans the offices?" But with the White House travel I did a 26-day trip with George Schultz who was then the treasury secretary. I went to South America with Pat Nixon. I

advanced Nixon's last visit to Israel. I advanced his last visit to Brussels. We did a lot of that; just for a one-year tour.

Q: Pat Nixon. How did you find her, and how did her trip go?

MCGUNNIGLE: Timid. The trip went beautifully. I got that trip because I spoke Spanish and Portuguese, and we were going to the inaugurations of the president of Venezuela and Brazil. We went to Caracas and Brasilia. She (Mrs. Nixon) was very shy but pleasant.

We flew on what we then called "Air Force Two." We did the advance; went down for a week, came back, back again with Mrs. Nixon. Protocol (in the State Department) was involved, and we had our own plane, with some press in the back. Mrs. Nixon joined us for her birthday, I think between Venezuela and Brazil. I made all the birthday signs in Spanish.

Q: Well, were you aiming, particularly on a management job, for another posting? Were you looking towards anything in particular now for the next job?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. In the operations center, we had fixed hours because somebody would come in and replace you. It's a 24-hour, seven-day a week operation. But John Thomas loved to have his junior officers sit around at night, shoot the breeze, and go into his office when everybody else was going home. I didn't want to do that. We had three young children, a good marriage. I decided not to. I didn't want to spend more than a year there, which was unusual, but I asked him if I could leave. I said, "I enjoy working for you; you're an interesting person and a good boss, but I don't like these hours."

Q: Were you married at the time?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. I was happily married with three children. (We have been married for 56 years now.) There was another guy by the name of Chuck Baquet, who later became an ambassador, who had recruited me to work for John Thomas. He and I became quite close, and we decided to go to graduate school. Chuck and I went to Syracuse Univ. in the Maxwell School of Public Administration for a year. We both got our master's degrees. My wife Sally had gone up early, and found a great house. I could walk to the school and the campus.

In those days, you couldn't pick your own assignment. It was before they even had the microfiche to learn what posts were coming up. So I just waited for my assignment. We had a good year of school. We had very happy kids; I saw a lot more of the kids than I did when I was in Washington. Then I was told I was going to Colombo as an admin officer. That pleased us, and off we went.

Q: So, did you have to study the language?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. We only had one language officer in the embassy, who spoke Sinhalese. It is the language of the Buddhist majority. The second language is Tamil and of course a lot Sri Lankans spoke English. At that time maybe 20% of the people were Tamils; some Christians, some Muslims, but mostly Sinhalese. The Ambassador was Chris Van Hollen whose son is now the senator from the great state of Maryland. I worked for him, and the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) was Ray Perkins. Again, we hit it off very, well. We had a good relationship. There wasn't much going on. We had an unfriendly socialist government that was in the process of nationalizing tea plantations; British mostly. There was a small British population in the country that was being squeezed out. It was nice post. My wife and I had qualified as scuba divers when we were in Syracuse, at the YMCA, with Chuck Baquet. Arthur C. Clarke, the science fiction writer, lived two blocks from us in Colombo, and he ran a dive shop. We did a lot of scuba diving. The work was easy because there wasn't much going on. We didn't have a lot of visitors during the time that I was there. The Socialist government was voted out, and a more moderate, somewhat centrist government came in. Our relations began to warm up. That happened towards the end of my tour.

Ms. Bandaranaike, one of course remembers the name because a man who was appointed to be ambassador to go there--and he couldn't remember the name--I think was discarded. And then somebody else took it. I mean, that was before your time.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah. Well when Ambassador Chris Van Hollen left, he was replaced by John Reed--a former governor of Maine, a Republican. He was very good with names. In fact, just the other day, I was talking to someone about John Reed, and he said Reed was remarkable. He could remember all of very long Sinhalese names. He had it down pat. When Jimmy Carter was elected, he (Reed), as a political appointee, was asked to leave. I remember he called the DCM and me in, and he said, "I just got a letter saying I can't stay as ambassador any longer. Why is that?" "Well," we said, "Sir, you're a political appointee, and generally speaking, political appointees--not always, but usually--have to be replaced by a Democrat appointee, or someone from the other party." He even said to us, "But am I not doing a good job?" We said, "Oh, you're doing great job, but you have to leave." So he left. Later, when Reagan was elected, he returned. So, he was ambassador to Sri Lanka twice. He loved the place, and was a very nice man. But he was a political appointee.

Q: Were the Tamil Tigers doing their thing?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I'll tell you a short story. A few years before we got there--we got there in 1975--in the early seventies, there had been a series of violent attacks by young Sinhalese against police stations and post offices throughout the country. Many people had been killed. While I'm not sure what it was all about, but some say it was sparked by North Korea. These guys were just vicious killers. A police officer had come to protect the embassy because they were afraid the terrorists were going to attack some embassies. Some of these bad guys did attack our embassy, and one of the policemen was killed. In his defense of the embassy, (the police officer) was murdered. Right after that, we hired his son in gratitude. Later I had to fire him because we caught him stealing money from

the embassy! There were two classes of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Some Tamils were brought from India during the British administration to be tea pickers. The original group of Tamils had migrated on their own from India to Sri Lanka across an archipelago called Adam's Bridge. The Tamils were quite clever and many Tamils worked in the British colonial system. The British administration brought in more Tamils to live in the mountains where tea was grown. Tea is grown only at high levels in tropical countries. The two separate Tamil groups didn't mix very well. Some were there to work, and were happy to do it. The others felt that they'd been prejudiced against after independence. There was some truth to that.

The Tamils were used more than the Sinhalese by the British administrators. They were regarded as somewhat harder working, it is said. I don't know if it was true. When independence came, during the '40s, a lot of the Tamils got pushed out of government jobs and out of other kinds of enterprises. There was a constant resentment about that, but it didn't lead to violence when we were there.

Q: Was there much social life with Sri Lankans?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I wouldn't say so. Very little I would say. I served, you know, in India and Pakistan as well. There's a big gap between South Asians and folks like us-- Europeans. There were some exceptions, but by and large, the embassy pretty much stayed to itself. We mixed with other Europeans who represented their embassies in Colombo. Not a lot of embassies, but some. We did not socialize at all with the locals.

Q: Was the Soviet factor there?

MCGUNNIGLE: I guess the Soviets were there, but they weren't active. The British were right down the street from us. We saw a lot of them. The French were there, of course, and India. Pretty much we stayed to ourselves. But also, that was one of my shortest tours. It was just a two-year tour.

Q: Did we have the Peace Corps there?

