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**KENNETH H. SHERPER**

*Interviewed by: W. Haven North  
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**INTERVIEW**

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Sherper]

*Q: Today is November 10, 1998. The interview is with Kenneth H. Sherper, who retired from AID (Agency for International Development) in what year?*

SHERPER: August 1, 1994.

*Q: How long were you with AID?*

SHERPER: About 29 years.

*Q: Let's very briefly in a thumbnail sketch go over an overview of your career. We'll go into the details later, but just get a sense of where you worked and what your assignments were.*

SHERPER: In AID only?

*Q: Yes.*

SHERPER: I started with AID on September 12, 1965. I spent the first year actually in a studies program before going to Korea. I was in Korea for about five years. Following that I returned to the U.S. and I went into long-term training, during which I stayed about a year and a half. Then I had a Washington assignment beginning in 1973. I left Washington in October 1976 to go to Ethiopia. I worked in Ethiopia until the summer of 1979, came back for a brief home leave. The mission was closing there because of circumstances in Ethiopia. I left there and went to Lesotho as a Deputy Director and spent a little over two years in Lesotho. Then I went back to Washington in 1981. I was the Director of the Near East Technical Office, a position, which I held until 1986. It was an

unusually long period for Washington because we had a merger of the Near East and the Asia bureaus during the period. I saw the integration of the technical offices, which I headed. Then I went from Washington to Yemen as Director in February of 1987 and I was there until about June of 1990, when I came back to Washington. I again went back to head the Technical Office in the Asia/Near East Bureau. I did that for about seven months and was asked by the Administrator to take the counselor position, which I took from about 1991 until I retired in August of 1994, about three and a half years.

*Q: Let's go back to talking about where you're from, where you grew up, your early education, and anything in that period that might have suggested why foreign affairs, foreign assistance programs attracted you.*

SHERPER: I was born and raised in Minneapolis. I come from a family of five siblings. We were a very close-knit family. My life really started out a little bit on the rocky side in the sense that my father died in an accident when I was two years old. My mother was left with five children, ages 2-8, and had basically no resources to live on. So, we were on welfare, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). We sort of survived on that for the first several years. Whenever any of us got old enough, my brothers and sister, to get a job, we got a job. We went through the whole thing, all of us, from raking leaves and shoveling snow to delivering groceries and newspapers and working in gas stations. We did everything we could to help supplement our income and help our mother, who sort of managed the family. That's why I say I think we were a very close-knit family.

We sort of had to work together and keep things going. As soon as my oldest brother graduated from high school, my mother called the ADC social worker and said, "Take us off of welfare. We're going to do this on our own" even though we were still eligible. Most of us were in school and we could have received aid. She was a very independent person. She disliked being dependent on the state or anybody else. My oldest brother then, as soon as he graduated, worked two, sometimes three jobs. We kept going. As I look back, I don't ever feel that we were a needy family. We didn't suffer from want. We always had food on the table. It was spartan maybe and maybe it was basic. It was not fancy and maybe we only got one pair of shoes a year, but whatever we had we had. I never felt that it was inadequate. I'm sure my brothers and my sister also felt the same way.

The next sort of event, I think, that happened as I grew up was my older brother then became eligible for the draft. It was during the Korean War. The one thing my brother did ask for (and eventually received) was about a 90-day deferment from going into the military so that he could work until my sister, who was the next in line, finished her high schooling. She would start working immediately to keep our household together. My oldest brother went off to Korea. The rest of us were still working and went along. He was in the military for two years plus. The rest of us worked at these odd jobs. During the

summers, we worked on a farm belonging to our great uncle. That was very significant in the sense that we really enjoyed agriculture, particularly my twin brother, Keith, and the next oldest brother, the middle one. Even though we lived in Minneapolis, we became very interested in agriculture, having lived and worked on the farm during the summers and trying to earn money that way.

The three of us, the three youngest ones basically, all went to the only high school in Minneapolis that offered agriculture as a program. It wasn't in our regular school district, so we had to walk to that district. It was a little over two miles away, but we thought the sacrifice of walking it was worth it. So we all became interested in agriculture. When it came time to move on to college years, again, the three youngest boys all were interested in agriculture. We all went to college at the University of Minnesota. We could not afford to go somewhere where we had to be in residence. We had to live at home and commute to the university, which was just fine. I remember my brother Keith and I started university in the fall of 1953 after we graduated. At that time, it was on the quarter system instead of the semester system. The tuition was \$52 a quarter. We had saved enough money so we could go two quarters and then we had to quit because we couldn't afford to go in the third quarter. So then we went back to farming for a six-month period at what was actually the third quarter in the summer. We saved enough money during that period. We actually rented a farm. That was our first experience at farming on our own. We grew soybeans, oats, and hay. We didn't have the equipment, but we rented the farm and sold the grain and commodities to others. We had them come in and do the harvesting and so on. We would borrow equipment and so on. We fixed up the pasture fences, rented out the pastures and gave it to two people who were raising heifers.

*Q: How big was the farm?*

SHERPER: It was 160 acres. It was only a one-year lease. That's all we wanted to do because we wanted to get back to university. That was successful enough to give us the resources to continue going to school. That was supplemented with other work while we were in college. During the Christmas breaks my brother and I worked at the post office. I guess the pay was about 80-some cents an hour, but you could get an extra 10% if you worked nights after seven p.m. until about eight a.m. We would work straight through. We would try to get in about 12-15 hours. So, that gave us another 10% on our salary.

Now they have zip codes, but in those times, they called them "zones." They had zones and the city was divided up in very odd shapes. You had to learn the streets. When a letter came in, you had to know what zone it was in and then you would sort it, put it in the right pigeonhole hopefully. You had to take exams to do that. If you took that exam and you could pass that exam, you got another 10%. We were getting close to \$1 per hour, which was big money for us in those days. We would work anywhere from 12-15 and occasionally get in 18 hours. Sometimes they would be short of carriers, so we would

do sorting at night. Then we would carry mail during the day in order to get more hours and more money. You sort of look back at those times and think they were enjoyable.

Then I finished university and studying agriculture with majors in animal science and agronomy. After completing that, I was very interested in history, foreign affairs, even though our studies were in agriculture.

*Q: How did you hear about international affairs? You had not been exposed to that.*

SHERPER: I wouldn't say there was a deep interest. It was only when you read the newspapers and watch the news (It was just the international news.); there was no real specific incentive or push towards international affairs at the time.

I was very active in one of the farm organizations called The National Grange, which had a chapter on the outskirts of Minneapolis. We were very active in the youth programs and so on with that. Through that we had heard about an organization called World Affairs, Inc., which was run by the Quakers out of Philadelphia. They had something called the Foreign Affairs Program through the Granges. What it entailed was young people going around to different Granges and other community groups, church groups and so on, and talking to them about world affairs to increase awareness, to increase interest, to get people more involved in what was going on in the world. Keith and I signed up to do this one summer.

*Q: You were talking about world affairs?*

SHERPER: That's right. We had to do a lot of studying. We became sort of self-informed about what was going on. World Affairs, Inc. was very small, but they had a good library. They sent a lot of information to us. We had films and so on that we would take and show people. For about an eight-week period during the summer, my brother and I went to Western Pennsylvania and covered many of the counties, including a lot of very poor counties where there were coal mines, where people were not very wealthy and so on. We were put up in the houses of people. We didn't get paid for this. This was a voluntary exercise, but it was a way to do something that we were interested in.

*Q: What piqued your interest in this? Just sort of out of the blue you suddenly were getting involved in foreign affairs? Why did you choose that rather than something else?*

SHERPER: I don't have a good answer for that. I can't say that I had worldly exposure in my life prior to that, although there was a sort of self-interest. Even going out and doing this lecture tour in Pennsylvania was not something that I tied to world affairs as much as I did to doing something for communities and helping some people become more aware of an area that I thought was important for them to become aware of. I think what became

the serious interest in world affairs came a little bit later. I'll mention that when I get to it. That was the summer. I got one thing out of sequence, so I need to mention this now.

What happened after we graduated from university, we continued our studies. We had a question mark. My older brother who had finished a year earlier had decided he was going to go farming. We went and worked with him for about six months or so. Then we decided that we would go back to university and work on a master's degree. I keep saying plural here. When I do, it's Keith and me. We both went back and we studied ag economics at the University of Minnesota. We had minors in agricultural education. We really weren't sure what we wanted to do, but maybe teaching would be an interesting avenue. We did this for two years, continuing our work in various jobs that we could find to pay our own way through. Of course we had no other resources other than what we earned and occasional scholarships, research assistant work at the university during the summers, and so on. We finished our master's degree. It was at that point we weren't 100% certain what we wanted to do. I believe it was that summer we did our lecture tour in Pennsylvania.

By that time, it was election time. This was 1960. There was all this talk about Peace Corps. We, in the meantime, committed ourselves to help our brother on the farm and we were working with him on farming. He had rented a farm, as I mentioned. I became very interested in the idea of the Peace Corps and was not really sure where it would lead, but thought, "Well, why not send in an application?" We submitted applications for the Peace Corps in January of 1961. Peace Corps was not organized. President Kennedy had not yet been sworn in. They had made this campaign promise. There were thousands of young people around the country very interested in this concept, this idea, but we weren't really 100% certain that that's what we wanted to do. We really thought that maybe that was an option, so just sent in the application anyway. You could always turn it down. Then we went and helped our brother in farming in 1961.

They organized quite quickly. The Peace Corps commenced operation on March 1, 1961. It was actually, as I recall, the first bill that the President signed after taking office in January after the inauguration. It was about April or May when we got this letter from the Peace Corps, both Keith and I. They said that they wanted us to consider an assignment in the Windward Islands, St. Lucia. It was like going to training within the next three or four weeks. We told them that we were farming. We had crops to get in. There was no way we could leave that. We had made this commitment to work with our brother. So we turned down that offer. Then it was about two months later, probably about late June or July, they sent us again a request asking us to go to India. We talked about it. The training program for India started in October of 1961. So we decided to accept it.

I'm not sure that I have this in the right sequence, but in between the period that we got our undergraduate degree and went into a master's program, we joined the Army. We

were near the point of being drafted. So we joined the Army with this thing of where you put in six months of active duty and then you had five and a half years of reserve, a six-year commitment. We had put in our six months of active duty and we were doing our monthly reserve meetings on one weekend a month. After we had told Peace Corps that we would join them, we got this August or September 1961 that the Berlin Wall was built. They started calling up these reserve units. At the time, we were in a hospital reserve unit that set up field hospitals. Our unit was called up. We wrote to the Peace Corps and told them, "It looks like we have to go to Berlin. Sorry for the inconvenience of accepting your Peace Corps position, but Uncle Sam wants us for another job." The Peace Corps said, "Wait a minute." They had already sent us tickets to come to training. We had signed all the documents and so on that we would do this. There was a big jurisdictional battle between the military and the Peace Corps. They asked us to put in a file and appeal to our local draft board, which we did, and was denied. We tried a second time. It was also denied. Finally, there was intervention from Washington. Peace Corps and the Pentagon had discussions. They had never had this issue come up as to who would win this battle. I am not sure exactly what took place in Washington, but a policy was made at that time that, if persons volunteered for the Peace Corps, their military time could be deferred until later. Of course, later meant never.

*Q: So, you set the policy.*

SHERPER: Yes, sort of. It was kind of interesting because we figured that the military would win this battle. The way we found out is that after the draft board met, we didn't even know this, but there were reporters at the draft board. There was a knock on our door and it was reporters from "The Minneapolis Tribune." They said, "Well, you won. Peace Corps has won this battle and you're not going into the military." That was the first we heard of it. Of course they wanted pictures and interviews and that was on, of course, the front page of the Metro section in the Minneapolis paper the next day.

We went to training in Columbus, Ohio at Ohio State for rather intensive training from October for around eight or nine weeks.

*Q: What was the content of the training?*

SHERPER: It was a variety of things. There were continual tests and interviews. There were a total of 35 people in the training program. This was the first group to go to India and the request was for 25 people. The training basically focused on language, cultural studies, some on fitness, history of the region and the country. Of course, language was the most difficult.

*Q: Which language were you learning?*

SHERPER: We were studying Punjabi. We were going to Punjab. This was, as I said, the first group to go to India. It was the fourth Peace Corps group overseas in 1961. There was a lot of competition during the training as well because everybody wanted to go and they knew that 10 out of the 35 would not go. The governor of the state of the Punjab came to make the selection of the people. Participating in that process were all the instructors and Peace Corps/Washington.

*Q: What basis did he use for selecting?*

SHERPER: I don't know what he used as a basis. I was one of the selectees. In fact, what he ended up doing was waiting because they couldn't make a final decision on the 25th and 26<sup>th</sup> [candidates]. We wondered whether everyone was getting his or her assignment. Apparently, they had selected my brother and me early on in this selection process, but we were not informed that we would be able to go until several hours after everyone else. The reason was we were having problems getting through the security check. That was based simply on the fact that our father had emigrated to the U.S. from Russia back in 1885 or 1887.

*Q: I didn't know you had to go through security checks in the Peace Corps.*

SHERPER: Oh, yes. Finally, they said they were waiting to hear from Washington as to whether they would allow us to go because of that. We were told when it came through.

*Q: It wasn't a newspaper reporter?*

SHERPER: No. That brings us really up to where we got seriously involved in foreign affairs coming back to the earlier question. I think maybe there was a lot of idealism in those days with the Peace Corps and the idea of helping people and having something to offer, contribute, and so on. I guess maybe it was a chance to have a period in my life when I didn't have to worry about when the next step would be, what I was going to do, or whatever. Maybe I'd take a breather and back away from those decisions

*Q: So, you were in India in the Punjab in 1961, right?*

SHERPER: That's right.

*Q: What was your assignment?*

SHERPER: I was assigned to a Graham Savoc training center, which is basically a place where they train agricultural extension people. The 26 volunteers that survived training were scattered around the Punjab. My brother went to a place called Batala and I went to a place called Patiala. They were probably about 75 miles apart. He also was assigned to

Graham Savoc Extension Training Center. When I went to India, it started out with sort of high expectations. This was the first Peace Corps group to India. There were big expectations, I think.

When we flew over on Pan Am, one goes east and two goes west. When we arrived, we were to meet Prime Minister Nehru. The ambassador was out at the airport to meet us. We circled New Delhi for about 40 minutes and couldn't land because of the fog and bad weather. So, we went on to Calcutta. I don't know what the land distance is, but I would guess 1,000 miles or so. We landed at Dum Dum Airport in Calcutta in what was a relatively new Boeing 707 at that time. We were quite exhausted from the trip. I remember we were brought from the airport by bus to a hotel. That had been arranged by the U.S. consulate general in Calcutta. I also remember that there were these huge crowds along the street going into Calcutta. They were applauding and doing all this. We wondered what all this was about. There were some people on our bus who thought that this was a welcome for the Peace Corps group. It turned out that there was a very high level Soviet dignitary who was arriving about the same time that we were. I can't remember who it was, but at the time India had very good relations with the Soviet Union. So we went to our hotel and were there for about four hours. It was about 2:30 or 3:00 in the morning when we were wrestled out of bed and put on a bus, taken to the railway station, and put on a train to take us back to New Delhi, which took about 23 hours. It seemed like forever. It also seemed like the train had square wheels. They had reserved one whole coach for us. It was a sleeping coach. It had room for 22 people to sleep. Four of us slept on the floor and it was a long ride. When we got to New Delhi the next day, we did meet Prime Minister Nehru. The ambassador was John Kenneth Galbraith. Kitty Galbraith took a liking to this Peace Corps group for some odd reason. Then we got our assignments and we went the next day to the Punjab.

I mentioned that we were in Patiala, which is about 175 miles almost due north of New Delhi. There was no housing available. They had put up a double walled tent for me to sleep in. It was an interesting experience. I lived in that for about six months. There was supposed to be some housing available for us. It was very, very hot; during the day the temperature was 110-115, occasionally 118. The first weeks, I had to figure out how I was going to work and what I was going to do. I spent it going around and meeting people and talking to people because there was no structured program for me. I was to do community development work, period. Pretty loose terms of reference.

*Q: What about the living conditions? Your food and water? What kind of amenities did you have, if any?*

SHERPER: There was water from a pump, which I boiled. I had a gas burner. I could buy food down in town, which was about two plus miles away. Peace Corps issued us bicycles so that was pretty good. I had a bicycle. I would go down and buy food. It was



things that I could prepare like soup, beans, tinned things largely. Occasionally, I was invited out to the homes of some of the instructors in the training center, so I had curry and all the other good food of India.

*Q: What was your reaction to the environment and the culture that you were suddenly thrust into?*

SHERPER: I think I probably adjusted to that quite quickly and fairly easily. I didn't seem to find that to be a problem. In our training we had sort of been advised what it would be like. There were Indians from school who came in and talked to us and gave us the cold, hard facts of what it would be like. I did not expect to live in a tent. I didn't have electricity. Every day I would go out and I would [end of tape]

It was so hot that candles would melt in puddles. It was sort of irritating because you would go through so many candles and I had a limited budget on which to live.

After about four or five weeks I sort of figured out how I would work. I decided that I would work in six villages, one village every day. In other words, every Tuesday, I would go out to the same village. I took Sunday off. Generally, the Indians are very sensible. They quit work after about one o'clock in the afternoon when it starts to really heat up. Us foolish foreigners sort of worked through the day and struggled along regardless of the climate and temperature. My work was quite interesting in the sense that I was able to sit down with these villagers and, over time, determine what things they were interested in and what their needs were. I started a number of activities in each of the villages.

*Q: You didn't get any guidance from the training center about what your function was or what you should be teaching?*

SHERPER: No, really, it was very, very open. They didn't know what to do with us. I think I was kind of a surprise. They knew that somebody was coming, but they didn't know what background was. They wanted me to give lectures, which I gave a few of, but my Punjabi was not good enough really to give lectures without having someone to interpret it. I didn't do a whole lot of that. I did some. Sometimes I would go out with the extension workers there. I would help them lay out their research plots. I would work with them in some of the activities that I had suggested. For example, in each of the villages, I was trying to encourage people to keep some very, very basic farm records. I designed something and got it printed up in Punjabi on just one piece of paper, not quite a cardboard, but a stiff piece of paper. One side was income and the other side was expenditures, trying to get people to think in terms of inputs and outputs and whether they were losing money or making money, what their expenses were.

*Q: You were introducing a new technology.*

SHERPER: It was new to them for sure, as simple as it was.

*Q: Did they accept it?*

SHERPER: Yes, because I said, "I'm coming back next week to see what's on there." You're there over a long enough period so that you can follow up with farmers that you work with. Probably what was most difficult was trying to identify the leaders in the villages that could influence others. It takes some time to learn who they are, but even that I sort of got to learn how to do that fairly easily and fairly quickly after a while.

Then we introduced poultry in a number of villages. What I'm saying is not that chickens were new to them, but raising chickens in a way in which they had proper feed was new to them. I got out my *Professor F.B. Morrison's Guide to Feeds and Feeding*, which is from university. It is a four-inch thick book with all the tables and the contents of what kind of ratios and formulas you need for different livestock and animals, and also what different crops have in those to put together a formula. You had to deal with what was available locally. The principal thing available locally for chicken feed was the residue that was left from extracting oil from peanuts, which is very high protein and very good. Then it was actually adding the supplements to that and then mixing it by hand with a shovel. I'd have to buy all the stuff with my own money and I would sell it at cost to the farmers and bring it to the villages, give it to the small poultry units of approximately 30-50 birds in each one to get them in a habit of using appropriate feed. They could see that these broilers could be at an edible weight in about two months. Normally, it took them six months. It was quite amazing to them.

Then we had to figure out how to market these chickens. We took old tea crates. India grows a lot of tea. There was sort of one box inside of a box and then we filled in with sawdust around it to insulate it. Then we would butcher chickens. We would stay up all night butchering chickens, when it was the coolest part of the day. Then the next day we would take these boxes of chickens after we had butchered them and plucked the feathers and worked all night to the bus station, load them on the buses and take them to New Delhi and market them. That was trying to introduce a marketing system like that.

*Q: Did it begin to become established without your having to---*

SHERPER: It was working quite well when I left. As far as I know, it was continuing.

The other thing that was of interest there was I found this old McCormick Dearing threshing machine that had been trashed and stuck in a roadside full of dirt, sand, and whatever. I was very interested in that because I had used a thresher in my earlier days back in the States and was familiar with them. I found out who the owner was and asked

him if he would be interested in fixing this up. The standard way of threshing was to bring the grain into a threshing floor, which was sort of a mud area that was hard from tramping on it, put the grain down and then drive your bullocks around and around beating the grains off the straw. Then when they'd get most of it off, they would take the bundles and put it above their head and crash it down onto a board or something to get the grain off of the straw. I got permission from Peace Corps for Keith to come down and work with me. We found a guy who was a carpenter who could help us in the reconstruction of the wood parts. I got the owner to agree to recast some of the broken castings, which the Indians are very clever at doing, particularly the pulleys. We had some broken pulleys and things like that had to be cast in iron. They'd have to make the cast and pour it and so on. Then we got the threshing machine working on it on odd hours over a matter of months.

I found another fellow who had a tractor. I talked to the owners, got them together. One owned the threshing machine and one the tractor. I said, "What I'd like to do is this tractor is ideal for running the threshing machine. It has the right amount of horsepower. I can use it to pull the thresher around. I want to take it from village to village. I said, "We can work out what is the appropriate amount of money to charge, but it has to be reasonable." After the expenses of running the tractor and paying the salary of one man who would train how to use the thresher, keep it up, adjust it, and all of that. It was a very complex machine. It's almost as big as this room. They agreed to that. We got the thresher going. We would go from village to village. People were so amazed that we would offer them to do this. The straw would come out of the big blower; all of the grain would be separated and come out. We could thresh as much in 1/2 or 3/4 of a day as they could do in a week easily. It was sort of another small business entrepreneurship that we got started. That was fun.

*Q: If people had the money to pay for that, I guess there was a big incentive.*

SHERPER: Yes. For them, they paid for it in grain, mostly in kind. They didn't have actual money. They are familiar with the bartering process. I don't understand the bartering, but they did among themselves. It was a very good experience in Peace Corps. I think it was something that solidified my interest.

*Q: How long were you in the Punjab?*

SHERPER: Two years.

*Q: You operated entirely in Punjabi? Did anybody speak English?*

SHERPER: Yes, there were a number of people. India is quite interesting. There were 26 provinces. There are more now. They've divided them again. When the country was

divided, the provinces were established on an ethnic basis and it was somewhat lingual. If you look on the currency of India even today, you will see "one rupee" written in nine or 11 languages. There are many languages. Punjabi is understood by those in the neighboring states who speak Urdu and some who speak Hindi. Hindi and Urdu, people who speak Punjabi can understand some of that. If you go much further than the boundaries of your state, you are in a different country. You really aren't able to communicate.

*Q: How did you find the people to work with? What kind of reaction did you have with the people?*

SHERPER: It was generally very, very positive. I think people were interested and willing to learn. They were surprised that an American would come and work there, that somebody would sleep on what's called a "charpoin," which is their little wooden frame with four little legs on it and woven webbing material for your springs. They would throw a mattress on it. That took some getting used to. After the first six months I was able to move into a house. I hired a cook so I could survive, although once in a while you'd find a bowlful of food full of ants mixed into the food or you would find the hygiene did not really meet all the standards. I ended up with hepatitis and that was rather fortunate because I went to the doctor after I got up one morning and saw these yellow eyes looking back at me as I was shaving. I said, "Uh-oh, I know what that is." I went to the Peace Corps doctor in New Delhi. I got on a bus and went down there. He sent me directly to the hospital and I was in the hospital. I didn't have really any pain with it. Maybe it's because I caught it quite early. I had hepatitis. The fortunate part of that is that there was this really beautiful nurse there that I became interested in who now is my wife of almost 35 years. That's where I met her.

MRS. SHERPER: I was working in family health.

*Q: Was this part of the Peace Corps?*

MRS. SHERPER: No, just on my own.

*Q: Fascinating.*

SHERPER: That's where I met Julie, my wife. She probably has her own story to tell. She came from England to New Delhi by bus. It took her about six weeks. My bus trip was only about four or five hours from the Punjab, but we both ended up in New Delhi at Holy Family Hospital. That's where we met.

There were other incidents that were quite interesting there. I had my bike stolen and had a hard time getting it back because I refused to pay any bribes to the officials to get it

back. It was taken because it wasn't locked by the police. Everybody wanted money up and down the line and I refused, so it took me a few weeks to get it back. There were some interesting parts of that. Eventually, I bought a horse. I apparently was the first Peace Corps volunteer to buy a horse. I used the horse to go out to the villages that I visited every day for a while, but the horse was not very cooperative. She kept wanting to run away back to the village that I had bought her from, which was about five miles away. If she got a chance, she would break out and run away. I walked that trail a few times going through the village saying, "Did you see a horse come through here?" "Yes, she went that way."

*Q: And ran home.*

SHERPER: Yes. I tried everything. I had hobbles on her and I had her tied to a brick wall around the compound and there were steel posts in that. I tied her once to the steel post and she just tore the wall down. Eventually we had a serious discussion, the horse and I, and tried to figure out what the problem was, why she wasn't happy with me. What I tried was fencing from the house back to the walls of the compound and letting her loose in that area. That's all she wanted, but she didn't express it very clearly, except that she wanted to get out. She couldn't stand the hobble or being tied to something. Even though the space was small, as long as she was not tied to one place and had some freedom of movement, she was happy.

*Q: I can understand that.*

SHERPER: I could, too, if she had told me in the beginning, but I didn't learn her language until after some months. Peace Corps had asked me, since I had the first horse in the Peace Corps, if I would keep records on what it cost to feed it and how much time I would spend on it. They thought this might be an answer in the future.

*Q: Better than mopeds or other things.*

SHERPER: Right. During the two-year period that I was in the Peace Corps, we had four different directors in India. The first director was somebody who was seconded from AID, a fellow by the name of Roger Ernst. Roger was there for about a year. Then there was a woman who came out. She was there for a few months as an interim person. Then a Dr. Houston was there, who was a medical doctor, a cardiac specialist. He was very famous for his mountain climbing and had climbed K2 in Nepal, the second highest mountain. I think an attempt failed and there were a couple of members of his party that died in that attempt. He wrote a book about it that was quite well known.

The fourth person was another interim person who, I believe, had been the AID Mission Director in Pakistan at the time and was just finishing his tour there. He came to India to

help prepare for the second India group, India 2. This person was Joe Wheeler. The Indian government decided that the second Peace Corps group would be in the state of Kerala, which doesn't exist now. It's the one that has the close relationship with the Sri Lankan rebels. It supported the Sri Lankan rebel movement there. The capital is Bangalore. Joe decided that he wanted somebody to go with him to Bangalore and to the second proposed area for India 2. For some odd reason (and I have no idea why), he asked me to do that. Joe and I went down there for three weeks. We went all over the province, even riding elephants into the jungles. We went to look at places where there was agriculture, which depended on these jungle flowers, and a variety of different species that they were looking for. We developed a program for the next Peace Corps group to go to the state of Mysore, as it was called then. It turned out, however, that that was, I believe, India 3. India 2 actually came to be the replacement for the group in the Punjab. That was a very interesting exercise, but also a point where I got to know another AID person who was important in my career in the future.

The other major event that I would say happened during my stay in India was when Jackie Kennedy came to India. She went to visit the Taj Mahal at Agra. Before she came, we had word from Peace Corps/New Delhi and the embassy that she wanted to meet Peace Corps volunteers. Well, there were 26 of us. We were all summoned to go to Agra to meet her. Also, they had us riding elephants behind her elephant (She went for an elephant ride.) and all of the trappings. For most of us, it was a very nice trip.

*Q: Did you meet her?*

SHERPER: Oh, yes, we shook her hand. She said that the Peace Corps was her husband's favorite program. That's a message that she wanted to carry from him to tell us personally. She knew that we were one of the first groups in the Peace Corps. She was kind of a quiet and demure person, but she was very articulate. She spoke to us as a group for a few minutes and then she went around and shook all of our hands and asked us where we were and what we were doing. It was very nice, very brief, but it was also an opportunity for those of us who really didn't have time to do any sightseeing to see one of the most famous sites in the world, the Taj Mahal. So, that was an interesting event.

*Q: What was the attitude of the Indian government toward the Peace Corps? I understood that this was not always so positive. Maybe in those days, it was.*

SHERPER: I think there were mixed feelings. Kenneth Galbraith went out there during the period I was there. When we first arrived, I mentioned that Galbraith was to meet us. It wasn't him. It was, Chester Bowles. I never met Chester Bowles. I met his daughter, Sally Bowles, who represented him on many occasions and whom we used to call "Salad Bowl," just in jest, not a deserved name. Once in a while, Kitty and Kenneth Galbraith would invite us to the embassy, any of us when we were in town, to use the swimming

pool. The embassy was new. I remember, Kitty always complained about the embassy. It was this huge concrete monster that she said, "I can be way down here by the swimming pool and hear them flush a toilet on the second floor on the other end of the building because of the echoes." Their son Peter was also out there, a very nice person.

*Q: What of the relations of the government do you recall?*

SHERPER: I think there were a lot of mixed feelings about it. There was a political party called the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), which was very socialist oriented. In fact, it was very similar to communism in its beliefs and principles. I can remember one incident I had with a fellow. This was shortly after I arrived. I was asked to take a group of people through the poultry houses at an extension fair day at the extension training center and to talk about the poultry and the breeds and some of the care of the poultry. There were these groups of farmers. This guy was doing the interpreting for me. I found out after I had finished the tour, my Punjabi being very poor at the time (and I studied Punjabi every day for the first year I was there in addition to my training at Ohio State), apparently after this tour another person came in and he said, "Do you know what that person was saying?" I said, "Only part of it." "Some of the things he was saying were that you apologized for the behavior of your country and for calling you capitalist dogs and all sorts of things and I wasn't really paying any attention to what you were saying, but was interpreting a totally different message." I wasn't aware of that, but I thought it was rather strange because the reaction of the audience was very strange, obviously. Anyway that sort of sensitized me a lot to the differences in the political parties and what they thought about the Peace Corps.

When we had the woman who was the director of Peace Corps, there was literature, which I saw with her picture. They called her the "American Mata Hari." She was a traitor to the cause of socialism and all this sort of thing, very much anti-American propaganda. So there were those people who were using Peace Corps as sort of an anti-American instrument and at least believed that all of us were spies, as this literature would say about us and so on. The thing that obviously was important was that none of this could bear any kind of scrutiny because I think all of us were very much dedicated to what we were doing. We were working in our areas as diligently as we could.

The dropout rate of Peace Corps in most countries, at least after that initial period, was quite high. During the two years that our group was there, we lost one person and we lost him after he had been there for a year. I think most of the people really performed generally quite well. We were away from the capital city, so I can't say what the government views were. I think it was more political issues in terms of a political party than an anti-American kind of propaganda that was attempted. I think that was not a majority opinion. I think that it didn't hold much water as was evidenced by the work that was done by the volunteers there. Obviously, the pro-Peace Corps side won out as the

program there expanded to be 1,500 volunteers at one point, a huge program.

*Q: So you finished up in 1963?*

SHERPER: Yes.

*Q: What happened to you then?*

SHERPER: I didn't get much chance to see Julie after I had met her.

*Q: You were married in India?*

SHERPER: No. We met in the spring of 1962. Julie went back to England in late fall of 1962. It was a time when security was not that good in India. The Chinese, the Indians said, were invading. They were trying to straighten up their borders with India and India could not defend its borders. There were other things going on. Kashmir was still hot with Pakistan and all the other issues. I think Julie's parents were concerned about her safety, among other things. She left in 1962.