MCGUNNIGLE: No Peace Corps. Peace Corps didn't flourish in South Asia. They were in India; they don't stay long. Indians didn't really want them. South Asians are proud people. They didn't want to be categorized as needing Peace Corps volunteers

Q: Any particular problems in your type of work?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. It was easy going. My local staff was competent. I had a B&F officer, didn't have a personnel officer, but had a good GSO. I was the post security officer. It was a small embassy, and not much going on. There was the issue of the socialist government, which we were cool towards, but that was what it was.

Q: Vietnam; we were involved in Vietnam.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. But we didn't hear much about it, frankly. Colombo is a long way from everywhere else, it seemed. Also, our ambassador was also accredited to the Maldives, but nobody went there either. (I went on vacation there.) I must say that it was my most boring assignment in the Foreign Service, except for the after-work activities.

Q: I would think the scuba diving would have been fun.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes it was. We had some incredible dives. The largest wreck in the world is in Sri Lanka. A floating dry dock sank during the war. Plus, the Japanese, during World War Two, reached the eastern shores of Sri Lanka, but didn't do much.

Q: They bombarded, I think, a...

MCGUNNIGLE: But not much. They sank a British carrier off the coast. The diving was great. I remember an American Jesuit priest, who lived in a town called Batticaloa on the east coast of Sri Lanka, who came to see me. He said that during the war--he had been there since 1942--he had seen a French ship off the coast which was being pursued by a Japanese submarine. The French ship, in order to avoid being torpedoed, had come into the harbor of Batticaloa and ran up against the reef and sank. He said the wreck is right there in the harbor, but no one has ever dived on it. Maybe you should go over and dive on it. So the economic counselor, the public affairs officer, and I went over with our wives, and we dove on the wreck. It was very interesting. The water was beautiful with lots of underwater sea life.

Q: Well, from this idyllic spot, where did you go?

MCGUNNIGLE: I had worked, as I said, for John Thomas. One of John's deputies was Ray Hunt who replaced John Thomas when John moved up to be Assistant Secretary for Administration. Ray had been my boss for a short time. As you probably know, Ray was later assassinated.

Q: He was in Rome, and he was part of the Palestinian, I mean in the multilateral Sinai support.

MCGUNNIGLE: He lived in Rome, and he was shot in his driveway. Anyway, Ray called me and said, "I understand you're coming up for a reassignment." I had already been in touch with ARA [now known as the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs], and they wanted me to go to Costa Rica as an admin officer. But Ray called me and said, "I would really like it if we could have one Foreign Service officer in the regional finance center in Bangkok. Everybody else there is either the financial type or the computer type." Since I liked Ray so much, I agreed to take the assignment. It was a mistake; a terrible job. There was nothing going on. We were slowly moving, automating, and centralizing finances for all of the Asian posts. I was involved in visiting Sri Lanka and Nepal to automating them. We handled a lot of money, but for me it was boring. After I had been there a year and a half, I called Washington and said, "You know, I recommend we abolish my job. I don't have anything to do here." The Department agreed, and told us

a job had just opened in Santiago, Chile. I grabbed it, and off we went. I didn't like Bangkok. It was post-Vietnam. There were some drug problems in the country.

Q: It wasn't a good place to have kids, was it?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. not at all. But the one blessing was that Sally had a good job in the refugee office dealing with refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Q: I mean, I just went there one time for a consular conference, and it was all fun and games. But to be in a, sort of, sex center is not particularly interesting.

MCGUNNIGLE: I had teenage daughters by this time. I just didn't think that was a good place to be. There's not much to tell about Bangkok, except stuff I did with the kids and the school. Traffic was horrible. You could spend an hour and a half getting to the kids' school. It was choked canals, busy streets, and all that stuff. I grabbed Santiago, and I loved it. When I got there George Landau was ambassador and Chuck Grover was DCM and we all got along very well. It was just a lovely place.

Q: You were in Santiago from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: I was there for three and a half years. I got there January of '79 and left in the summer of '82. I became president of the International School Board. Again, we had issues with Chile, mostly involving the Allende assassination and the Pinochet takeover. We blew hot and cold with Chile for a long time, depending on who was in the White House. It was a big issue.

Q: Kissinger was implicated, although I mean rather dubiously, in the Allende killing.

More likely it was just a nod. We'll probably never know. But if you ever saw the film "Missing" with Jack Lemmon, there were reasons to suspect that we had --if not actively involved--given our blessing. Then when Jimmy Carter became president, well, we were pretty cool toward the Chileans. Evidence had been developed that strongly indicated that the assassination of a guy named Orlando Letelier (referring to the September 21, 1976, car bombing, in Washington, D.C., of a leading opponent of Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet). He was blown up near Sheridan Circle, along with his American assistant. Apparently, an American who was involved was arrested, and he was apparently working under the direction of the head of Pinochet's secret police. The Department felt they had the goods on him. We have an extradition treaty with Chile, and we activated it. We asked that he be extradited, having been implicated in a murder in Washington, D.C. It went to the Supreme Court of Chile, and the Court ruled, no; they weren't going to give him to us. At that point, I remember George Landau flew to Washington, then called the Embassy; the DCM and I got on the phone. He told us that the Department and the White House had decided to curtail our activities in Chile as a way of indicating our displeasure. We closed the Peace Corps; we closed the USAID

mission; we closed the military group. I was involved in closing all those guys down. Furthermore, we lost some of my own staff. I lost my secretary and the security officer--I only had one security officer, and they took him away. I remember calling someone on the desk in Washington saying, "You're taking the security officer? Why?" He said, "Yeah, we're going to show them." I said, "Oh yeah, that's really going to show them. Teach them a lesson." So, we reduced the mission considerably, and then got on with life.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Chileans?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. Well, with the local staff I did. Again, it was a smaller embassy. I had some good GSOs and some good B&F officers, but I was actively involved with the Chilean staff of the embassy. But on a higher level I was not, in large measure because nobody was. We were arguing that these guys were bad government people; we were friendly with our neighbors, of course. We joined the Prince of Wales Club and the Chilean Country Club; we had friends there, played tennis, and used the pool. Even others in the embassy--political officers and others--were also not encouraged to get to know people too well in the government because it was a Pinochet government through and throughout.

Q: What was your impression of Pinochet and his support staff and all?

MCGUNNIGLE: They killed people. We were aghast at some of the things. The killings were over by the time I got there, but if some of those scenes from the film "Missing" (a 1982 American historical drama film directed by Costa-Gavras) were accurate, there were people being chased through the streets. Two Americans were killed that we know of. It was a brutal takeover. I sensed that most middle-class Chileans approved of it because they saw that the government of Allende was getting chummy with Cuba; other socialist countries were coming in; things were nationalized.