Keith and I in our ending months in India decided that we hadn't seen enough of India. It is a huge sub-continent. We finished our work, I believe, in September. We saved our leave. We took about a month or so, six weeks, and traveled around southern India in different states and places that we had not had a chance to see in that huge country. We also took part of our money that we had been given for our transportation home and we bought an old car, an old 1936 Rolls Royce. We bought it from the Maharaja of Patiala, which was about 15 miles from where I lived in Naba. It was in questionable condition, had been abused quite a bit, but we drove it to Bombay. That was sort of the start of our southern tour. Then we arranged for shipping to the U.K. where we would meet it and then it would be trans-shipped to the U.S. In the meantime it was stored in Bombay, but we had made all the arrangements for its transport. Then we took off together after we spent six or seven weeks in southern India down to Karala, the very southern point, all the way through several of the southern states.

*Q: What kind of impression did you develop from traveling around that part of India?*

SHERPER: It was a totally different country almost. St. Thomas Aquinas landed in Kerala, converted people there to Christianity. It was largely Christian communities there. You saw the plantation agriculture of tea, coffee, cardamom, that sort of thing. We saw good roads for the first time in India, largely put in by the plantations, and reasonable health services. People were better dressed, better educated. The eating habits were different. The cultures were different. The languages were different. We took trains and busses where we could. The cultures were very different. It was a fascinating experience



to see the differences in southern India.

From Bombay, we took a boat to Mombasa and we spent time in Kenya and in Tanzania. At the time, it was Zambia and Tanganyika. We went to both of those countries and to Uganda. We did largely hitchhiking and either sleeping under the stars or in gudlars, which are sort of the Sikh temples. We had enough Punjabi that we were able to stay in those places. We would travel at night on a train or a bus where we could sleep and that way avoid having to stay in a hotel or any place. We stayed in youth hostels and we just backpacked. We went through eastern Africa. We were in Kampala on the fateful day of President Kennedy's death to give you some timeline. Then we went up through Sudan, which was in civil war, and hitchhiked from the Ugandan border up to Kosti. We took a barge down the Nile, which took seven days to get through Sudan, and had a lot of interesting experiences. We had to go on the train for one part of it to hook up to the Nile in Khartoum from Juba. The train derailed and such things you remember, being out in the desert where you could see nothing but sand. Then from Sudan we went all the way down the Nile to Alexandria. That was before the high dam was built. [end of tape]

We saw Abu Simbel before it was moved on top of the cliffs. We got the barge on the Nile to stop long enough so that we could take a rowboat and go over to see Abu Simbel. We could go inside of the caves under the feet of the images that were carved into the cliff side, quite a sight. Of course, we visited the game parks when we were in eastern Africa and Ngorongoro and so on back in those days. We went up through Egypt and spent some time seeing the pyramids and the other sites in Egypt. Of course, Thebes and the other historic cities. As we were getting closer to winter, we decided we did not want to go to Europe during the wintertime, so we took a boat from Alexandria to Beirut. Then we spent time in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and went to Israel and worked on a kibbutz for the winter. That was a very fascinating experience. They were run by the political parties. We tried to find a kibbutz that would be the most socialist. We were sent to one that was run mostly by east Europeans. There was one man who spoke some English. We studied Hebrew at nights so we could communicate a little bit. We taught them some techniques that they were not familiar with: how to vaccinate chickens, some crop harvestings in a little different way than they had experienced, etc. That was a very fascinating experience working on a kibbutz.

From there, after we left Israel, we took a boat to Izmir and then we went east into Turkey. We visited a lot of the Roman ruins in western Turkey, which were quite fascinating. We went to Ankara and then over to Greece through Thessaloniki and to Athens. We eventually took a boat from Piraeus to Brindisi, which is on the heel of the boot of Italy. Then we worked our way up Italy seeing the sites that we could find there. We went across Italy to France and eventually to the U.K. This would have been about in April of 1964. I met up with Julie. After a couple of weeks, we got engaged. Keith and I then left and went through northern England into Scotland and took another boat across

the North Sea from Newcastle to Oslo. We went to places in Norway and came down through Denmark and Germany. We went back to the U.K. I guess Julie was surprised: I did show up for the wedding. We had a very nice wedding in her hometown in a church that was about 700 years old. Then we went to the States.

*Q: You covered quite a bit.*

SHERPER: Quite a bit.

*Q: A lot of wanderlust.*

SHERPER: Yes. It took about a year to see all these things. The car that we had shipped to England was damaged when it was unloaded at the docks in London. We had to get it repaired. After we got married on June 13, we went on a honeymoon to France, which we spent mostly along the coast of Normandy and Brittany in the fishing villages. We came back to England and Julie packed all her possessions in one trunk, which we had shipped to London. It got lost as we were going to go to the States. We went to the States on a Norwegian freighter and took along the old car as a company baggage. We landed in New Jersey in July. It was 1964. We spent a few days in New York. We went to the 1964 World's Fair. Then we drove to Washington and I started looking for a job.

*Q: You did all that on the Peace Corps final payment?*

SHERPER: My brother and I traveled for between October 1963 and about June 1964 on something like \$5.46 a day for the two of us. We had used our money that we had been given for transportation back. We used the accumulated \$75 a month that the Peace Corps paid us as salary for our work during the time we were there. Because I got married and had additional expenses, I had borrowed some money, \$700-\$800 from my older brother, who was back in Minnesota. He bankrolled us. We landed in the States dead broke, in debt, no job, recently married, and Julie's possessions being lost somewhere. Everything she had in that trunk. That was our beginning in the States.

I'll just add a quick note on my jobs up until the time I joined AID. We were looking for a job and one of the first places I went was the AID. We went to Washington. I had crafted some sort of resume. Keith had traveled ahead of me. Julie and I were on a freighter. He had come to the States and had been in Washington. He had also gone to AID. The only people they were hiring at the time was for Vietnam. He signed up anyway and said that he would be interested in the job. I also applied there and was accepted, but I was looking for other alternatives. I wasn't sure that that's what I wanted to do, but I had accepted it. They wanted to send me for language and all of that stuff, the training program. I said, "One thing is, I want a break. I've been away from the country for almost three years. I want to go back and visit family," as Keith did as well. But Keith decided to join AID

and he did. He went to Vietnam and was there for about five years.

Julie and I traveled back to Minnesota. At the time (This was maybe in August of 1964.), I wanted to spend a little time with family, which I did. As I got back to Minnesota and we drove our old clunky old Rolls Royce, I began to think about it and thought that things were going bad. I was reading the newspapers. It (the war in Vietnam) was going downhill at that particular moment. I started thinking about it and said, "It looks to me that things are going to be so bad that they aren't going to allow dependents to go to Vietnam." We had just gotten married and didn't want to be separated. I said to Julie, "Maybe we ought to reconsider this." So we did. I said, "I think what's going to happen is they're going to send all the dependents out." I called AID and I said, "Look, I don't have a problem in going to Vietnam per se, but I do have a problem if dependents are evacuated. I've just been married a couple of months and that's not the way to start off a marriage." They said, "Well, we can't provide any kinds of assurances of anything." I said, "I think you can just take me off the list. If something else comes up, I might be interested." As it turned out about six weeks later, all the dependents were evacuated to Bangkok and other places and back to the States. We were quite happy we had made that decision.

That sort of left me in Minnesota with no job. I started sending out resumes. There were about 30-40 jobs I applied for. Most of them didn't respond. I couldn't really find anything that I was really interested in. One of the jobs I applied for was working for the Farmers Home Administration. FHA is a lending part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which provides loans to farmers who are not eligible for loans from banks or from other sources, usually because of their financial situation or whatever. They only provide these loans on the basis of working on farm management plans. You have to make recommendations as to whether these people get money or not. I accepted a job with them in Minnesota. I worked with them through a training program of a few months in a place in the center part of the state. After that they immediately decided to give me my own county to be responsible for, which was kind of unusual. They didn't usually do it that quick.

The county they gave me, they were probably quite happy to give it to me. I don't think anybody else wanted it. It was the county in Minnesota that was bordered on the west by North Dakota, on the north by Canada in the uppermost northwest corner of Minnesota. It was not that far from the city well-known to weather watchers around the country called International Falls, which is often the coldest place in the country during the winter months. It was an interesting county in the sense that the Red River, which is the border between the Dakotas and Minnesota and flows north into Canada, basin was very flat. The riverbanks rise about one foot per hundred feet, which is almost flat. It's a slight grade, so when it floods, it floods a lot. It's very, very rich soils and it's used for producing sugarcane. The western part of the county was quite wealthy and it was fairly

well off. The eastern half was scrub brush, very poor, and quite the opposite of the western half. Obviously I had to deal with a lot of the very poor farmers on the eastern part of that county working with them: trying to get them to make the right kind of management decisions, giving them loans or denying them loans, and telling them, "The best thing you can do is find a job in an urban area." I did that for a while. The winters were incredibly cold up there, particularly on the flat riverbeds. I came in one day from working with farmers and the wind-chill was about 60 degrees below zero. The wind would literally take the breath out of your lungs. You had to cover your mouth when you walked. The roads had five feet of snow. You often couldn't get into farmers' driveways.

I had come back from a day of this and my secretary said there was a phone call from Washington. It was from a guy by the name of Holmes who worked for AID. He said, "I'm a program officer working for AID. I worked in Korea. We're looking for some agriculturalists. The deputy director of AID in Korea asked me to give you a call to see if you might be interested in working in Korea for AID." I said, "Who is the Deputy Director?" He said, "Roger Ernst." I said, "Oh, Roger. I know him." My answer was two words. After coming in from a miserable climate and a difficult job, I said, "Yes, and when?" So, they said, "Well, as soon as you can." I said, "Well, I've got to give these people at least 30 days' notice." When I gave my notice to the Farmers Home Administration, they said, "You've been doing such a good job. If it's money, we will increase your salary from a G7 to a G9," which to me sounded like a lot of money at the time. I said, "No, I've made a commitment to go overseas to Korea. I'm going to do that." I had worked just about a year in the Farmers Home Administration. I accepted a position with AID. That began September 12, 1965.

*Q: Your experience with the Farmers Home Administration must have been kind of useful in terms of your career and background.*

SHERPER: Yes, it was. It was in some ways working with people who had a different not only economic needs and background, but there was almost a cultural difference. It was just like working in a different culture almost.

*Q: What do you mean by that?*

SHERPER: What I mean is that there is a cultural poverty, as I call it, in the sense that there is a lot of commonality among people that are very poor. They have survival instincts; they sometimes lack the ability and tools to do what is needed to sustain their life, but they have the drive to survive for themselves and their families. I think you don't necessarily find that among a lot of people who are middle income and other levels of economic situations. In that sense, I think there is some sort of commonality. The other thing is what I had been doing in the Peace Corps and Farmers Home Administration was really focusing on other people and their needs. I was trying to assist and help and

support them to advance their goals and their life's dreams, whatever they may be. In many ways, AID is doing that. We, particularly at the time that I joined AID when the mission in South Korea was 240 people, we didn't hire a lot of people from the outside. It was our own staff that had the technical competency to do things. We had something like 17 people in the provinces, as I will talk to you about a little bit later when I talk about that. We were actually doing things with people. We weren't contracting it out for others to do. It was a different kind of organization at that time.

*Q: But your experience in the Peace Corps was a natural prelude to the hands-on work that you started in AID. Let's pick that up later. What was your next experience?*

SHERPER: After I left my job in Hallock, Minnesota (Kittson County) up in the northwest corner, I went to Washington on September 23, 1965. I was designated to go to Korea before I left, so I knew that that was my destination, but they wanted to put me into some training courses first. That was just fine with me. My wife was expecting our first child. We had several months that we were in training. It included community development training, which was done at Berkeley, area studies and orientation for East Asia, and Korean language. I had about six months of Korean language studies before I left.

*Q: How proficient were you in six months?*

SHERPER: Actually I could get by not too badly. It was kind of broken, but I did put a lot of effort into trying to learn the language. I think I got a 2 in my testing before I left.

*Q: Did you get much orientation about AID and what the agency was all about?*

SHERPER: We did have a limited orientation about the agency. The orientation focused more on the area studies and the substance, that is, community development, whatever that meant. I wasn't sure what it meant in Korea. The course that AID had contracted with the University of California at Berkeley was probably one of the worst courses I've ever had.

*Q: Why is that?*

SHERPER: Because it wasn't relevant, I didn't think, to community development. I had already been working in rural communities extensively in Minnesota; I had farmed in Wisconsin; I had spent two years in the Peace Corps in India working in villages, and thought I had a little sense of it. Remember, this was the 1960s. One of the things that we had during this six-week course at Berkeley was two weeks of a tea group session. Those were the days when everyone was expressing one's inner thoughts and all that. I probably was not a very good participant in that sort of thing. I guess there are some things in life

that you think are personal or private and they don't have to be opened up. I was not very good at that. Then we did a couple of studies in Richmond, California, sort of sociological studies, doing surveys and so on. I felt they were not very good. The lectures we had, some of them were quite good and others were quite mediocre. I wrote an evaluation that was pretty critical of the program and sent it back to AID. I said in there that, frankly, I thought that AID was wasting their money. I won't dwell on this.

Moving along, we had good language training and orientation. Our daughter was born on April 10, 1966. We left in June. The mission in Seoul wanted me to stop by Taiwan en route to observe their agricultural systems. I was going to be working in agriculture and I was going to be working in a province. So we went to Taiwan and we went to Tai Chung, a city about halfway down the island. I spent a lot of time looking at cooperatives, their multiple cropping systems, and having discussions with a lot of different people in government. That was quite interesting.

*Q: What was your impression of the Taiwanese system?*

SHERPER: I thought it was quite efficient. The cooperatives were highly organized and with the multiple cropping system they got as many as three crops a year. I think in some areas maybe they got more, but where we were there were three rice crops a year. That was quite a lot, which was not applicable to Korea, but it was an interesting farming system to look at and to study.

From Taiwan, we went to Korea. We arrived there on July 4, a holiday. They totally forgot that we were arriving that day. The person who was responsible for taking care of us was maybe a colleague that many people know in AID, Lane Holdcroft. Lane was at his home having a big Fourth of July barbecue with a lot of people. When I practiced my rusty, broken Korean I was able to find out how to use the phones and exchange some money and get some coins. I called the USAID number, which I had and finally got through to a guard, who put me through to somebody else, a duty officer. Eventually I was able to get Lane Holdcroft's number. He came out to the airport very apologetic, having left us abandoned at Gimpo Airport. My daughter was two and a half months old. It was very, very hot. She was quite an unhappy child at the time, but everything worked out fine. We went to Lane's house and enjoyed his barbecue. No one had bothered to get temporary housing for us, or anything, but eventually they were able to find people and wake them up on the holiday to find an accommodation for us. That was our first venture with AID and arriving in Seoul.

We spent a couple of weeks there and I was assigned then to be a Provincial Advisor. I worked in Kyung Sung Nam Do. Starting backwards, "do" means "province;" "nam" means "south;" and "Kyung Sung" is the name of the province. So, it's really South Kyung Sung Province, but it is the province that surrounds Pusan in the southeastern

corner of Korea. I also learned during my two-week orientation in Seoul that I not only had to cover Kyung Sung Nam Do, but I also had to cover another province, Cheki Do, which was an island. I spent one week every month, flew out to Cheki Do and worked there as an advisor to the governor, as I did in Kyung Sung Nam Do. The governor that I worked with when I first arrived spoke no English. That was interesting. It really forced me into using my limited Korean.

The governor had one thing that he wanted me to do the first time I met him on the first day of work in Kyung Sung Nam Do. By the way, the capital of the province was also in Pusan, but Pusan City was an independent entity. So, we were living in Pusan. We lived near the military base called Hialeah. The governor wanted me to take my first two weeks and go out and live in a village. He had it all arranged. I was to leave that afternoon. I said to him, "I would be happy to do that, but I have a wife and a three month old baby at home that I have to get settled into some housing first, so I need a couple of days, but then I'd be happy to do so." I did that and he sent me out to a village that was in the farthest corner of Kyung Nam, farthest away from Pusan, right on the border with the next province. It was a very poor village. There were no inns or places to stay. I had to stay with a family there. There was no one who spoke any English there. I spent two weeks there looking at the agricultural projects and talking with the people the best I could, trying to understand how things worked and what village life was like, learning about their crops and their livestock and their way of life. It was there that I really felt the deficiency in my language. So, after I returned to Pusan, I hired a private tutor to continue my language studies, which I did for the next two and a half years. I studied language an hour before work every morning from 7:00 to 8:00. I became reasonably well adapted with the language. I can't say that I was fluent, but I must say that I could at least function okay with the language. I learned that Korea is quite easy to read in the sense that it's a very phonetic language. It has 26 letters in the alphabet. When I tried to read the newspapers, however, they had all these Chinese characters mixed in with the Korean. So then I decided, "Well, if I want to read the newspaper, I'm going to have to learn some Chinese." So I studied Chinese, learned about 75-80 characters or so, which were the basic characters that allowed me to read the paper anyway, get most of the news through that. I worked in Pusan for just about two and a half years.