Q: I mean he was forming, sort of, his own left-wing militia, from what I understand.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, Allende. It was one of these times when a third party swung the election. He was elected, without a majority of the votes, only because the two other moderate parties didn't get the numbers. It was a messy situation. Again, it was a lovely place to live and a good school. I was president of the school board. The kids did well there. Our children left there speaking Spanish. It was very nice, but my responsibilities were diminished when we reduced the size of the embassy.

Q: Who went to the school? Were Chileans at the school?

MCGUNNIGLE: It's a great school. It's called "Nido de Aguilas" ("Eagle's Nest" International School) and Chileans and all our other embassy staff's children through high school were there. It was wonderful because everybody was mixed together. There were Chileans even on the school board. Nice people. Your average middle-class Chilean is a pretty nice person. We had an American principal who I hired. But again, our relationship was in decline. It wasn't until later, when Pinochet was removed, that the embassy got

bigger. Peace Corps was there for a while. We sent our two daughters to go live with Peace Corps volunteers for a few weeks in the summer, as a kind of summer job. We got to know the Peace Corps very well.

Q: How old were your daughters when you were there?

MCGUNNIGLE: They are very close in age. When we arrived, Margaret was 14, Jennifer was 13, and Michael was 11. It was a good time for them to be there--to escape Bangkok--and to be in this wholesome environment. In spite of the government, it was a good place to be.

Q: Well then, where did you go?

MCGUNNIGLE: We were in Buenos Aires at a Security Officers Conference when I get a message from the Department that I had been assigned to the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. I was really upset. So was Sally. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, the Admin Counselor there had been recruited to go back and manage administrative officers in personnel. He was being yanked out to take that job, and there was a sudden vacancy. It was offered to me, and it was a big job. There was a lot going on. I took it. Of course, we had already served in South Asia. We weren't worried about living in Pakistan. So we transferred to Islamabad. Our eldest daughter had gone off to college that year, but the other two were still in high school.

There was a lot going on. Ron Spiers was the ambassador and Barrington King was the DCM. We had first class officers throughout the embassy. The embassy, as you may recall, had been burned down in 1978 by a mob; people had died. We were rebuilding the embassy compound entirely. At that time the Embassy was in the USAID building; we couldn't even use [the grounds]. Only the Ambassador's residence was useable. His residence hadn't been finished when the mob stormed the embassy; everything else was burned down or destroyed. We had that issue. There was a huge military presence, USAID presence, and Agency presence--they were supporting our friends in Afghanistan, against the Russians. So, there was that. The military was selling F-sixteens to the Pakistanis. The USAID mission had blossomed. There was a lot going on, and for me it was a good assignment. My wife wasn't crazy about living in Pakistan. But she had an interesting job in the Canadian High Commission and later managed the new Wang Computers in USAID. We still had a large consulate in Karachi, a consulate in Lahore, and a consulate in Peshawar. It was a very good assignment, and I enjoyed it a lot.

Q: Well, did the conservative movement affect you all? I mean on our operations.

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, only in in fact that we had to support them. Not in terms of my job. I wouldn't say that.

Q: Well, I'm just wondering, did you have the equivalent of "terrorist" problems?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, there had been that mob that had burned the embassy down, but that was a mistake. It was a terrible mistake.

Q: Does it tie into what happened in Iran?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. It was actually a group of anti-establishment Muslims in Saudi Arabia had attacked Mecca, and the Pakistani radio said it had been the Americans. Then a mob came to the embassy from a neighboring town and burned it down. We lost two Americans, two Pakistani staff, and some of the terrorists died--we don't know how many. It was a mistake. As it happened, in the neighboring town of Rawalpindi, there was a bicycle race going on that day and everybody had gone there. But the university was in Islamabad, between Islamabad and Rawalpindi, and the university students came up as a big mob. I remember British and Canadian friends of ours who had seen them march by on the way to our embassy. It was a huge mob, and the Pakistani guards at the embassy had fled, wisely. They were Frontier Guardsmen, Pakistani Army. The mob just went over the fence. The staff--those who weren't able to get away before the mob got there and set the building on fire--moved to the communications area. Everybody was in the communications area, where there's a hatch in the roof so you can escape if necessary. A marine went up the ladder to the hatch to look around and see what was going on, because there are no windows in the communication section; he was shot in the head--fell down dead into the communication room. Another American army warrant officer died; He was overcome by smoke in an apartment house we had in the compound. Two Pakistani staff died. Others were injured, jumping out of windows and things. It was a mess.

But terrorism itself, we were careful about. It really hadn't arisen. We were with the Pakistanis. At that point we were supplying the military. It was a happy marriage--didn't lead to the best of outcomes, but at that time it was big.

Q: Did you get involved in support of our operations in Afghanistan?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I don't know if you saw the film "Charlie Wilson's War," but we were moving things across the border. There were a lot of mountain passes between Pakistan and Afghanistan, most of which were open. We used to go to look down into Afghanistan, and we used them to move equipment into Afghanistan. Eventually, of course, the Stingers [anti-aircraft missiles] were sent in. There was an element of the USAID mission in Pakistan that also was putting in non-lethal sorts of aid: trucks, donkeys, things that could be used for the Mujahideen economy. There was a lot of aid going in--both through the Agency (war stuff), and USAID (foodstuff), and other things--but I was not involved. I would never have been involved,

Q: How did you find the staff there?

MCGUNNIGLE: All men, no women. They were so so; but we had a lot of American staff. We had five GSOs and a couple of personnel officers. I really enjoyed most of those posts where I could get close to the locals. I was not close to the FSN [Foreign

Service National] staff in Pakistan because most things were done by Americans. We had [local] staff, of course, but it wasn't the intimate kind of relationships I was used to having with local people, so we didn't see much of them. If you read any books about the Raj and the British period in that part of India, you weren't chummy with the local people. I knew a few bankers, and we'd go to their houses; men and women were separated at social occasions. Every house had a perimeter room. If you went to a Pakistani house, the women would go into that room. Social life was not great.

Q: After that, then what?

MCGUNNIGLE: Then when we went to India. Matt Gurlach was the executive director for South Asia at that time. We just wanted to do another tour in South Asia. We liked it. I was able to nail the same job in New Delhi, working for John Gunther Dean and DCM Gordon Streeb. We had a good staff again. But there was not much going on in India. There was a lot going on in Pakistan, but not in India. They were so chummy with the Soviets, which had a huge embassy in New Delhi. We were not involved much. I think there was only one issue-- it was a supercomputer that they wanted to buy from us to predict the monsoon. We wouldn't sell it to them because we were afraid the Soviets would get the technology. It was a pleasant assignment.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: From '85 to '88. John Gunther Dean was also a special kind of guy to have worked for.

Q: How did you find him?

MCGUNNIGLE: Okay. I mean, it didn't bother me. Both there, and later in Cairo. I mean, we got along well enough that when there was a gap in the DCM job, I was the acting DCM in Delhi for about six weeks or something. We get along, but he wasn't my favorite guy. I heard later that he wouldn't leave the post when his tour was finished. Have you heard that about?