*Q: How did you find conditions there?*

SHERPER: It was a time when there was a lot of poverty. This area had a much longer growing season than the area around Seoul so that they could grow a lot of vegetable crops, certain things like persimmons and that sort of thing that you couldn't grow in the north. They also depended very heavily on rice growing. It was very mountainous. I worked in areas that included fisheries. There were a lot of fisheries, particularly oyster growing and different other shellfish. There was a lot of industry that was starting in that area, particularly in a place called Ulsan, which was on the east coast of South Korea.

During the period I was there, they started building a place where they could make aluminum ingots. There was an oil refinery that was built there and eventually it turned into petrochemical.

The principal way of transportation for most people was a bus, on very rough, rugged, old beat up busses that would go up and down these old routes. The only vehicles that were made in Korea at the time were the very old, early Toyota Land Cruisers, which were assembled there. About 90% of the parts were imported. There were very few things that were made in Korea that went into a car. As we know Korea today that's changed remarkably. Most of the houses in the rural areas had thatched roofs. They were built out of any kind of material you could find. There were limited health facilities. People had to walk long distances.

Education was always a very important part of the culture of Korea. The family clans, if they found a bright person, usually a male, in their clan, they would all get together and pay the school fees for that person to go to the best school and try to get that person into the best high schools, which was the path to the best university, Yung Se University or Seoul National University. Once a person graduated from one of those elite universities, they were on Easy Street, so to speak. They were almost ensured of employment. Then, of course, once they were employed, they could bring the clan members in as employees. Everything was sort of working on a family system. All of the big families that owned the big facilities were into not just petrochemicals and fertilizer, but also they might be into soap production. If they were into electronics, it was mainly assembling TVs or other things. There was a great deal of family groups much like you have in Japan.

*Q: What kind of advice were you able to give in a situation like that? What were you trying to do?*

SHERPER: It was quite interesting, although the terms of reference for my job were quite broad and general. I found that, first of all, they were always seeking advice. The Koreans seemed to always be looking for ways to get ahead. In a way it was an ideal situation as an advisor. Lots of times I found that I could suggest things at a lower level than the provincial government and they seemed to percolate to the top. A week or two or a month later, you would see this idea coming out in a paper or a pronouncement or something. I found it to be very exciting in the sense of what I was doing in terms of advising them on agricultural research, different ways to approach. We had a big Food Aid program, a Food for Work program. I managed that in the province. We had a lot of activities related to the private sector, small enterprises that we were trying to move forward, mostly agricultural related. We included such things as licensing for fertilizer and deregulating that sort of thing in terms of seeking farm credit for poor farmers and how to open loan windows for the poor farmers. I had some experience working in farm credit in the U.S. so that was quite useful. Of course, I had quite a bit of technical



agricultural experience having farmed myself, but I got into things that were new for me. I learned a lot, as well as maybe contributed some.

*Q: What do you think you did contribute?*

SHERPER: I think the thing that I was probably most able to help with were areas on farm credit. I'm talking specifically about organizing farm credit by opening more windows in the rural areas so people had access to the credit. We also advised them on how to improve their loan reviews and facilitate processing of loans. In cases of agricultural research, we set up a system of trying to determine what agricultural research would be done based on the priority needs of the province instead of listening to the researchers. If you have a researcher who is an expert in wing beam genetics, he wants to study wing beams. If you ask him, "What are the priorities," he's going to say, "Wing beams." It's not always a good idea to ask the researchers what are the priority research activities to be done. They need to step back away from that and say, "Well, where do we want to go, what do we need to focus on in terms of increasing production? What are our priorities? What do we have the physical capability to do once we get another research station, all of the extension service," and so on. I worked a lot with the Ag Research and Extension Service.

I also worked some on fisheries. I didn't know much about fisheries when I went there, but it was more the management side. I was really able to help out on that.

*Q: Were these all central USAID projects and you were dealing with their regional development or were these separate?*

SHERPER: These were almost exclusively run by the province themselves. They did not have external support for them. I was there simply as an advisor. I didn't bring any resources with me other than sometimes I would ask Seoul for some technical assistance or for some specific item but it was all very minor. My biggest resource that I had was the PL480 Food for Work program, which was being carried out by CRS (Catholic Relief Services).

*Q: How did that work?*

SHERPER: It worked pretty well. We did a lot of bench terracing, what was called paddy land reclamation. We had some projects where we actually reclaimed land from the sea. Others were paddy land rearrangement and trying to make fewer but larger paddy fields so that they could be more efficiently utilized. We had farm roads that were built with PL480. We had some community buildings, such as schools and health clinics also that were built with labor from PL480.

*Q: That requires a lot of management.*

SHERPER: Yes, the management was done. I was involved in selecting which projects and I would visit them and monitor them. Obviously, there is a limit as to what I could do. We did have some incidents where there was abuse of the program. A couple of times we stopped providing support to some localities where commodities disappeared, but all in all it was pretty good. It was a fairly successful program. We were also working on a big AID program at Suwon, which is just south of Seoul. There is a huge national research station on developing and \_\_\_\_\_. We would try to test those and so on.

I also had a lot of visitors that came from Seoul. They all wanted to come to Busan, it seemed, from AID or through AID contacts. There was always a lot of showing people around and making sure that they were cared for when they came down, setting up their agenda and appointments. That, in my view, took too much of my time. Eventually, I was able to move that off to a Korean assistant that I had hired. We spent a lot of time on some ceremonies with the governor. He always wanted me to go with him when he went out to different areas on field trips. I think he liked to have sort of a sidekick and maybe someone who could speak a little broken Korean with him. We had a very, very good relationship.

*Q: How did you find your Korean agricultural counterparts?*

SHERPER: They were really, really very good. They were highly dedicated, motivated people. That was quite different than I had found in other places where I served. Of course, this was just the first part of my stay in Korea.

After I was there for about a little over two years, we went on home leave. When I came back, I was assigned to a different province. It was called Chung Sang Nam Do, which is south of Chung San Province, which is in the center of the South Korean peninsula. It's probably best described as being the only province that is landlocked in Korea. Korea is very mountainous. It is about 72% mountains. This was no different; in fact, it was an extremely mountainous province.

When I got back from home leave, I went to my location in Pusan and the governor that I had worked with was transferred to Chung Sang Puk Do where I was in Chung Do, which is north. He wrote to the director of AID saying, "I want Sherper to come and work with me" in this other province where he had just moved to. He got a reply back saying, "Well, we appreciate your confidence in him, but we can't move our advisors around at the request of the individual governors." He was very persistent however. So he went to the embassy and talked to the ambassador. The ambassador asked what this was all about. It was explained to him. There was some sort of agreement or accord and they said, "If it makes him really happy, why don't we just move Sherper if he's willing to move?" I said,

"Fine, I'm ready to move. It's not a problem for me." I did get along with him well. He got into this new problem and wanted an advisor like me for some odd reason. So I moved to Chung Do.

*Q: Did we have people like you in every province?*

SHERPER: We started out with 17 advisors. There were to be two people in each province. I think there were 11 provinces. In my case, there was somebody working there, a fellow by the name of Ryland Holmes, when I first came to Busan. He and I worked together. He wasn't there for more than three or four months and he was transferred. He was very good. I got to learn a lot from Ryland, but then I was left with Chung Do and Chegido [Jeju]. Chegido, which I learned is a volcanic island. The whole island is basically one big volcano called Hallasan, Mount Hala. The perimeter of it is pretty good agricultural land. We did a lot to put some roads in there, and PL480. We had several other activities there.

Moving back to Chung Chow Puk Do, I did go out there with my old governor, which was not the first government \_\_\_\_\_, it was the second one. The \_\_\_\_\_ who suggested I go out and live two weeks in a village. He left after about nine or 10 months. There was this other younger guy who was very dynamic. He was the one who went up to Chung Po. I think I had very good people to work with. The governor \_\_\_\_\_, we got out and traveled so extensively in all the mountains back to every corner of the province. That was where a lot of officials had not been because it was so difficult to get to. I lived in a Baptist missionary compound where there were a couple of elderly missionaries who were still there. My daughter, who was then about two years old, went to nursery school as the only foreigner. Interestingly, she learned Korean so quickly and so well. It was quite amazing.

When I had been in Chung Jung Puk Do for a year or a year and a half, the governor was again transferred back to Chung Sung Nam Do. I guess I made one mistake in saying that he was the governor. He was the deputy governor in \_\_\_\_\_ and he went to Chung Jung Puk Do. He came back as governor in Chung Sung Nam Do in Busan. Again he wanted me to go to Busan with him. I said, "I can't do that. I'm stuck here as long as AID wants me to be here." But something else happened. We were starting to phase down the AID programs. This was in 1969. The first thing they did was start to pull people out of the provinces. They left about three or four people, one of which was me. They said, "We don't want you in Chung Puk Do. That's too small a province." So they sent me back to Busan anyway, where I went to start with. I not only covered Chung Sung Nam Do and Chegido, but I also covered another province north of Chung Sung Dam Do. I spent a lot of time on the road. I was now covering three provinces. When people were on home leave, I was sent over even to other provinces to cover periodically. I was doing a lot of traveling.

I think AID was making the right judgment. That it was about time to start backing away from Korea. The economy was doing incredibly well. Things were really picking up. Our role there really did seem to be diminishing. We had approximately 240 some people in AID when I went, of which about 45 were in the Agricultural Development Division. Then we got down to something like 120. The Agricultural Development Division was down to 30 people or fewer. Our work was less needed. There was clearly an internal capacity for the Koreans to manage their own affairs without our involvement. My work basically was finished. I think people get attached to their first post. \_\_\_\_\_ to remember and I have a lot of fond memories of Korea. My wife and I went back to Korea 18 years after I had left. The difference was incredible. When I was there, it took about nine and a half hours for me to drive up to \_\_\_\_\_. In Seoul, you \_\_\_\_\_ from Busan. Now the country is crisscrossed with superhighway and the trip takes about three hours. I saw that we crisscrossed the country up and down visiting our friends and found that all of those thatched houses were now tile roof dwellings. They were all cement block buildings \_\_\_\_\_ remote villages we could find \_\_\_\_\_. People were enjoying really a much better life.

I think AID should take some credit for what was happening in Korea. They had a very massive input following the Korean War and over the years. I think it had a very direct impact on the economy. I think it had a direct impact on the evolution to a more democratic society. One more minor anecdote. We left Korea in 1971 after five years. But several years later, I was working in Ethiopia and I received this letter from Korea. It was sent by the Director of Research at Su Wan. He sent it to me just via AID/Washington, DC and eventually it found me in Ethiopia. He said, "I want to tell you that we have reached self-sufficiency in rice production for the first time in our history. It was largely because of AID and people like you that contributed to this and we are very proud that we want to extend our appreciation to you and all your American friends who did so much to help us." It was really a very, very nice tribute, I thought, to the work of AID.

*Q: You should have that framed somewhere.*

SHERPER: I don't, but I have it tucked away somewhere.

*Q: It would be nice to have.*

SHERPER: It was a very moving letter. He was a guy that I had worked with some in research and he had moved to Su Wan. During my last year that I was in Korea, I was called more and more to do writing. I co-authored the spring review on land refund papers for AID. Then I was summoned to Seoul in 1971 or 1970. They asked me to draft the supply and demand projects for a five-year plan. I worked with the Economic

Planning Board on doing that for six weeks. I did some other sort of macro kinds of work, being called into Seoul. I got to meet a variety of people at different levels and it was very exciting. I left there feeling quite good that we had really made a positive contribution.

*Q: How long were you there?*

SHERPER: Five years.

*Q: All your different roles, but you had never served in headquarters?*

SHERPER: No. We served in Seoul. I'd go out for monthly staff meetings and that was all.

*Q: Most of the time you were pretty much on your own.*

SHERPER: I was pretty much left to my own. I was very independent. I had to make a lot of independent decisions.

*Q: Did you get much supervision or guidance in what you were supposed to be doing?*

SHERPER: I reported to the head of the Agricultural Development Division, a fellow by the name of Joe. I don't know if you know him. He passed away two or three years ago. He was succeeded by a fellow by the name of John Cooper. John retired. He is still in Washington.

*Q: You started out by talking about community development, but you didn't do much of that.*

SHERPER: That's right. I did not really do much community development. I thought that that's what we were going to be doing, but it just reemphasized to me that community development was really low priority. The training course that we had at Berkeley, which I said was not very good, I felt that I was quite validated when I went to Korea because I really couldn't apply any of the things that I had had during that training course. It was really more agriculture and rural development advising.

*Q: Were you aware that you were sort of the last direct-hire field technician?*

SHERPER: No, I wasn't aware of that.

*Q: It was the end of that period, by and large.*

SHERPER: I think you're right. It didn't strike me until much later. I guess I wasn't really linked into what was going on in headquarters in AID. I wasn't \_\_\_\_\_ in terms---My assignments were mostly determined by people who had heard about me, had heard what I was working on or doing. \_\_\_\_\_ made periodic visits and met me when I was in \_\_\_\_\_, that's about it. There were so many people that I had no idea who they were or what they were doing. That was my first assignment.

*Q: There weren't other people working in your areas in other fields?*

SHERPER: No. Towards the end, there was a guy who was working on private sector development. He depended on my information a lot. He was on a contract under a different division than agriculture. He stayed about a year and that was all. I don't think any of the other people I knew, knew him. I asked people, but I was quite distant from what was going on in the capital.

*Q: How did you find living in rural Korea?*

SHERPER: I enjoyed it. It was great.

*Q: The living conditions were \_\_\_\_\_?*

SHERPER: Yes. We were near a military base that had a commissary. Then when we went up to Seoul for staff meetings once a month, which were on a Friday, I would drive all day Thursday and then come back Saturday or Sunday. Usually I would be in the staff meeting and other meetings on Friday and then Saturday we would go to the PX and commissary and take home our provisions.

*Q: What kind of housing did you have?*

SHERPER: There were three identical houses that were built outside of the U.S. military compound at Hialeah, named after the Florida racetrack. They were very basic, but adequate houses. I remember, when I was there, I decided that I would plant some Italian poplar trees, which I bought in a nursery about 200 miles outside of Pusan. I put in about 15-20 of these trees. We went back 18 years later and they were about 40 feet tall. It was rather shocking. It reminded me of how long it had been since we had been there, but our living conditions were fine. Our daughter when she was old enough went to nursery school on the military base. My wife, being a nurse, volunteered at the clinic on the military base. She also worked with the Korean Girl Scouts and was one of the Girl Scout leaders for the province. When we were in Pusan she worked at a school for the blind, did some teaching, and also did some nursing care there. When we moved back to Pusan, she was volunteering for the Red Cross and for the clinic doing immunizations and different things for them.

*Q: Anything else on Korea?*

SHERPER: No, I think that really covers Korea, which was a fascinating experience. One of the things I should mention is that I saw a lot of residual influence from the war. Those who are listening to this remembering the Korean War from 1950-1953 might recall that the Chinese and North Koreans practically pushed the UN forces off of the peninsula at the Pusan perimeter. As they went through these villages and towns the Chinese and the North Koreans literally assassinated any of the people who were leaders in the community, the school teachers, the doctors, the village council leaders, anyone who had any significant position in education. People remembered that so much it really affected them when I was there. There was a resentment and hatred for what they did when they occupied that territory. That affected a lot of thinking. Once in a while we had security breaches where the North Koreans would come by rubber rafts and land at night to infiltrate the south. Almost always they were captured because anyone who was suspicious in a community was reported to the police.