Q: Oh yeah. I've interviewed him.

MCGUNNIGLE: Oh, you have? All right. I'm sure he's got his own story. We were okay. He'd been Ambassador in five countries.

Q: Yeah. He also got shut down in Vietnam.

MCGUNNIGLE: When he was in Lebanon, they tried to get him with a rocket; it bounced off his car. He used to tell us those stories. I was very chummy with the DCM-- Gordon Streeb. In fact, I like to think I was his favorite guy. We got along very well. There were things going on, but nothing monumental, frankly.

Q: How did, you deal with the consulates in Calcutta, Madras...

MCGUNNIGLE: Bombay, now Mumbai; Madras, now Chennai; and Calcutta, now Kolkata. I would go out to them at least once a year to see what was going on in the administrative side.

Q: How did they all fit in? Did you feel it was sort of a cohesive unit there of all these consulates?

MCGUNNIGLE: I guess. We had three consulates in Pakistan as well. During the sixties, before India really had its agricultural revolution, which improved crop production greatly, we used to sell a lot of food to India. The deal was that we would be paid in rupees, which could not be converted. As a result, in the '60s, '70s, and even up until Daniel Moynihan was ambassador, we had huge piles of excess rupees in India. So the embassy in Delhi and the consulates flourished because we had all this money. The Department had no trouble spending it. We had a regional medical center with a hospital in Delhi. We had three doctors, a bunch of nurses, and people would come from all over South Asia to be treated. At one point, after I got there, there was a furniture factory in the embassy to supply furniture to other posts because we had that money. There were a lot of elements of the U.S. Government that were there that wouldn't have been there otherwise if it hadn't been for all that money. The Library of Congress, the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service], and a whole bunch of agencies were there. We had all that dough, and when Moynihan was ambassador, he thought that was outrageous. So he wrote, supposedly, the largest check written by the U.S. Government, and gave most of the money back to India. There was so much money that we couldn't even spend the interest on it. We still had a lot of staff.

Q: I remember we were getting airline tickets going from someplace other than in India to someplace also not to India, but we were paying for the tickets in New Delhi.

MCGUNNIGLE: The reason was that Pan Am [Airlines] was still operating to India at the time. They wanted the rupees to run their local operation--to pay their own staff. We gave them rupees in large amounts, and they would issue us tickets that were denominated in dollars. Pakistan benefited from that too. We could go to India and do that. So, people were taking the QE2 [Queen Elizabeth cruise ship] home, at very great expense. A lot of that was going on until we ran out of the money. U.S. Senator [William] Proxmire used to write a column called the Golden Fleece, in which he exposed government waste. He didn't know where the money came from; he just knew that we were flying, buying expensive ship tickets, and things. So, they stopped doing it. For a while you could benefit from those excess rupees. One of my staff in Pakistan took the QE2 home to the west coast--virtually free. We had all this money, but then it dwindled.

The Indians could be very difficult in business. We had an FBO [Foreign Buildings Office] engineer come out to build two duplexes houses for senior officers. They would have been beautiful homes if they had been built properly. They were just a mess. The FBO guy was apparently an alcoholic; didn't do a very good job. One was finished, and it was just awful. The doors wouldn't close, the wiring was exposed. It was the worst job

I've ever seen. But we took possession of one of them, and we wouldn't pay him for the other one because it was the same terrible workmanship. So the Indian contractor occupied it, and wouldn't let us into the house. I said, "This is crazy! We paid." I mean, we'd given them some advance money. I tried to make a raid on the house to take it back from this contractor.

John Gunther Dean wouldn't let me do that. Later, we had a little bit of money left from the funds we had not given back to the Indian government. We decided to build a new USIS [U.S. Information Service] center in Calcutta. We sent an FBO guy down to do the job. He didn't like the contractor and was going to terminate the contract. That scared me because I knew what had happened with these houses and how things could turn out to be very difficult. So, I asked FBO to remove him. I called Washington, and said, "Send me another FBO representative because this guy is going to extremes. He doesn't understand the Indian culture." So, he was fired, another guy came in to finish the job, and he was a success.

Q: The Indian bureaucracy, particularly in that era is widely known as being bad. How did you find it?

MCGUNNIGLE: Awful. I mean, terrible, just terrible. Silly. Picayune. They would deliberately slow things down just to show you they could do so. I used to have to go to the Foreign Ministry at least once a month. I practically begged this young Indian Foreign Service Officer to release our things. He just found it kind of fun to not do it. It was a constant struggle. I was a little more forceful than other people in the embassy, who were somewhat more appropriately diplomatic. I tried to struggle with some of these guys, and didn't prevail, usually, because most folks didn't want to ruffle any feathers. I got along with the front office very well--I was acting DCM. Still, I was a little tougher than they wanted me to be.

Q: Well, this was known as a challenging assignment.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. While I was there Casper Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, came on a trip. He was accompanied by some people from the bureau—Arnie Raphael, for one, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia. I had known him when I worked in the operations center, and we'd seen each other over the years. He recruited me to go to Cairo.

Q: What did they recruit to you for?

MCGUNNIGLE: To be admin counselor in Cairo. That was an interesting assignment. It was one of the biggest posts. I wanted the job; I traveled to Cairo, and was interviewed by Frank Wisner and the DCM Jock Covey and landed the job. Then the officer I was replacing decided that since he couldn't get the European assignment he wanted, he persuaded the ambassador to let him extend in Cairo for a year; therefore I didn't get the job. I then decided to extend in India for another year. Before he left, Frank Wisner still wanted me to come to Cairo. Frank went to the Department and said, "Assign Jim

McGunnigle." The panel turned him down because I had benefited from home leave by extending in Delhi: plus the panel wasn't happy with my intended assignment. So Frank Wisner persuaded George Vest [the Director General] to go to Delhi to interview me. He did. It happened that my wife was having a cooking class for Embassy wives, with a Chinese cook, at our house that day. George was charmed. He went back to Washington and overruled the panel and I got the assignment to Cairo.

Q: So, you were in Cairo from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: From '88 to '91. We had three DCMs. I was acting DCM for a while. There were always gaps. It was an interesting assignment.

Q: Well it is our biggest embassy, isn't it?

MCGUNNIGLE: At that time, yes. .

Q: Well, tell me. It's big mainly because of aid, isn't it?