There was a lot of sense and identity with security and fear of the north. That sort of was an overarching factor in everything that one did there. Also, it made for very strong support of a very strong military machine. The last thing I'll say is that as Korea evolved out of its under-development and its economic woes, people felt more comfortable that they had a better quality of life. They started demanding more democratic freedoms. Park Chung-hee [president 1963-1979] ruled the country for years and got the constitution changed so he could continue to rule; he was in a sense a veritable dictator, effectively a dictator. The uprising by the students year after year and the eventual opening up of the economy and allowing more and more democratic freedoms were, I think, representative of people feeling economically they could take more chances. In other words, they were willing to put up with some political suppression for a while so long as they were advancing and improving the quality of their lives, but there is some point (and I don't know exactly where it is) where they're saying, "Okay, now we really want to get some democratic elections and voting, honest elections, and we want to get rid of corruption." So, you've seen that evolve over recent years.

*Q: So when you were there?*

SHERPER: It was starting to \_\_\_\_\_. There were periodic riots by the students, but they were not extensive. They were always suppressed by the military.

*Q: Were there any democratic movements in rural communities that you were aware of?*

SHERPER: I think there was a strong fundamental democratic base. There were elected officials at the village level. Elections were not new to them. They also had elections in

the National Assembly and so on, which was a little more corrupt, if I could say it. The presidential elections were obviously rigged in a way that only Park Chung Hee could win. They had gone through a series of difficulties, but the future is bright. The important thing now is to look at integrating north and south Korea and the homogeneity of a people that speak the same language and have the same culture and were artificially divided in 1954.

*Q: Did you have any exposure to North Korea?*

SHERPER: No, I don't. I don't think they would accept a united Korea. When I was in Washington with AID, I had a visit from a man who said, "We want to establish an aid program, but we don't know how to do it. Can you help us?" I arranged for him to go through the AID orientation program and project design course, gave him documents, and so on. He was a very ambitious young guy and now their aid program is going pretty well.

*Q: That's quite a turning point. Where did you go from there?*

SHERPER: I always had this desire to go back to school. I applied for long-term training, but I didn't know if I would get it. I had only been with AID for five years. They were short on candidates or something because when I left Korea, I went on home leave. I was notified that they had received my application and it was acted upon favorably for long-term training. So, I was assigned to Syracuse.

*Q: This was for one year?*

SHERPER: This would have been in 1971.

*Q: What did you do at Syracuse?*

SHERPER: I studied public administration. They had a very good program where you could select the courses on public administration "Maybe I'll work on a master's while I'm here." I thought it would complement the master's that I already had in agricultural economics from Minnesota. I did and I worked at it long and hard and was able to get my master's in public administration. It took me about a year to get that degree. I felt that I had become sort of committed to AID and I thought I would move to more of a management position.

I was mostly interested in learning management skills. I realized \_\_\_\_\_ managed my own office. I had a Korean assistant, a secretary, and a driver. I also noted that the organizations I was working with had very weak administrative procedures. They were \_\_\_\_\_ a long time to do and lots of clearances. I always thought there had to be a



better way, but I didn't know a whole lot about public administration, just what I had really picked up as I went along in watching others. I thought that it would be useful for me in my career.

*Q: What was the focus in the courses that you took?*

SHERPER: I was focusing on public institutions. I was also looking at leadership roles and responsibilities. When I got into my first year, I decided leadership would be interesting. Maybe it would take longer. I asked AID if I could extend my nine-month training courses over the summer. When spring came, I started Ph.D. courses and then I learned that the Maxwell School had a very good program that was interdisciplinary where you could pick and choose courses in \_\_\_\_\_ development. I thought my agricultural economics was interesting, but I knew that if I was going to go anywhere in AID, I probably would not be a technical specialist in agriculture, that I really needed to look at management, and some of the broader issues. This interdisciplinary program in the social sciences interested me. To make a long story short, I decided that I would go for a Ph.D. in the specialty area of development economics. So I did that. I went on leave without pay for the second year. Actually, I studied for a total of 17 months during which I did get my master's degree in public administration. Plus I did all my coursework and took my oral and written exams for my Ph.D. and wrote about two chapters of my dissertation. I didn't quite finish my dissertation.

*Q: What was it on?*

SHERPER: A subject that very few people knew much about in Syracuse: land tenure in Korea. I then left in 1973. I went to Washington for my first Washington assignment. The position that I got was in the Africa Bureau working in what they called Development Services. The head of the office was Princeton Lyman. He had about three or four divisions and I was the Deputy in the Agriculture Division. During that time, I did a lot of TDYs (temporary duty). I went to Ghana two or three times and saw the Mission Director, Haven North, out there for the first time. I can remember him asking me to come to Ghana, he asked me if I was interested in an assignment in Ghana the second time I was out there. At that time, I wasn't prepared to leave Washington. I was just getting settled there.

*Q: Too bad for me.*

SHERPER: Then I worked primarily on African programs. This was the Africa Bureau, but I'm saying African programs in terms of technical support, not doing much in headquarters. I was going out doing design-

*Q: What were you doing in the field?*

SHERPER: I was doing primarily designs, evaluations, and sometimes sort of special reviews or studies to look at framework, what we should do in the ag sector, ag sector analyses, and that sort of thing.

*Q: Was there any particular strategy the Africa Bureau had in this agriculture sector or was it just ad hoc?*

SHERPER: There was sort of a little policy unit that Princeton established. He made me a member of that, but we seemed to keep getting carried away with crises like in Zaire. There were two or three others. I can't recall that we ever got to the point of putting together a coherent strategy of what AID should do in Africa. It seemed like I was continually involved in project reviews, putting teams together, and going out myself on TDYs. That's my recollections of that era.

*Q: Do you remember anything about the bureau and what the environment was?*

SHERPER: I have trouble remembering names. We had a wonderful guy who was the assistant administrator in the Bureau whose name was Sam Adams. He was the most pleasant, enjoyable guy. Then he was followed by a guy. All I can remember is that he had a broken leg for much of the time he was there: Stan Scott. I think the bureau management didn't seem to get the attention it needed during that period. I'm not sure I have any idea what his background was, but I know that he seemed to be less interested in the things we were doing. That's all I remember.

Then in 1975, I was getting nowhere on my dissertation. When I came to Washington, I didn't have a day of leave because when I went on leave without pay they require you to use all of your leave. I had now worked for almost three years and I hadn't taken any leave to speak of because I was trying to accumulate it. I managed to go back to Syracuse during the summer of 1975 and made arrangements with my principal advisor to get a dorm room that was empty. I closeted myself in there and churned out my chapters on my dissertation, fed them to my committee for reviews and revised them. I was up there by myself.

*Q: What were your sources for this? You were far away from Korea. Did you have all of that research work with you?*

SHERPER: Exactly. I mentioned before that I had co-authored with Bob Morrow actually the Spring Review of Land Reform, which was done in several countries. In Korea in going through that, I learned that there was very little documentation. So, I picked up everything I could on this interesting topic. I think I had almost everything written on it at the time. I collected that, had copies of it, memos, books, and papers. I

thought, "Sometime I'd like to write on this topic." I never thought about it as a dissertation at the time, but when I put it all together, it made sense for a dissertation. I did this in the summer of 1975 and finished my dissertation.

*Q: Was there anything wrong with the characteristics of land reform in Korea that is useful?*

SHERPER: Oh, yes, there were a lot of very interesting things that came out. They had a law that when they had land reform was proposed many times. What happened after [end of tape]

At the end of the Korean War, the Japanese, who had occupied Korea since 1905 and annexed it in 1910 and held it up to the war, were all sent home. I should say this was after World War II. In 1945, at the end of the war, when they took the peninsula at the 38th parallel, the U.S. military then managed everything in a military government in South Korea until it got on its own feet. The Japanese who were all sent home had taken over the best land in Korea. So all of the land that was owned by the Japanese came into the hands of the Americans. The Americans were the largest landholders in Korea at the end of the second world war. The Americans didn't want this. We wanted to give it back and get the military out.

They were pressing the government for land reform. One of the things that happened in the north is that Kim Il-sung came into power as a puppet of the Soviets. One of the very first things he did when he came to power was to have a land reform, which brought him all kinds of goodwill from the people in the north and gave him a tremendous amount of support. In the south where the Americans had the land, they wanted to have land reform, but they had a very weak president, a national assembly that was also composed of the elite and land owners who had no desire to have land reform. Every land reform effort kept getting stalled from 1948 and 1949. They kept trying over and over. They couldn't get it through the National Assembly. In late 1949, the Americans said, "We're fed up with this. If you can't pass your own land reform bill, we're going to have our own land reform with the land that we have responsibility for." This forced their hand. They had to have a land reform then because the Americans were moving ahead. We were ready to go. This land reform---I think it was like in March or April of 1950, this land reform was finally going to come about on July 1<sup>st</sup>, but something strange happened. On June 23, the invasion came from the North. One of the conclusions I come to in my dissertation is that the reason for the invasion from the North, at least the timing, was to disrupt the land reform that was to start seven days later on July 1st.

*Q: Why was that? Why did they want to stop it?*

SHERPER: Because they knew that if the South had land reform, the government would

have a tremendous amount of support. It was 80% rural. The farmers wanted land reform and they wanted to get it out of the hands of the big landholders. There was a lot of communist sympathy in the South. There were riots in the southern provinces of Chula Nam Do and Chula Puk Do and a lot of sympathy for what was happening in the North. It seemed like land was distributed and that there was a lot more equity and fairness under this so-called communist system. They didn't care what the system was called, but they did recognize that there were an awful lot of inequities in the South. There was a very strong elite and a powerful elite that was ruling the country through the National Assembly. Having had the experience that Kim Il Sung had of having land reform in the North, it was later discovered that his plans when he took over the South were to have his own land reform. Of course, if the South had already done this, it would be a moot point and the southern leaders would have a lot of support. I remain convinced that at least the timing--I can't say that the Korean War would not have happened, but I would guess that certainly the timing would have been different had it not been for the land reform.

*Q: What happened to land reform then?*

SHERPER: Of course, it was totally disrupted. During the war, so many of the land records were destroyed. It wasn't until after the war, which ended in 1953, that they were able to begin to institute the reforms. There was a limit on the size of the landholding for a family. I think it was around four hectares. One of the conclusions I came to is that they needed to review the land reform act and to modify it. There were really no allowances for shifting migration to the urban areas, reducing the number of people in rural areas, increasing mechanization, and that they could in fact farm more efficiently larger pieces of land than four hectares. It has subsequently been revised. I don't know if I had any influence whatsoever on it. I did send copies of my dissertation after I finished to several of my Korean friends in Korea just for their information.

*Q: I'm sure it was instructive.*

SHERPER: To universities and so on.

*Q: Very interesting. Let's continue on. That is very useful input and you may want to add something more on that thesis, work, and so on. After the African Bureau, a rather ad hoc experience that was not as significant as perhaps the next assignment, what did you do?*

SHERPER: In 1976, in the spring, I finished up my dissertation and got my degree from Syracuse. One day, Princeton came to me and said, "Ken, let's have lunch." I said, "Fine." I figured, "Well, I must have screwed up somewhere." We went down to the cafeteria and had lunch. He said, "I haven't told anybody yet, but I'm going to Ethiopia. I would really like you to come with me if you're interested. I think it would be a fascinating experience and I'd like to have you come out with me." I said, "What do you think I can do out

there?" He said, "There are two divisions, one called the Drought Relief Division, which goes on and on. The drought seems to be never-ending there, so they have a permanent division. Then they have an Agricultural Development Division. There are people heading both of those divisions. I feel they ought to be working more closely together and I think both could use your input. What I'd like to do is put you in a position where you're responsible for both of them." I said, "Won't that make it a little difficult for these people who are used to reporting to the mission director?" He said, "No, I think it will work out fine." I said, "I really enjoy working with you and I haven't consulted with Julie, but, yes, in principle, I'm ready to go to Ethiopia. I think it would be an interesting experience."

In October 1976, we packed up and went to Addis. I took this new job. I didn't know much about Ethiopia at the time. I knew this trouble with Mengistu and sort of the newspaper events, but I really didn't know a whole lot about Ethiopia. When I got there, I found that it was very difficult to work. The government was almost run like a big brother government with a lot of fear. There were a lot of people who had supported Haile Selassie who were the key bureaucrats and so on, but the political dimension was very strongly Mengistu.

I hadn't been there more than a few weeks and we would hear tanks shooting up at the palace. There was machine gun fire. Anybody who raised a thought, a hand, or a view against Mengistu was basically wiped out. I also discovered that they were fighting three wars at one time. They were fighting in Eritrea and Tigre, who wanted their independence. They were fighting the Aromas in the south, which were a clan that was very strong and a warrior group that was very poor and never got its fair shake of anything. Then there were the Somalis. My daughter who couldn't pronounce words very clearly called them the "Salamis." They were warring on those fronts. There was restriction on your travel and it was really not a very easy development situation. AID had a plane. It's a very mountainous country. The plane was shot at so many times that we finally had to give it back to the Ministry of Agriculture and resort to land-based transportation.

*Q: Was that any better?*

SHERPER: Not a whole lot. You couldn't get permits to go anywhere. They were very restrictive. You could travel south and you could go into the Riff Valley and a little bit west, but I never got to see the big tourist sites and so on in Ethiopia that I really wanted to see. It's still on my list to go back and do.

We had agricultural research projects and we were working on control of locusts and tsetse fly. We were working on drought problems. I remember Princeton once went by helicopter up into Tigre Province and they found all these people who were literally starving because there was this big drought. This was a big fear of the government

because one of the reasons that they were able to get rid of Haile Selassie is because they claimed that he did not take care of the people when the drought came in the north. Here again was a drought and they couldn't do anything about it, the current regime. We had what was touted as the Minimum Package Program, which was a package of fertilizer, seed, and inputs, that you use so much per unit of land area. So, it was all prepackaged and that was the amount you used and those kinds of things. We found that that kind of support was only going along the main roads and people would walk for two or three days to get to the main roads. The road infrastructure was terrible.

Coming back to this situation where Princeton went up to Tigre with some other officials who were working on drought control, he came back and told me this horrible story about not only were people not having enough to eat, he said their limbs were falling off. They attribute that to this stuff that they're eating. He said, "I brought back a sample. Is there some way that we can send this stuff to the United States and get it tested?" I looked at it and I said, "You have ergot. Do you know what ergot is?" He said, "No, I don't have a clue." I explained to him what ergot is. People were suffering from ergotism. It's a fungus that attacks the seed of the grain and usually is found in barley. Here, it was found in other seeds. It really takes over the seed. It totally encapsulates the grain. It becomes hard so that when you harvest the grain, because it is about the weight as the grain, it grows with the seed. The way you could tell it was affected is that it turns the grain black. That's what ergot looks like. If you eat it, it is highly toxic. What it does is it causes the blood vessels to constrict. It starts on the appendages. What happens is it goes to the appendages and causes the blood vessels to constrict. Eventually the appendage atrophies and very quickly. It isn't a matter of months. This was a matter of a few weeks. People were losing their limbs. I had never seen ergotism because I knew that we had gotten rid of it in the United States many, many years ago. My recollection in reading about it in college was rather limited, but I did know about it. I knew what it was.

*Q: Where did this come from? Was it on the local seed or was it on the seed they imported?*

SHERPER: No, it was from the local seed. I said, "The first thing we need to do immediately is to get word to this area that people should not cook, prepare, eat in any way these black seeds, and that they need to pick every seed out before they use that grain. The other thing that we can do is that we can contact our people in Washington to see if there are any state universities that are still working on ergot. It's questionable. The last ergot outbreak that I know of was in the 1920s in Ireland."

*Q: Had we learned how to control it or eliminate it?*

SHERPER: Yes, we've learned how to eliminate it. We sent a message back immediately to Washington. In fact, they had found one of these lonely researchers out at Washington

State University who was a specialist on ergot. So, I said, "Get him out here. We need him." So, he came out and was able to give us further advice on what to do on controlling it and so on. The government implemented its policies. We also had a program actually for rehabilitation.

*Q: How big an area are we talking about?*

SHERPER: I can't remember the area in size or square miles. It affected parts of three districts. I think that the number of people that died was somewhere around 70-80. There were 200-300 that had lost limbs. These places are so isolated that you don't even know what's going on there, particularly in a war situation where there is nobody traveling up there.

*Q: Where would it have come from?*

SHERPER: It can be airborne. It can come for hundreds of miles.

*Q: It hadn't broken out anywhere else?*

SHERPER: No, it was in that particular area. That was one emergency that we dealt with. We had continual drought in the south. It seemed like we were trying to support movement of grain that would have to be air dropped because you couldn't get into these places. I went to visit some of these areas in our old Chevy Blazers that, I guess, every AID office had. We were trying to cross a riverbed that was very rocky and tore the transmission out of the vehicle. We always traveled with at least two vehicles because we knew in those isolated areas, if you needed help, there were no communications. Those were the days before they used much radio or such things. Pitch a tent and you sit there until a couple of days later you can get some parts coming down from Addis to get you going again. These places were so isolated that we had to use aircraft to drop grain to people. We got into such things as using the military surplus to get engines for the old DC-3 Dakotas, which they must have quit making 50 years ago. They were still flying those old aircraft.

*Q: Was the government cooperative in helping with some relief operations?*

SHERPER: The Drought Relief Authority had its own aircraft for delivering commodities.

*Q: They weren't interfered with by the government?*

SHERPER: No, they knew politically it was important to keep people happy. Those were the kinds of things that---It was another place where you couldn't run a program that was

logical and planned and thought through carefully because there were so many events that came up from day to day. Then the political situation was so unstable.

*Q: Did you talk to the government about programs and so on?*

SHERPER: Oh, yes, you could talk to them about them. We were doing some things. I had a couple of people doing research at one of the research stations in a place called Nazareth. That was about 30 miles outside of Addis. We had a plant pathologist and a genetics person. I had people come in helping. We had people for desert locust control. The sky was black with locusts when they came. We were doing things with one of the International Livestock Institutes, which was located in Addis. There was a very large community of foreigners there and it was because both the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the OAU (Organization of African Unity) were headquartered in Addis. There were a fair number of foreign representatives, but the living conditions continued to deteriorate because of the political situation. It was very difficult to get things done.

During the period I was there relations between the U.S. and Ethiopia sunk to new lows when the government asked that we close down our military unit in Asmara. They gave 48 hours to leave. Then they did the same thing with the military advisors. They had U.S. military advisors because they had a lot of military equipment from the U.S. from the old days of Haile Selassie. They were sent out. Then I was there when they kicked out USIS (United States Information Service). They halved the size of the embassy, but they never picked on AID. They wanted to send home the Marine guards. That's where the embassy stood their ground for the first time, but it seemed like we were always helping our neighbors pack up to get out. I was responsible for overseeing the evacuation of the USIS building, which was at the top of Churchill Avenue, the main drag. It was a big eight-story building. It was a Voice of America (VOA) broadcast center. These people were all evicted and told to leave within 48 hours. I went up to this building and I found that it was surrounded by police. I showed them my ID, that I was American and I came to take American--- They said, "You can't take anything out of the building." I said, "Yes, we can. This property has not been confiscated." After some arguments, I got some trucks up there and I talked to the USIS Director. I said, "What are the most valuable things you have? Tell me what floors they're on and what they are." It was, of course, mostly the cameras and photographic equipment and things like that. I just picked people out of the street. I said, "Do you speak English?" If they said, "Yes," I said, "Do you want to earn so much money?" They said, "Yes." I said, "Then I want to you help me carry stuff down." I just got people and got them moving stuff out. We didn't know when the authorities would wake up and stop us from taking anything out of this building. In fact, we worked at it all day. I took the valuable things out. I left things like sofas, furniture, whatever. The bottom floor was a big printing operation where they printed colored brochures, books, pamphlets. The top floor was the Voice of America broadcasting. Then there was



all the stuff in between. Basically, I had almost everything. I got out everything of value.

*Q: The radio station and all that?*

SHERPER: Yes. I got even the printing presses. I got a forklift truck and put them on the trucks and got them onto the embassy compound. Basically, we saved anything of any value in the building.

*Q: Amazing. The police didn't stop you?*

SHERPER: No, they hadn't figured it out. I went in with sort of an authoritative approach and was able to succeed in doing that.

*Q: My goodness.*

SHERPER: The only two contractors I had left, the ones that I mentioned who were in Nazareth, I was worried about them because they were going out looking at research plots and they had a jeep. So, I said, "I need to know where you are. If you get into problems when you're out looking at research plots, we won't know what to do. I'm putting a radio on your jeep." I had the radio installed, but it had this long antenna, which was terribly unfortunate because about a month later, they were in the research station in a meeting actually, and the local police came in and arrested them for spying because they had this radio on their jeep.

As they were being dragged out, they called out to their assistant "Call Ken Sherper up in Addis and tell him what's going on!" I got this call that these guys were being hauled off to jail. They stayed in jail one night. I was able to get the consular officer to get down there and get them out. Then I refused to send them back to their post until I had assurances from the Ministry of Agriculture that this wouldn't happen again. They wouldn't give me those assurances. I wrote to them, called people, wrote to the Minister. I went to the ambassador and said, "This requires a demarche. You can't have people arrested here. You need to go to foreign affairs and tell them." He refused to drop a note on them and do a demarche. "Oh, that will upset the government."

In those days, you had to have exit visas as well as entrance visas. They required everybody to have exit visas. When the exit visas expired, you had to go around to everybody: to the Electric Board to make sure your electric bill was paid; to the landlord, and so on to get clearances to get an exit visa issued. I knew Italians who had been there for two years and could not leave because they had businesses and their employers said that they owed them wages. All they had to do was accuse you and then you couldn't get an exit visa. So they stayed in Addis for the next few months, the two contractors. I said, "I'm still not getting anywhere with the government. Get some plane reservations to leave

here the day before your exit visa expires. I don't have any assurances of what is going to happen and the ambassador is not helping me." This happened during a period when Princeton went on home leave. I was there and I was acting mission director. Come the day before the exit visas expired, I went with these guys to the airport and put them on a plane. Then I went back and told the ambassador what I had done. He was livid with me. He was so upset. He was so afraid this was going to damage our relations with the Ethiopian government.

*Q: He was still worried about damaging relations as our relations were going down the drain regardless?*

SHERPER: Things were really bad. Princeton was back in Washington just at the time (This would have been 1978.) that the Humphrey Bill set up the International Technical Services (ITS). Who was the administrator then?

*Q: Tom Erlich and then Doug Bennett.*

SHERPER: I think Bennett was. Princeton called me and said, "I had a meeting with Bennett and he told me that he wanted me to work on this ITS proposal." There was like \$10 million they had to get it started.

*Q: This was prior to Doug Bennett's time.*

SHERPER: Whoever was the administrator. Princeton said, no, he really wanted to go back to Ethiopia. He had only served one tour there, two years, and he felt the job was unfinished, and so on. The administrator said, "This is really a very interesting challenge." He said, "We went back and forth like this, dancing, for about 15 minutes. Then finally I said to him, 'Mr. Administrator, do I have a choice?'" He said, "Well, no, you don't." He said, "I'm calling you to ask for your help in shipping my effects back, my dog, and everything," which we did. By that time, we were expert packers anyway from having packed up so many people.

This was an era also when there were the anti-people people and the White Terror and the Red Terror periods. It was very difficult. There were bodies on the street when I'd go to work in the morning. They would take the opposition people out and execute them. They would tie their hands behind their back and then they would execute them. They would leave the bodies on the street with a note on it that said, "Anti-people person" or something like that. There was shooting near our house. There was a ravine---The opposition would infiltrate. Almost every night there would be shooting. My kids were a bit traumatized. The American school was considered one of the best schools in Africa before all of this. I happened to have been the chairman of the board of governors of the school. I did that in my spare moments. Teachers were wanting to leave.

Then the government nationalized all of our housing. Any housing that was rented to foreigners was nationalized. The rents jumped from \$500-800 a month to \$2,000-3,000 a month. The school couldn't afford that. I changed the name of the school from the American Community School to the International Community School. We built housing on the school grounds to avoid this problem because we had a long-term lease on the grounds. The local militias, which were called cabellies, the small community organizations, were given weapons and told they were to defend their territory and they were responsible for the safety of the people. They were also responsible for education, health, and everything else. It was decentralized to these poor, untrained people.

My wife was volunteering services, some in what was called the Black Line Hospital, the main hospital in town, as well as up at the embassy. One of the biggest types of injuries that came into the Black Line Hospital were literally people who were given guns who knew nothing about them and they had shot themselves in the foot. It's what we would consider a joke, but it happened repeatedly. You saw the level of training. These cabellies wanted to take over our school for a drill ground, the athletic field. I went to the Department of Education and tried to stop them. I went to the Department of Labor and the military. They said they couldn't do it, that these people were in power to do what they wanted. I couldn't stop them from using the school grounds for drills, I said, "You cannot bring your weapons onto the school property." I tried to make them leave their weapons outside the gates. I said, "There are children around and I don't want any accidents happening." Finally, I convinced them of that. They understood the safety of the children. They would stack their arms outside of the gates, but it was a real problem. If the school's Ethiopian staff went on strike for something, which they were told they were participating in the management of every business and every school and everything, a strike to them meant they closed the gates and wouldn't let people in or out. It was not just carrying a sign walking back and forth. It was a very, very difficult time. I had no help at all from my friend, the ambassador, who was again worried that we were going to upset the feelings of our host government.

*Q: Was the embassy concerned about the safety of the Americans, the children and all that?*

SHERPER: Safety, yes, but really not--For example, all of the teachers had pouch service. Mengistu cut them off because, according to the agreement with the country, that was only for people who were officially here under some American government auspices. He cut off the use of the commissary. You couldn't buy commodities in the market. In other places, they were using the commissary. Teachers were allowed to use it but he wanted to follow everything to the letter of the law. He was not extending the same courtesies and in many ways not the same protections to the teachers in the school. That was another thing I had to contend with.

A lot of this was derived from when Mengistu took over and nationalized all the American property. There wasn't a whole lot of American business there. I think the total value was like \$22 million. Those were probably inflated because when the claims came in, these businesses inflated the value of their property. The big thing was McCormick Spices. There was a charter aircraft company. There was some pharmaceutical company. During the period that Princeton was there, he tried very hard to negotiate this because of the Hickenlooper Amendment, the U.S. legislation that requires us to cut off aid if property has been nationalized and there hasn't been reasonable compensation provided in a reasonable time frame. A reasonable time frame became a year, then two years. They were trying to negotiate. They did establish an Expropriation Committee to negotiate with and so on. If they would have negotiated just one simple part of this for \$1 million to one of the companies, it would have been progress, and kept things going for a couple of years. Instead, they were giving up something in the neighborhood of \$18-29 million a year in aid resources, but that never happened. Princeton then was gone and the ambassador couldn't negotiate anything.

The result was that we were under pressure to start phasing out our program. Then I had sent back the two contractors that we had. The permits were so difficult for us to do anything, we had decreased the number of our U.S. direct hire staff from around 19 to about 10 or 11. We had a wonderful group of very well-qualified, highly educated Ethiopian nationals. Some of them had been working for 25 years and could run the program. They were so talented. Then we were instructed to phase out. There was a new director that was sent, a young fellow who probably had a few more years in AID, but probably no more management experience than I had. He came out to close it out.

*Q: Was this Ed Hogan?*

SHERPER: No. Ed came out briefly in the interim. He was there for a couple of months. I was Acting and Ed came out. Then this Robert McCloskey came out. He was there during the phase-out period. I left then on home leave. I had extended almost a year. I left on home leave not to return and went back to Washington. I guess in some ways I look back at my experience in Ethiopia as filled with a lot of turmoil and difficulty and the impossibility of getting an effective program underway.

*Q: Did you sense from the earlier days that the situation was not ever going to be resolved for a long time?*

SHERPER: No, we always had hope.

*Q: What had given you hope despite all the problems?*

SHERPER: Maybe it wasn't the staff that was there who gave you---The Ethiopians were great, but they were also getting demoralized, not with AID, but with the government. So many of them had relatives who were killed and had the utmost insult put upon them. In order to retrieve their bodies from the morgue, they had to pay for the bullets. It was large sums. It was terribly important for the Ethiopians to properly bury their dead. That was a factor. The war was continuing.

The other thing that happened during the period I was there (There were many other incidents.) was when the shift came between the Americans and the Russians. Then the Americans took over the bases in Somalia and the Russians gave up those bases, but they came in force to Ethiopia. Literally, for days there were these Russian cargo planes coming in every few minutes day and night, bringing troops, supplies, and whatever. They took over the golf course that was adjacent to our house and turned it into a military campsite bristling with antennas. They brought in Cubans by the thousands. There were, at one point 17,000 Cubans. The Ethiopians loved the Cubans, but they really hated the Soviets. Just the different cultures. The Soviets always traveled in groups and they seemed to be very demanding. They would go out and buy everything on the market and stuff they couldn't get at home like meat. Of course, there was gold and silver there that they could never buy at home. The Cubans were much more happy-go-lucky and friendly and loved to dance and tell jokes and so on.

Then I had a gardener/houseboy who did some work inside and some out. I discovered by his strange actions that he was working as a spy, bringing everything out of my wastebasket to the Cubans to turn over to the Russians, looking for everything from telephone numbers to whatever. The atmosphere was not that pleasant. I couldn't invite Ethiopians to my house because they were watched. Even when we left Ethiopia and we took an Air France flight that stopped in Djibouti, we were supposed to have a brief stopover. They emptied the plane and we sat in the terminal waiting for them to do something to the plane. You could see the plane out the window and the French Foreign Legion there emptied everything out of the passenger compartment, then the cargo compartment, and they found what they were looking for. They took a net and they lowered this thing and put it in a canvas bag. There was a bomb in that plane we were taking from Addis to Djibouti.

*Q: That's a great farewell.*

SHERPER: Yes. The incidents that I look back at, you feel so sorry for the Ethiopians. Even in the school situation, we had given a lot of scholarships to Ethiopians to attend the American School. We had to quit giving them scholarships when I got there because these people were treated differently on the outside once they went to the American School. My daughter was around 12 or 13. Her best friend was an Ethiopian girl. The police came to the school one day and arrested her best friend, who was 13 years old, and

just took her away. My daughter was so distraught. She cried for two days. Just a 13-year old kid. Eventually, she came back to school. It was about two and a half months later. They had put her in an education camp. The crime was that her older sister had trained in the States. Her sister was about 21 or something like that. She was going to university in the States. So that was the crime, but those kinds of incidents can be multiplied a hundredfold or a thousand-fold.

*Q: I gather, despite all this, the U.S. was still trying to hang onto relationships there?*

SHERPER: We were. I think about that small mission headed by Princeton and the Deputy Director was Jerry French. You had people like Marge and Ron Bonner there. You had people like Jess Snyder.

*Q: A very talented bunch of people.*

SHERPER: Peter Shirk and Barry Sudman. These people were just so good at their skills and it was such a wonderful team. Everybody loved to work with Princeton. He was a mentor to many.

*Q: Were there any other programs going on besides the ones you were working with?*

SHERPER: There was assistance to the agriculture college until that was taken over by the military and the Russians.

*Q: This was Alamaya.*

SHERPER: Alamaya, right. The professors would come and talk to me when they would come to Addis and shake their heads at what was going on at Alamaya. It was their beloved institution, which Oklahoma State helped build from the early days of the 1950s. It was a real institution. It was sad for them. They found the Soviets who voted in the staff meetings would vote en masse in one group against anything that they wanted done. They were having such a hard time.

Then we had an education program working with the Ministry of Education. I think it was working on the school curriculum. The big programs were in agriculture and in drought relief. We had some infrastructure activities. We had some Food for Work, rebuilding roads and things like that. What could have been such a wonderful program in one of the poorest countries on this planet was really disrupted by this guy named Mengistu. My Ethiopian friends even now that I meet here, at the UN, and other places don't understand why this guy is still living in luxury in Zimbabwe. They have a strong resentment against him.