MCGUNNIGLE: There is a large USAID mission there--in a different building. The embassy had been burned, and it was being rebuilt, slowly. Just before I got there, they finished the first 15-story tower, and we were slowly getting ready to build another tower. We were about to move the ambassador, who was living in the DCM's house, to an apartment in the first tower. We were also building a new office for USIS in the compound. It was very confusing. The real estate issue was a big deal. When [Gamal Abdul] Nasser took power, he beat up on a lot of foreigners. From them, and often their houses. A man came to see me and said, "Oh, Sadat decided to give some of the houses back, not the businesses." Sadat was giving the houses back, but when the embassy was burned down, years before, the Egyptian government had given us this guy's house and it became the American Center. The previous owner of the building housing USIS came in and said, "I just went to the foreign ministry--or the government--and asked for my house back. They said, "We can't give it to you because we gave it to the Americans." So, he came to see us. It's a beautiful home in Garden City, which is the classiest part of Cairo. He said, "Can I have my house?" I said, "You know, we're not going to need it because we're going to move USIS on to the compound". I went back to Washington, and asked, "Can we give the guy his house?" We had gotten it as compensation. The Department said, "Give him his house." There were a lot of stories like that in Cairo.

Q: What was your impression of the USAID operation there?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was very large and very well run. Marshall Brown was the USAID Director. I think they did a fine job, as far as I could tell. It was mostly a cash transfer. There wasn't much out in the field. We still had a consulate in Alexandria, but I don't even think there was a USAID representative in Alexandria. There was also had a big military program.

Q: We had the military, but also, we were doing things like sewage replacement, weren't we?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was big.

Q: Today is the 6th of February 2018 with Jim McGunnigle. You were in Cairo there as the minister counselor?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, I was the senior admin guy out there. It was a good tour. Frank Wisner pulled some strings to get me the assignment--which was a good assignment, but very difficult,

Q: I mean, in context, this certainly at the time was the largest embassy that we had going. It had complexity and everything. The one thing you didn't have was a war going on. We were involved in a huge aid project; there were problems in the Sinai, and the rest of the substantive side.

MCGUNNIGLE: On the management side, we had nine RSOs [Regional Security Officers], three B&F [Budget and Finance] officers, and three personnel officers. There were about 12 GSOs [General Services Officers]. The Administrative section had 100s of employees, including Egyptian staff. Managing all of that was difficult. On the substantive side we had some very good officers in the political and economic cones-- Ryan Crocker was political counselor. We had very good DCMs, and a great ambassador. From a management standpoint, it was very difficult.

Q: Well, one of the things--I was in personnel way back in the Middle Ages. We noticed that if you had a post, such as London, where if we had a personnel problem, we would think, "Well they can take care of them--they speak the language and all that." One or two, maybe. But all of a sudden, we were staffing practically whole outfits with problem cases. I would think that in Cairo that would be somewhat the same thing. A little different background, but if they got so many people there, it shouldn't cause a problem. But you know, you reach a certain number of difficult people.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yeah. Jumping ahead to my next assignment, which was Paris. I could have managed the Paris administrative section if I had had my brain removed. It's because there were competent people. In Cairo, the middle management staff itself was problematical. Then you add to that the circumstances that we had a lot of real estate and were building a new embassy.

Q: We were talking about the staffing.

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. It was difficult. There were huge numbers of people. The USAID mission and the military group were large. There were some very senior people, but a lot of problems. Housing was substandard, and it was difficult to find good housing. Many parts of Cairo are run down. There was rent control, so buildings weren't being taken care of very well. When we were inspected [by the State Department's Inspector General],

those problems were reflected in the inspector's report. Somehow, I think, some of the inspections that I've been through did not take into consequence the circumstances in which you were operating. It was just, "These are the rules; this is how it's supposed to be". If it's not that way, you're doing something wrong." I don't see how you can compare Paris and Cairo, for example. Or London and some of our African embassies-- it's just impossible. At least the inspection I went through--that was not considered cause for a greater understanding of some of the issues that we had to deal with. We had deaths. A lot of people got in trouble. It was very difficult. I think one of the reasons that I went on to Paris was, in part, because the Foreign Service--at least the NEA Bureau--recognized how hard it was to manage Cairo.

: Well, let's just take some of the particulars. Did you find that you had in that large group of people a superfluity of either alcoholics, people with mental problems like depression, or things like that? Or was it just the work?

MCGUNNIGLE: There may have been, but it was not obvious. No, there wasn't any form of temporary phenomenon. It was just that not a lot of good up-and-coming junior administrative officers--GSOs and so forth--wanted to go there. We had very few FSOs who came into the administrative section. At other posts that I had been in, we had bright, young FSOs who had chosen admin as a calling. That was rarely the case during my Cairo tour. But to be fair, there were some notable exceptions.

Q: Well, it wouldn't be a good place to go. A young administrative officer has got a damn good chance to go in and be the sole administrative officer at another post; he or she learns on the job and gets experience and all.

MCGUNNIGLE: We didn't have that benefit. For example, when I got to Paris--the next post--every one of my administrative officers, GSOs and B&F officers, were junior FSOs, and they knew their stuff. They had chosen admin, it wasn't just the only job they could get. They could do other things, and did, but they chose admin. In part because they were on a Paris tour, but they were also top officers. That was not so much the case in Cairo. In addition we had to deal with the issues on the ground--what it means to live in Egypt.

Q: What did you figure was your major problem?

MCGUNNIGLE: Housing was a big problem because things just didn't work well. To understand the history of management, probably throughout Cairo, especially in the embassy, is to know that King Farouk and other monarchs in Cairo had imported hundreds, if not thousands, of Europeans to do skilled work in Egypt. Fellaheen (that is to say the Egyptian farmers) very rarely did anything but farm. So, when Nasser took power--followed by others, including Sadat-- many skilled workers fled the country. As a result, the FSNs were nice people, fun to be with, but not very good at skilled work. There had been 100,000 Jews in Cairo alone. They were all gone. There had been Armenians, Greeks and Italians. There was a huge Catholic Cathedral in downtown Cairo. When I arrived, it was virtually empty because the Italians had all left. The

consequence was that vacuums were created in the skill trades and filled by Egyptian farmers essentially--or maybe not all farmers, but people who did not have a tradition of skills that we needed in the administrative section. We had a big problem.

Our 200 drivers were not very good. We had one instance, in which one of our drivers got in an altercation at a crossroads with the son of the prime minister of Egypt. They had a fist fight. As a consequence, the prime minister called the ambassador and said, "You've got to do something about that driver." So the Ambassador called me, and said, "Jim, I want you to talk to the drivers about their behavior." My senior FSN, who was a pretty capable guy, and I talked to the drivers in two groups of a hundred each. I had written--what I thought was--a very persuasive speech about working for the U.S. Government, what that meant. I had it translated into Arabic by my staff. I said "I know it's hot out there, and I know you lose your patience. I know some of the other drivers you have to contend with are a problem. But you do represent the United States of America, and we think it is important for you to understand that. Even if you get into an accident, we'll help you out. We understand. Try to behave as if you represented the embassy." One driver stood up in that crowd and said to me, "I don't care what I represent. If anybody messes with me, I'm going to do duke him one." I was flabbergasted. After a couple of these sessions, Ambassador Frank Wisner asked me, "How did it go?" I said, "Fine. They all understood." When we met President Bush at the airport, the embassy fleet looked like something left over from the demolition derby. Every car had dents or broken windows. It was just terrible. Terrible drivers; traffic in Cairo is impossible. We had to contend with these things at all levels, in all parts of administration.

Q: Well, driving is one part. How about housing?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well again. Anybody who didn't have children lived in downtown Cairo. The international school was in the suburbs, about 40 minutes from Cairo. If you had children, we would find housing for you in that community. If not, you lived downtown--as, my wife and I did. We could get pretty good housing near the school. But in Cairo itself, which was a city that had been grand at one time, there were a lot of old turn-of-the-century condominium apartments; totally rent controlled. Landlords did no repairs because they couldn't raise the rents and make a decent living from their real estate. As a consequence, we had to do all their maintenance work for them. Of course, the rental prices were low because they couldn't raise prices for us either. Every place we rented needed a lot of work. The general services staff would come to fix up the apartments, but these were guys did not have a tradition in carpentry, setting tiles, that sort of thing. It was a constant problem dealing with staff that meant well but didn't have the needed skills, who were trying to fix up buildings that were completely abandoned, effectively, by landlords.

Q: Well did you find yourself in competition with our USAID projects for skilled labor?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. I'm not certain about the USAID program, but my sense was that in large measure it was turning over money. We had, of course, a lot of USAID contractors

in addition to USAID direct-hire staff. The motor pool was joint USAID/EMB, and large parts of the administrative section worked closely with the USAID administrative section--not in everything, but in large measure. We did not have a problem with that.

Q: Well, were you training a useful cadre?

MCGUNNIGLE: We did, but it was all on the job training. In learning how to do things, there are often mistakes. Certainly they were getting better. They weren't inferior in any way. It was just that they didn't have the tradition of work as you would in places like Germany, France, or the United States. They had to learn the skills, which were brand new to them. They were clumsy--not because they were innately clumsy, but because they just didn't know to do the work. When I went to Paris, our local staff had been doing whatever they did for generations! That was not so in Cairo. Therefore, during the inspection, to no one's surprise--not to my surprise, in any case--there were people who told the inspectors they weren't happy with their quarters; things didn't work well, and they were constantly having workmen come around who didn't often solve their problems. I knew that, and I told the inspectors that. It was a very tough inspection. It didn't turn out well. I was very upset. Sherman Funk, who was the Inspector General, had been to Cairo and met me. The inspection was criticized by other members of the inspection corps.

Q: Well, what happens when you have an inspection that is sort of going after you for things that you have no control over? I mean, can you...

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes you can. You can argue and quibble; but that sounds very sounds very defensive. It's so much fun to be told that your administrative section is doing a great job. But if someone says you're not doing great job, you sound falsely apologetic. Once somebody slaps you with that tar, it's hard to get out of it and keep your own sense of being. I found it very difficult. The DCM who met with me and the inspectors for final briefing told me it was the most difficult day of his career. I was really up in arms, as the inspectors didn't agree with me in some respects, and it was really a torturous experience. I've been inspected in at least six embassies without any criticisms, but not in Cairo. It was a difficult and painful time. They sent out an inspector to inspect the inspection. He asked me if I would like to write up a criticism of the inspection, which he was willing to do. I told him not to do it because I knew the chief inspector, and I didn't want to damage him if he was up for an Embassy. (Later, he did get his Embassy.) I felt that inspection teams should be better briefed on the circumstances of the post are inspecting. They should know that every post is different.

Q: Did you have any particular problems with the American staff?

MCGUNNIGLE: I mean, in the sense that there were very few good officers. .

Q: I've been in places where you ended up with people who go to a post with a different agenda. I was in Vietnam, and an awful lot of people had personnel problems or personal problems. They were going into a war to get away from their home. And...

MCGUNNIGLE: Unless they steal or punch the ambassador in the nose, you can't get rid of those officers. I mean, that's one of the issues of government. Generally speaking, if you're stuck with a poor officer there's very little you can do. If they show up in the morning and sit at their desk for part of the time that satisfies the government requirements. I understood that Cairo was not considered a great assignment because the housing was substandard, and traffic was mind boggling. There were some deaths in the embassy; kids on drugs--lots of problems. We got through it. Frank Wisner and the DCMs were supportive. But it was a strain for all of us.

Q: Were you there when a young woman--my daughter used to baby sit her, a colleague's daughter--died of poisoning? They were fumigating in Cairo...

MCGUNNIGLE: I remember something about that. We had a death caused by malfunction of the gas water heater in the bath room. That was one case. We had a young man who died in the desert; overdosed. We sent a couple of families home because of drugs. I don't know that particular case you mentioned.

Q: How long were you there?

MCGUNNIGLE: Three years. I'm glad I did it. It was a test, and I felt that I did okay.

Q: Do you think you had any progress?

MCGUNNIGLE: Not much. We had a lot going on. When I arrived, they had just finished a 15-story office building. We built a wall around the compound, and there was another office building to be torn down. That started right after I left. There was a lot of building going on, and that was part of the problem. We had two FBO [Foreign Buildings Office] managers there to manage the construction. The company that had started to build the second 15-story tower were fired because they couldn't get it done right. There was a Japanese company rebuilding the Cairo Opera House--just before I got there--they were hired to finish the job. There were stories throughout the history of the embassy of things that just went wrong all the time. My predecessor was a good officer when he was there. They were building a major residence for the ambassador--but when it was finished it had to be torn down immediately. It was unusable; nothing worked--water came pouring out of the walls. That was not uncommon in Cairo. So, you had to be prepared for that and we were. That's why the inspection was so...

Q: How about money? You know, payroll and B&F? How did that work?

MCGUNNIGLE: It was pretty good. We had a very seasoned senior B&F officer who knew his business. There was a lot of money coming in, and we managed it pretty well. There was no malfeasance, to my knowledge. It was big time money because the Reginal Finance Center in Paris was responsible for Egypt. It worked okay. After I left, there was a case of embezzlement from someone in Paris actually. We had so many accounts. We probably had a dozen bank accounts in Egypt for different things. It was complicated. Fortunately, we had a very good officer doing that job.