*Q: I'm sure.*

SHERPER: The AID program we left with maybe our heads high, but maybe our hearts were pretty saddened. It was a really very difficult time. I did not really realize it, both my wife and I, when we left there. When we got back to the States, we slept for almost two days. We didn't realize how the tension was and how stressed out we were. Somehow you take this day after day after day, but you don't realize that you're really tense about it. It was an experience not to be repeated, but certainly one in which I think that AID, as you look back in its history, can say that it played as good a role and as strong a role as it possibly could.

*Q: Did you have the sense that the government really wanted AID out? From what you were implying, they didn't want it out.*

SHERPER: No, all of the technocrats loved us. It was strictly political.

*Q: But the political people were trying to drive us out.*

SHERPER: Yes.

*Q: But not, like the saying goes, they were---*

SHERPER: They wanted us to take the initiative of leaving. In the end, it was the Hickenlooper Amendment that really forced it.

*Q: There was a major effort, a last gasp, in trying to preserve all the humanitarian routes. There was an exchange of efforts and meetings to try to preserve that part of it.*

SHERPER: Yes.

*Q: I was the one that sent the message to close the mission having been there 25 years ago and helped build the mission in the first place. I was a junior person at the start of most of those projects. After the Ethiopian experience, what did you do?*

SHERPER: I went back for home leave. There was a big discussion about where I would go. There were a lot of issues. The Philippines wanted me to come out to head up their agriculture program. I think it was Bolivia. I think the Philippines were winning the battle. I wasn't too interested in any particular place, although I did not really want to spend another six months learning a language at this particular time. Everything was pretty much lined up for me to go to the Philippines and then all of a sudden the Africa bureau came in with a bid for me, as I heard later, to go to Lesotho as the deputy director. Since I had already been in the Africa bureau in Ethiopia and had not completed two

tours there, they felt they had priority on me. I said, "Fine, I'll go to Lesotho."

So, I went to Lesotho. The director there was Frank Correll. It was a very different experience. This was in 1979. I think it was probably November or maybe December. It was a different experience of working sort of in the middle of South Africa, but not in South Africa. Everything seemed to be determined by South Africa. Our program there was again very strongly agriculturally oriented, but we had a very major education program, education curriculum development and teaching materials. We did some work in training in health, but agriculture was the big one. We were doing a lot of work on bench terracing.

*Q: What was the agricultural situation in Lesotho?*

SHERPER: Agriculture was very weak and very poor. The reason why is because Lesotho became a protectorate under British rule after the Boer War in about 1908. The fight between the British and the Dutch or Afrikaners---The war went on back and forth. King Moshoeshoe took his people, the Lesotho people, and brought them up to the mountains in the center part of South Africa, where nobody else would want it. The mountains were quite barren and not very productive. He then asked that the Lesotho land become a protectorate of the British and the British agreed, providing that he would give up all of his good agricultural land that was on the other side of the river from Kubung.

So the good agricultural land then was ceded to what became South Africa. Lesotho, although the king saved his people from going through a war, was really in a very poor area. It was highly mountainous. Maybe 80-85% of the country was mountains. The only part that was really good agriculture in terms of crop production was the perimeter on the north and some on the west side and then there was a little bit on the south. The center part of the country was used for grazing goats and some sheep, but it was very poor agricultural land.

The kinds of projects that we had there were farming systems projects and agricultural planning, statistics, strengthening their capacity in those areas, soil conservation. We had environmental projects on the parkland. The last year I was there, much of the land was leased to South African farmers to come in and farm because they had tractors, equipment. This was the land along the border, which was the more productive land. Then they would hire them to come in and do the plowing, planting, and harvesting, and would give them a percentage of the crop. In some ways, that made a lot of sense for what they did. South African farmers are very good, very productive.

The country would depend upon imports agriculturally, but they had a weak planning system and a weak agricultural statistics system. Their research system, also an



extension, was fair but needed some help. So, those were all areas that we worked with. I think it probably improved their capacity, but I'm not sure that for those institutions all of that translated into higher productivity. Having been there only two years, it's hard to see results of that type.

The big income for Lesotho was primarily from two sources. One was something called the Customs Union, which South Africa ran and managed. They then gave a percentage of the customs' receipts that it managed for the Customs Union. So, Lesotho received pretty good receipts from that.

The other main income for the country was from remittances from Lesotho workers who worked in the gold mines, the coal mines, the diamond mines, and so on in South Africa. They would go out on 11-month contracts and come back for a month and then go out again for another 11 months. They made pretty good money. When you went to buy consumer products, you had to go to South Africa. All the major stores were on the other side of the border. It was only in the last six months that I was there that really the first major supermarket came into Lesotho, which would have been in 1981. When I arrived in 1979, the Hilton built a hotel. We were scheduled to move into a house and construction of it was not completed, so we lived in this hotel for about four or five months before it was opened. They let us stay in the rooms. We couldn't get any food. They were working on the exterior and interior of the building, but they let us have rooms for like \$25 a day, so that's where we stayed. We had two rooms. Our kids were in one room and we were in one room.

Our kids went to the local school there and it proved quite inadequate. When the first opportunity arose, we had them take the exams for enrolling into Waterford School in Swaziland. So, they went over there and did two years of their schooling in Swaziland, which really affected them in many ways. I think it was a very positive experience for them. It certainly affected their lives, as many of their fellow students were refugees from South Africa who were sent there to avoid the apartheid situation.

The program there was quite interesting. We had a very interesting group of people in the Ministry of Agriculture, a woman who headed the Planning Division, and the soil conservation people became good personal friends.

*Q: These were in Lesotho?*

SHERPER: Yes. We had a lot of experiences because of apartheid that were quite interesting as well. We used to have to buy all of our vehicles, for example, in South Africa. I recall one time I went over to pick up a vehicle. I took a Lesotho staff member with me to drive the old vehicle back. It wasn't ready. We had to wait two or three hours, so I went to a barbershop to get a haircut and the Lesotho guy didn't want to come into

the barbershop with me. I said, "You come in. All you're going to do is wait. This won't take more than 15 minutes because there is nobody else in there." So he came in and sat on a bench. He was reading a magazine. The barber asked if he wanted a haircut and he said that, no, he was waiting for me. I sat in the chair. As he was getting ready to put the apron cloth over me, he started saying things like, "You know, your friend shouldn't be in here." I said, "He's just waiting for me. He's not getting a haircut. I asked him to come in." He said, "It's going to chase away all my other business." I said, "Wait a minute. What's your problem?" He started taking off on all of these issues about the blacks and so on. I was so angry that I ripped off the apron and threw it on the floor and walked out of there. I said, "Come on, let's get out of this place."

I've had other incidents like when I went to Ladybrand, which is a small town in South Africa just across the border from Nlesero. I went to the cleaner's to bring a suit to get it cleaned. This was my first trip to Ladybrand and I wasn't that familiar with apartheid. I went in and I asked the guy if I could get my suit cleaned. He said, "No, you'll have to go in the other entrance. This is for Nelonkis. You'll have to go in the one for Blonkis." So, I went out the door, down the steps, out about seven or eight feet, up the next steps, into the door, and there was the same guy who was going to serve me. The counter was continuous all the way along. There was a dividing wall from the front wall up to the counter, but all he did was move down a few feet. I went outside, around, and back up. I said, "This is ridiculous. You're the same person. I've got the same suit. You make me go around to another door to come in to get the service. I don't need that." I took my suit and walked out.

So, there were always these strange things that were hard for me to get used to. I did learn that I wouldn't put my Lesotho staff in the embarrassing position that I did with the one I took for a haircut. When I took him to Bloemfontein or wherever to pick up a car again, I would go and eat at the international hotel or whatever places that would not be embarrassing for them. It was difficult for me to adjust to that. Probably one of the worst incidents I had was when my wife became extremely ill. It was in the middle of the night at 1:00 am. We had to get her to a hospital. The border was closed at 11:00 pm. We were in this Hilton Hotel with no services. There was a house doctor supposedly available. I sent my daughter down to the desk because I couldn't leave my wife to ask that a doctor be sent up and they wouldn't pay any attention to her because she was a little girl, 12 years old. Eventually, [end of tape]

I had to call the Minister of Foreign Affairs to call the gate to have them open the gate and also to call the South African police in order to open the gate so I could get my wife to the hospital across the border in the middle of the night. It was a very frightening experience. It took about two and a half hours to get her in a place where it should have taken 20 minutes.

*Q: The hospital was right across the border then.*

SHERPER: That's right. Even when I got her to the hospital, I had called the doctor ahead of time, called the hospital, and he called the hospital, and because the ambulance driver and the nurse attending her in the ambulance were Lesotho. The Afrikaans woman who was the head warden at the hospital would not allow them to bring my wife in until she came out with a flashlight into the ambulance and saw for herself that the patient was white. Eventually, we did get her in. Of course, the Lesotho nurse didn't want to turn over her patient too quickly either. She played it for everything she could. The tension because of apartheid affects so many things you do in your daily life.

*Q: It's so pervasive.*

SHERPER: It was very pervasive. The incidents that we faced were minimal or nothing compared to what the Lesotho people face or even the black South Africans.

*Q: What did you see then as the prospects for agricultural development in Lesotho?*

SHERPER: I saw very limited. I think you have to look at where the comparative advantages are. The one thing that they had a lot of in their mountain valleys was water. So, they did start a multi-year project to build a dam and sell water to South Africa. That's one thing they had that South Africa wanted and needed. I think it is rather foolish to depend upon remittances, as you can see what happened to the countries in the Middle East that depended upon remittances from Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War when they sent so many of them home. The outlook in my view for agriculture in Lesotho is for very specialized cash crops that have high market value because they have limited land resources that are very productive. They probably always will be food importers. They need to accept that and look at their other comparative advantages. They have a pretty good skilled labor force and it does seem to me that that presents possible opportunities for the light industries and small entrepreneurship. I think they could compete quite well.

*Q: What were these high value crops you were talking about?*

SHERPER: I know there is a big demand for vegetables, flowers---When I say "vegetables," it's a pretty broad spectrum of traditional things. It can be cabbage, carrots, radishes, and some of the root crops. I don't think that they're set up for things like tomatoes or lettuce. I think flowers because it is very specialized and there is a niche market potential for that. They also have other things like mohair and goats and goat milk. Probably there is some limited demand for that. There is also potential in their crafts. They do wonderful weaving, silver work and such things. I think they're going to be a country that will develop based upon the small kind of niche markets and crops and specialized industries.

*Q: Did you do anything with all these mountainous areas?*

SHERPER: One of the things that they could do is that there is a huge national park in the southern end of the country that could bring tourism from South Africa. South Africa has its own parks, but foreigners don't necessarily want to go to South Africa all the time. There are small parks in South Africa that I visited that I found to be absolutely fantastic like William and Mary. Such places like that that are small and not visited maybe as much as Kruger and some of the other more famous ones. They should build onto the tourism that is in South Africa and draw a portion of it to them. I think the mountains can do that.

The main transportation in the uplands is by pony. The Lesotho pony is kind of an interesting creature in itself. The Irish had a big project there when I was there to upgrade the pony breed because the back was relatively weak and they wanted to strengthen the spinal area of the horses so that they could carry their passengers more easily, their loads. They have a different culture. They are very famous for wrapping themselves in a blanket when they ride their horses. They have this Lesotho woven hat, which is kind of unique. I think there is a lot of tradition and culture would bring some tourism there.

*Q: What do you think our main contribution is?*

SHERPER: I think it was mostly, during the period I was there at least, in trying to put in place some of the planning and management systems in agriculture. We were piloting this big farming systems project where you would take a relatively small unit of land, which is what they had, and see if you could make it sort of subsistence plus. That is people could live on it without having to purchase a whole lot off the farm. That meant maybe having a cow and some chickens and a few goats and growing your own gardens and enough crops to feed your animals, sort of a diversified unit. That activity was going on when I left. I would say the preliminary results were not that great. I would not be promoting that if I were going back there. I obviously have to review---

*Q: Why did you think it was not working?*

SHERPER: I think it was inefficient. It's a lot more efficient to specialize. Your productivity and, hence, your income, could be enhanced a lot more by specializing in a crop, livestock, in things that would be higher income. One of the things that could be done in agriculture in Lesotho that really hasn't been exploited has been the poultry industry. There is a big demand for poultry in South Africa. Now that the borders are pretty well open, that would be one opportunity for them. It doesn't take a whole lot of land area, doesn't have to be totally flat land. That's an area that I would be looking at. There is also the potential for the swine industry, for pig production. Again, there is some

demand locally, but again most of it would have to be exported. Those are the kinds of things that they need to do to look for those specialized---

*Q: It really needs to be tied into the South African economy even though politically that is very difficult. In the long run that would be the logic.*

SHERPER: I do think there are opportunities to sell in South Africa now that didn't exist when I was there. South Africa was much more controlling of what was going across the border. Now, it's a much friendlier atmosphere. I think the opportunities are selective, but where there is comparative advantage and there are good markets, they really ought to look at those areas and focus on them. It's a country of maybe two and half million people. It's a very small country, but it is fascinating and unique like so many countries. If one would start with a clean slate, one would say you would never make a country out of this blob on the globe.

*Q: A country like that.*

SHERPER: Yes, but it exists; it's there. I think one has to recognize that they're one of those countries that will be affected greatly by both regionalization and globalization. They need to integrate themselves into both the South African economy and the global economy to the extent they can.

*Q: In the region of southern Africa?*

SHERPER: Right. They are active in SADC (Southern African Development Community). They are not as actively involved like some of the other countries, Zimbabwe and so on. They ought to be taking advantage of those things in terms of infrastructure.

*Q: Do they have the capacity and leadership in government?*

SHERPER: You raise a very good point. The King, King Moshoeshoe II, who was educated in the UK and whom I met a couple of times, is very, very bright, a very capable and competent individual; however, there is a lot of fear of him having any significant power. Lebowa Jonathan, who ruled for many years and ruled when I was there, is a bit of an autocrat.

Subsequently, they have had problems recently, in fact, with having to have South African troops come in to put down potential coups. There is a problem in the structure of the military. I know that we have been trying to help them sort out some of these things with seminars about the role of the police and the military in relation to civil society and the government. I think civic education needs to be strengthened there, the

responsibilities of the people under a democracy and, in particular, the military and the police. All in all, I think it's a fascinating country that has got some instability politically, has moderate to possibly good potential to become adequately sufficient economically to survive as a country, but I think its biggest problems will be political, not economic. [end of tape]

I left Lesotho in December 1981. At that time, the timing was associated with getting our kids back in high school to finish and prepare for college. We were only in Lesotho for about a two-year period. That's after being in Ethiopia for three years. Normally I would have stayed in Lesotho a second tour. I decided against the wishes of the Director, since I was only the Deputy Director there, but I was able to persuade him to let me go for personal reasons at that time.

When I went back to Washington, I did have some choices on which office and bureau to work in. It was Brad Langmaid who convinced me I should come to the Near East Bureau. My brother Keith had been working in the Near East Bureau and had just departed about the time that I was leaving. In fact, they were hoping that I would take his job. He was the Division Chief for Agriculture and Rural Development. They changed their offer and asked me to head the office. I took that challenge. Near East Tech, as it was called, was relatively small in terms of the office. It was probably the smallest. It had a total of about 35 people, of which about 27 or 28 were professionals. The areas of work were agriculture, rural development, health and population. They were also into environmental issues. Those were the three main things that they were working on.

After I had been there about a year, there was an effort to merge a couple of the bureaus, Near East and Asia. I helped in the design of those structures in terms of the combined technical office and was there through the transition period.

*Q: What was your understanding of the reason why they wanted to combine these?*

SHERPER: Frankly, I never really supported their combination. I thought there were adequate differences so that one could concentrate and focus more on. For example, in the Near East, the Arab region and North Africa, which had a lot of similarities, were to me quite different from Southeast Asia and East Asia. I think the rationale for it was, there would be some savings. The savings in terms of personnel were very limited. Basically, sort of division heads. Maybe there was a savings of about six or seven people, not very big for what the cost was. Brad, who became the deputy of the combined Near East/Asia Bureau, asked me to stay on for a year or more to solidify the combination of those two tech offices. It was Asia DR (Development Resources) and it was Near East Tech. I believe that we became a DR office at that time. That was before there was a European Bureau. So, we had some programs mostly through humanitarian relief and others, earmarks that were in places like Poland and a few other places in Eastern Europe.