Q: Oh, well you were there from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: I was there from '88 to '91. I was there for the First Gulf War. That was a big issue because there were a lot of American businessmen and businesses operating in Cairo. Frank Wisner decided--as the war preparations began, and forces from Europe and the United States were mobilized--that there was no reason in the world for American businesses to abandon their efforts in Cairo. The Ambassador called a major meeting in the embassy, attended by probably a couple of hundred American businessmen, so the Ambassador could deliver a message to encourage American businessmen to remain in Cairo. Consequently, very few left, unlike other posts in the Middle East. There were no anti-American incidents during that period in Cairo at all.

Q: Well, we were on the right side of that war.

MCGUNNIGLE: That's right. It was the second Gulf war that was more questionable. During the first war there was no question that we were doing the right thing.

Q: How did you find working with the Egyptian government?

MCGUNNIGLE: Not good, not Bad. I actually went to protocol a lot, but that wasn't much of a problem. The problem there was some corruption. I wouldn't say very much, but there was a little bit of finagling to try to get me or the embassy to do things for them so they would be more cooperative. But it wasn't that bad. It was okay.

Q: Well then you left. Where did you go?

MCGUNNIGLE: Paris.

Q: Well, now, these are two major posts, but Paris is sort of...

MCGUNNIGLE: Half a brain; I could have done it with half a brain. It was so easy. The French are competent, very capable.

Q: Well there's nothing like working in Cairo. Anywhere else you go where you have competent...

MCGUNNIGLE: It was a tradition in the department that if you managed Cairo, and if there was a major European post available, they would try to get it for you. My predecessor, Nick Baskey, went to London after Cairo, and the guy before him went to some nice place. It was sort of "You've done a nice job. You've survived. Here's your reward." We loved Paris.

Q: You were there from when to when?

MCGUNNIGLE: From '91 to '95.

Q: What was the situation with France in those days?

MCGUNNIGLE: Very good. Good relations; no big problems. The CIA had trouble with something--they were caught meddling in something. I mean, what's not good about France? The French love us. It was a dream assignment, not just for me, but for almost everyone in the Embassy. Our first ambassador was Walter Curley, who had gone to Yale with Prescott Bush and was a big investor in New York City. He was married to someone from the great American industrial families. He had been Ambassador to Ireland. We got along fine. When Bill Clinton was elected, Pamela Harriman came out to replace Curley, who was sent packing as he was a Republican. I had almost two years with Pamela. During that time, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of D-Day, which required huge resources to make it possible for Bill Clinton and his whole team--and many other well-known Americans from Congress--to participate in the ceremonies in Normandy.

Q: Former president George Bush parachuted there, didn't he?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. He wanted to parachute with the Americans. I think he asked the 82nd Airborne if they would take him on a jump, but they wouldn't do it. They said, "No. You're too old." So, he jumped with a British parachute group. Yes, that's right. He was there. I met him in Cairo after we won the First Gulf War. He was a nice man. We were expecting a large delegation for the celebration. So, very early, before anybody else got organized, we took an Embassy team to Normandy. There were two large classy hotels in Normandy. We booked both hotels with enough rooms for all the White House visitors .

When the White House advance team arrived, we told them what we had already booked the hotels, but they said, "No way. Bill Clinton wouldn't want us to be in these expensive hotels. It's going to look bad." We said, "Well, we have to find a place for you guys to sleep and eat." They said, "Well, can't you build us a village?" We decided to go with this plan. We had a first class FSN by the name of Johnny Berg, who ran the travel section, who was responsible for the village project. We found a soccer field next to a school not far from Omaha beach, and rented the soccer field. Then we contracted with a French company to fill the soccer field with large mobile homes to house the advance team. It cost us probably three or four times more than it would have cost to stay in hotels, but it looked better. We named this little village "Camp Berg," for Johnny Berg, and raised an American flag. We had a mess hall and sleeping quarters; that was the American delegations base for the visit. Following the D-Day celebrations, Bill Clinton and his immediate group flew by helicopter up to Paris for a few days. Clinton, by the way, slept on an aircraft carrier offshore. It was an important visit, partly because of the Pamela Harriman connection. She had been one of the driving forces behind Clinton's campaign.

Q: Oh yes. How did you find Pamela Harriman?

MCGUNNIGLE: I liked her. She was tough. She fired some people, and I had to carry out her orders. She got rid of the cook at the residence, plus the residence manager. It was an elegant and Massive residence, by the way.

It had been given to us by the Rothschild family after the war. During the war it served as a Luftwaffe officers' club. It was a very elegant building. A series of political appointees as Ambassadors to France--many of whom, if not all, had considerable wealth-- put money into the residence . It was already a classy place when Ambassador Harriman got there. She came back from a trip to Zermatt once, called me up, and said, "I met an old friend at Zermatt, named Stavros Niarchos, and he asked me if I needed any money to run the embassy." She said, "I don't know, I'll check." But he gave her \$250,000 anyway. This is 1993. So, she called me up to ask if we could take the money.

I checked with Washington, and we weren't doing any business with Mr. Niarchos. So, we took the money. Under the rules, you can take donations, but then the money becomes the U.S. Government's property. You can direct its use, but it must be used in accordance with regulations. Therefore, we asked her what she wanted to do. She wanted to put a lap pool in the residence basement. It's a very old house. We asked FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) to come out to take a look at it. It was necessary to use chlorine in anything you swim in. So, they vetoed the project, as chlorine can affect the structure of old buildings. I had to go up and tell her that, in spite of the fact that she got us the money, she couldn't have the pool. She took it very well. She said, "Well, I guess I'll have to find something else to spend it on." So we bought chairs for moving showings, and we bought a new bathroom suite for her private quarters on the top floor. It was all done according to Hoyle. It was very interesting. I liked her, but she could be tough. I think she had a tough spine.

Q: Well, I've heard good reports from people who have served with her. She didn't make the social rounds. She was...

MCGUNNIGLE: We had a press officer who one day was gone. I said, "Where's what's-his-name?" Someone said, "Well, he disagreed with the ambassador in the country team meeting. He's gone." So, she could be tough. But if you were fair with her, and played the role you were expected to play--be an honest broker--then she was fine.

Q: Did you get any sort of a White House or political people who--maybe the niece of somebody who's important in Washington--assigned to Paris as a cultural officer or that sort of thing?

MCGUNNIGLE: No. Ambassadors, I think at major European posts, possibly others, are allowed to bring one political appointee staff aide. Pamela Harriman brought a woman by the name of Janet Howard, who had worked for her in Washington when she was in Georgetown. She was okay too. She was on staff but there were no others--she didn't throw any other, as I recall, political appointees into the mix.

Q: Paris, you know, has a very enticing sound, but so many people in the Foreign Service that go there are unhappy because essentially they don't get together as a family. Paris is so diverse, and there's so many things, it's sort of assumed, "Well, you'll go out and make your own friends." And often, they're left feeling rather isolated. Did you have that problem?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes we did. But it was funny, I just thought about that. I had forgotten this. If you were a junior officer assigned to Paris, single, you could have a wonderful time. But families that came with little kids—and if they were junior officers, Paris is very expensive—often found it not to their liking. They knew that they loved Paris. I always compared them to the children with their noses up against the window in a toy shop. It's all there, but you can't have it. My wife and I had finished putting our children through three expensive colleges.

Sally, my wife, got a job with the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development], which is a mission in Paris, and we were financially comfortable. We had a wonderful time in a \$2 million condo owned by the embassy. A lot of senior officers who earned their spurs got to Paris. Some people said, "Last assignment, you can go to Paris because you've been a good guy," and you're okay because you've got enough money. But not everyone was in that position. So, yes, there was kind of a gap between those of us who could afford it and those who could not. It was interesting. We had three missions: a very small one-person observer at UNESO, because we were on the outs with UNESCO at the time; a fairly large mission to the OECD, which was on the other side of town. By the way, I should mention her, I had one of the best DCMs I had ever worked for, whose name was Avis Bohlen. That was her fourth or fifth time to live in Paris. Her father had been the DCM, and then he was the Ambassador. She came back as a junior officer, and then she came back as the DCM. She was a very nice person who really knew Paris and the French. That was a good thing for me. I enjoyed working for her. She was there the whole time that I was there. In fact, the connection was that Averell Harriman ran the Marshall Plan in the Hotel Talleyrand with her father Charles Bohlen. So, the Ambassador's husband and the DCM's father had been good friends. They had that, sort of, Georgetown connection that was so common in those days.

Q: Were you there when Ambassador Harriman died?

MCGUNNIGLE: No, she died right after I left. The irony was that she couldn't have her own swimming pool at the Residence, and she liked to swim every day. She was getting on in years, but she looked pretty good. She was in the Ritz Hotel swimming pool when she had a heart attack and died right there in the hotel. But no, I had left by that time.

Q: Was it difficult working with the French? I think of French regulations and that sort of thing?

MCGUNNIGLE: No, nothing was a problem. The guy I worked with in protocol--we negotiated an arrangement that permitted our diplomatic spouses to work in Paris and French spouses to work in Washington. We had any number of diplomatic spouses employed on the French economy. Now, there were some catches. You couldn't keep your immunity for that work. The political counselor's wife was a lawyer; as a lawyer, if she broke a French law, she could not claim immunity--but in all other respects, she could. We did the same thing in the US. It was a major breakthrough to do that. There were just a handful of embassies at that time that had allowed their spouses to work. It was good. My wife worked in COCOM and later at OECD, so we were very happy.

Q: How did the consulates of our embassy fit into the system?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, we had three major buildings. We were in the embassy itself, which was the first building built by FBO in 1927. Across the Place de la Concorde was the Hôtel de Talleyrand, and that's where the consular section and other agencies were located. It was truly a wonderful building. USIS was in the same building. We had no problems with the consulate. They had a big workload, of course--not just the French, but people connected to France, and French speaking Africans. They had a lot of good junior officers. They were the ones with their noses up against the toy shop window. We didn't have any problems in Paris.

Q: How about--how many consulates were there in France?

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, many of the Consulates were closing at that time. Since then, I've learned that some consulates have been reopened. Right after we arrived, Vice President Dan Quayle came out for the opening ceremony for the Winter Olympics. Right after the Olympics, we closed the consulate in Lyon, because it was the closest one to Albertville, where the French had the Winter Olympics. Lyon closed, but we still had a consulate in Bordeaux. We had a consulate in Marseilles; one person in each place, or maybe two. We had a consulate in Strasbourg--not because we had consular work to do, but because the European Parliament was there. They were thinking about closing Bordeaux when I left. Since then, other Ambassadors have made a pitch, on the basis of commercial work, to keep those posts open. I think it was a good thing because we have a favorable balance of trade with France--the French don't mind buying American stuff, especially the high-tech stuff. We were doing good business in France. There was a big commercial section in Paris. They used the Talleyrand building for large trade shows. Of course, they've had to give up that building now for security reasons, as there's no setback. There had been an unsuccessful bombing attempt there once. The embassy now leases it to somebody--it's not a U.S. Government building now. Anyway, it was quite an experience. I never knew I had so many friends until they started to visit us in Paris. Curiously, when we lived in Pakistan we didn't have any visitors.

Q: Where did you go after Paris?

MCGUNNIGLE: I retired. I did some WAE [when actually employed, retiree work] jobs. I went to Algeria for a month, to Lisbon for three months, to Yemen for a couple of months and to Qatar.

Q: Let's talk about some of these. What did you do with the Middle Eastern thing? Yemen?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes, I first worked for the European Bureau. My wife and I bought property in the Azores on our first tour when I was a junior officer. We built a house in the Azores. So, EUR sent me to Lisbon to cover for the GSO for three months. Nothing was going on. Elizabeth Bagley Smith was the ambassador. That was fine. Later I trained a good friend of mine who replaced me in Paris, and he went on to become the executive

director of the NEA Bureau. I went over and I worked for him, and that's why I went to Algeria and Qatar. I was the admin officer in Algeria at the time when they were killing people in great numbers. It was unsafe. We weren't allowed to leave the compound. We had [Navy] Seals and tough guys from different units of the military there as RSOs effectively. I would be there for three months but never left the compound. None of us could; only the ambassador. So, you were just looking over walls into Algeria. Nothing was going on when I was there, except it was a strange place. Qatar was hot and uncomfortable.

Q: Could I go back to Qatar? I know when I was a vice-consul in Dhahran, we covered Qatar. There was nothing there. It was getting some oil, but it was not a big deal.

MCGUNNIGLE: Well, we leased an embassy there. There was a real estate deal going on because the embassy itself was too small. As you know, we had a base out in the desert, which was very valuable, especially during the Gulf Wars, both one and two. But we needed a new embassy. I was there for part of that work. We wanted to build one; FBO didn't want to do it. So, we leased a new embassy from one of the royal family in Qatar. We negotiated that when I was there.

Q: What have you been doing here, in the United States? You're retired here?

MCGUNNIGLE: Yes. The first ten years that I was retired, we were in the Azores most of the time; not exclusively, because we had a house in Washington, D.C. We went to the Azores every summer, and once we stayed there for a whole year. We built a house on a cliff overlooking the ocean.

Q: What's the weather like there?

MCGUNNIGLE: Wonderful. It never goes above 85 or below 60. It's a wonderful climate; it rains a lot. We love it. We speak Portuguese, and we built a beautiful home right on a property we bought in 1971. We have many Portuguese friends. We have a lot of visitors. We loved it.

Q: Okay. Great.

MCGUNNIGLE: Okay. Thanks so much.

End of interview