Italy had the earthquake rehabilitation. So, we had all of these European things, plus countries clear out to the South Pacific Islands. Geographically, it was a horrendously huge area. For somebody like me that wanted to visit each country to understand what was going on, it was a long-term process. I must say I didn't totally complete it. I probably only got to about 90% of the countries, but it was very interesting. The size of the combined office included about 45 professionals and about 15 support staff. I tried to put them in close proximity geographically, which took two years to do. At one point, I had two divisions on one floor, one division over in Rosslyn, another division on the floor above, and the fifth division was in the old State Department SA-1 (State Annex-1) building. It was a problem. We finally got the area and it had to be totally rehabilitated and gutted and new cubicles put in but we did eventually attain getting the whole office together. It was a long, agonizing process. The five divisions that I had at that time were agricultural rural development, health and population, environment and natural resources, science and technology, and education and human resources. Actually, it was a very active time, but it was a lot of fun because we made some very important steps forward in supporting our field offices. We had really good backstopping. There were always people who wanted to work in that division. They had heard about it and people were coming in from the field and asking if they could get a job in this office.

*Q: What kind of steps forward are you talking about?*

SHERPER: The kinds of things are a major initiative on environmental issues, particularly supporting GEF (Global Environmental Facility), and working on developing environmental plans. We were doing environmental assessments for the World Bank at that time. We were helping do national environmental planning. I think it was a time that our environmental program really blossomed in AID. Other things that were going on were helping get APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) up and going for the Asia region.

*Q: What was that?*

SHERPER: That was the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, which ended up being a very high-level conference that is attended annually by heads of state, the United States being a member, and all of the Pacific Rim countries. At that time, we never realized how important it was. Things were delegated down to lower level staff, but when the whole concept of globalization took hold and the trade issues became important, we ended up having this sort of major regional program that we were supporting. It was very exciting.

*Q: What kind of a program are you talking about?*

SHERPER: It was basically focusing on getting the countries to cooperate on development programs where there could be exchanges of information and technology, in

the hope that that would promote trade among the participating countries. What I think elevated it to heads of state level was when they got into policy issues related to trade and globalization. Now you have where the ministries of finance, Treasury Secretary, for example, meet on these issues annually. We played a secretariat role initially and supported it. A new secretariat was begun by their own among the APEC countries. They became basically a coordinator and eventually moved from coordination to supporting coordination by themselves. APEC grew beyond my imagination. I never thought it would become such an important regional organization, but now it is.

*Q: And it's still continuing.*

SHERPER: Yes, it continues today. There was obviously a lot of work done in the 1980s in agriculture. There was a lot of focus on strengthening CGIAR (the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research) institutions---that is, the International Agricultural Research institutions.

*Q: Did you have a role in that?*

SHERPER: Yes. We supported CGIAR, which is their association. We also did a lot of separate and individual support to some of the international research organizations with supporting what was global or regional research. We obviously had a lot of work to do with other donors as a technical office, mostly exchanging information, jointly working with the World Bank and UN organizations and others in the particular technical areas.

*Q: Were there any other initiatives related to the other sectors that you mentioned?*

SHERPER: On science and technology, there was a lot of work that was done by our office in renewable fuels and trying to use---For example, Pakistan had a very big program to use their low quality coal resources, which were very extensive, but there was high-sulfur content. I don't understand all the technology, but I do know that we promoted these fuel coal bit furnaces that would greatly improve the efficiency of the fuel, basically grinding it up into dust and putting it through a process. As I understood it the coal dust is blown into the furnace, which burns very clean. It burns it all up rather than leaving slag and so on. That technology was supported and tried for electrical power generation in Pakistan, which was a very major effort that we worked on for some years.

There were other areas that we were working in population, particularly in countries like Bangladesh and Thailand where we were trying family planning techniques. They became trial countries where there was success in trying Norplant, the implant, and some of the other technologies, particularly sponge and others that were promoted. We had a lot of exciting things that were going on in our office all the time. The Bureau Deputy Assistant Administrator, Jim Norris, who became the first Director in Moscow---Charlie



Greenleaf was there for a while. It never seemed like it was routine when I worked in that office. There were always new things happening. It was quite fascinating. It was always juggling a lot of work.

*Q: Was there anything in particular that you were trying to do to change things or you were just trying to keep all of it working?*

SHERPER: I think my biggest responsibility was knowing what was going on. I had very good division heads. I had to keep the DAA and the AA (Deputy AID Administrator and AID Administrator) apprized of what was happening on a regular basis. I was doing a lot of things in terms of writing papers and documents for the administrator's office related to what was going on in our bureau. On the private sector side, there wasn't much.

*Q: That came later?*

SHERPER: Yes, the private sector side came later, but we were also doing some things related to that. My role was two things that became very key. One was the coordination of all the multitude of activities and having a sense of what was going on and giving it some direction and cohesion. The second thing was to carry this thing through where we were merging these two offices. There were differences among people. They had to do things a little bit differently. They had to work with different people, and processes were different. Sometimes tempers were short. It was this transition period that absorbed a lot of my energy.

*Q: Did they ever bring these two streams together?*

SHERPER: Yes. I felt quite good by the time that I left there. It was really operating quite smoothly. On that task, I felt that I had been reasonably successful.

*Q: Was there anything in the processes of project development, review, and approval processes that were changing at that time?*

SHERPER: Absolutely. We did a review of what the responsibilities of the different types of officers were. I did another review of the kinds of documents that we were handling and who was responsible for clearing, drafting, clearing, and approving. I did the same for documents that were sent to the field or came in from the field. As a result, we did a lot more delegation to the field, documents that we felt we didn't need to see. We cut out a number of clearances.

One of the biggest problems I had in the transition and combining these two offices was that the Asia Bureau had a separate office of project development, while Near East Tech did not. These were project development officers whose sole responsibility in life was to

design projects. Generally, they were generalists and not technical specialists. They were the ones in the Asia Bureau that chaired the project review meetings. In the Near East it was chaired by the technical people. This became a very big bone of contention. We had to eventually sign a treaty on how this would be handled. I think the project development officers felt they were squeezed out a little bit on this. The technical officers also felt very upset in the sense that they were looked upon as somebody who only knew a very narrow technical specialty, did not know how to run a meeting, did not know how to write. Those functions could only be performed by somebody who had an arts and literature major. There were these differences that it really did take some time to meld them. We had to get through the roles and responsibilities, who is doing what, and to settle the differences. By having a couch in my office people could come in and bare their souls and their concerns. There was a time when there was a lot of handholding. Particularly some people had to move on to other jobs outside of the office. It was not easy. It's never fun, but in fact it worked out as well as it could have.

*Q: Were there any major programs or projects that you had a personal interest in promoting or supporting?*

SHERPER: I really tried not to have my own personal wishes felt that way. I delegated very heavily to the division heads and their staff. The ones that I followed were those that had congressional earmarks in terms of projects and programs. I also had to go from time to time up on the Hill and argue our cases. Then the other types were those projects that caught the attention of the administrator or the assistant administrator who entered the bureau, some special concerns that they had. I had my hands full with those kinds of special activities without developing my own-

*Q: What kind of earmarked projects?*

SHERPER: I can go on and on. One of the more contentious was Senator Packwood's earmark to do forestry work in Nepal. He had a very demanding staff member who came and told us who was going to do what and how. In fact, we were told not only that there would be a project, but who would manage it, the federal lab, as well as the name of the person in that lab, the species of trees that should be planted, and from whom they should be purchased in Senator Packwood's state of Oregon. When we floated this initial proposal to Nepal and it was sent to the foresters from Australia, the UK, the UN, and others (because there were major forestry programs there), they thought the idea did not merit any consideration. Yet we had this tremendous pressure from the Senator's office to do it and he was very critical of us.

*Q: Why were they so interested in that?*

SHERPER: Because the individual who wanted to sell the seedlings and nursery stock in

Oregon was also a person who ran in certain seasons a trekking company in Nepal. He took tourists on trekking, backpacking treks in Nepal, but he had this business in Oregon. He was also a war veteran who had been quite distinguished in the war by his bravery and who Senator Robert Packwood had apparently supported very strongly for some reasons. It was because of this and this individual that this whole thing started. Eventually, we were able to sort it out. It took a visit to Nepal by the deputy administrator, a meeting with the king of Nepal, and senior officials, ministers, and so on, for them to accept it. They didn't want to just take it either without some technical rationale for it.

*Q: There wasn't any merit?*

SHERPER: There wasn't any merit, but we eventually convinced them to modify the project so that there would be some value to it. We had to move it from the areas that they chose to do the plantings to one where the climatic conditions were acceptable for this kind of poplar tree that they were pushing. That's one example.

I can go on to Senator Al D'Amato's (New York) earmarks for the earthquake in Italy. For 10 years after the earthquake we were still building schools and hospitals in a country that could well afford to build its own schools and hospitals, but we got our \$10 million a year. Senator Inouye's (Hawaii) earmark on milkfish year after year after year for research to be carried out at the University of Hawaii. It's incredible what kind of micro-management we had from the Congress and I presume still exists. I can remember going up on the Hill meeting with key staffers associated with the development group. When they asked me what could be done to assist AID, I said, "The best thing you can do is to do everything you can to get the earmarks off of our backs and out of the bill. It causes an incredible amount of work. Many times they do not make economic sense. Sometimes they don't meet basic technical requirements. Often, if they are even of merit, they are very low priority, not something we should be in when we have so few resources." I always used to ask them, "Why do you have development professionals working in this development organization if you aren't going to trust their judgment on what should be done? If you want to make the decisions up on the Hill, then what is the point?"

*Q: What did they answer?*

SHERPER: They just sort of smiled and said, "Well, that's the way things are." Unfortunately, AID resources were seen very much like domestic pork; it was just international pork. Not all congressmen and senators were like that. I think one of the things that bothers you about these earmarks is that I'm not even sure that the congressmen or senators know about them. There are also 7,000-8,000 staff members. They have their own interests and their own people that come to them. Then they come to

you saying, "This is the wishes of the Senator or Congressman," which may or may not be the case. Although I wouldn't say that they could do things without the support or approval of the congressman or senator, many times the elected officials have so many things to do that they cannot follow these things. Somebody says to them, "What do you think about having AID continue to work on milkfish for our friends at the University of Hawaii?" We had so many of these kinds of earmarks. Of course countries where there were ESF funds (Exchange Stabilization Funds), where there were program monies like in Egypt, it was incredible the kinds of projects we were doing there. I had to go to Egypt at least twice a year during this time just to review the projects and suggest what even should be dropped.

There were certain projects they had that should not have had funding continued, things that I recommended strongly against. There was some poultry house construction and materials laid around years; nothing happened. Aquaculture. They had one to put generators along the Nile. The government was supposed to build the concrete slabs to put these small generating units on. The government never built those slabs and the generators sat in the warehouse for years and years and years. There is a point when, if you come from the outside, from Washington, you're sometimes able to say things and do things that people who are resident in the country can't get done.

*Q: For example?*

SHERPER: Like what I just mentioned in Egypt. When I would go out to Egypt, it was the time that they had the reviews with the government, like the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) tripartite reviews. I think congressional earmarks have been a real problem for AID. I continue to believe that is something that really needs to be managed or controlled in some way.

Anyway, wrapping up, I guess I did a lot of traveling myself when I was in that large office. I think they were very positive days in terms of what we were able to accomplish. I felt very good when I left that office that things, even though there was the bump of the transition and the combination of that---

*Q: Why don't we jump to when you came back to that office and added the Private Sector Bureau to maintain that flow? You left for Yemen and then came back again, right?*

SHERPER: Yes.

*Q: And you came back when?*

SHERPER: I left there in February 1987. I returned to that bureau heading the same office in about June of 1990. It may have been a little later, August, but it was

approximately that time.

*Q: What was different?*

SHERPER: What was different was the Private Sector Bureau had now been combined with Asia and the Near East Bureau. We had an additional office that worked explicitly in private sector activities. By and large the private sector activities were supporting activities in the Newly Independent Countries (CIS). The Wall had come down and there was this big rush to get some support, some help into private sector companies and so on. The effort to create the European Bank for Reconstruction---It was going through a lot of pitfalls. We worked with the eastern Europe and the CIS country bureau, which was established approximately at that time in late 1990/1991. We tried to provide credit and so on. We had a very big microcredit program under that division. It began as an earmark from Congress at the time. It was only about \$70-\$80 million a year. The first couple of years we couldn't meet the earmark, but eventually we did. There was a big push on the microcredit side.

*Q: Microcredit meaning what?*

SHERPER: It was credit for small entrepreneurs, for working with small farmers, small farm operations.

*Q: What does micro mean? What level are we talking about?*

SHERPER: It was generally under \$300 loans. It was a little higher than the Grameen Bank, but it was still quite small. The funds were transmitted through an intermediary bank of some type in the country. We had people who came into this division from the banking industry. They had little or no experience or knowledge either in overseas work or certainly of AID. They knew the process and procedures for making loans and what kind of training you needed for loan officers and what kind of mechanisms and paperwork you needed to transfer resources quickly. I think we had a few bumps in the road in trying to get that program up and going. It went very slowly, but it went quite well after it got started.

*Q: This was mostly in the CIS countries?*

SHERPER: Actually there was a big push in those countries, but we also had programs in Africa and some in Southeast Asia getting companies that would make small castings, or that would make and assemble water pumps for villages. Some were companies that built carts or pieces of machinery. Some were service industries, retail sales stores, bakeries, etc., but I never was in that office that long to see the longer-term results of that program.

*Q: Were there other private sector initiatives that you were involved in?*

SHERPER: The other big thing was working on the internal side with the Department of Commerce. We set up a computer website. It wasn't really a website at that point in time, but it was a computer based listing of all of the companies that were interested in getting married to some U.S. company. Commerce would send people over to look at our stuff. We also set up a direct link to them so they could have the same information.

The other thing we did was a series of promotions of U.S. linkages by bringing trade interest groups to the U.S. or bringing Americans to some of the countries in groups and looking at the various potential investments that might be available. They'd come on their own money.

*Q: Would that work? How did you set that as an AID kind of activity?*

SHERPER: Actually, I brought one of these trade groups to Yemen when I was there. That was quite interesting. We had nearly 25 people who were looking for investments. I consider it a success because we actually got one direct investment and two that tied up with Yemeni firms to be sales agents for them. They can be successful, but it has to be really well planned.

*Q: Were you involved in the Private Sector Bureau's interest in direct investment? Wasn't that part of their initiative at one time?*

SHERPER: That was, but we never had a major program or effort for direct investments when I was there. The focus was really on microcredit and trade missions, promotion of trade. The major direct investment activities were not in that.

*Q: Anything else about your initiative at that time, other areas during this latter period?*

SHERPER: The period that I was in Asia/Near East with some responsibilities for private sector activities was only about seven or eight months, so it was a relatively short period. I think there wasn't anything else in particular. It was [end of tape]---

the new thing on the block. Maybe I could just go back a bit to February 1987 and pick up when I went to Yemen.

*Q: What was the situation in Yemen at that time?*

SHERPER: Yemen was at the time in a fairly stable situation. President Ali Abdullah Saleh had been in office for some years and, in fact, all the time I was there he was president. I was there during some very interesting years. The three and a half years I was

in Yemen saw the first elections ever held in Yemen, the first national elections.

*Q: Were we involved in supporting those?*

SHERPER: No, not directly, only on a peripheral basis. I saw the unification of North and South Yemen. I think we had some very interesting programs. I guess one of the things that sort of was a challenge to me when I went to Yemen was the fact that I was told when I got my briefings in Washington before I went out that, "Look, because it's a Muslim country, you're not going to be able to do anything in population and family planning, you're not going to be able to do much with women, and the big programs that you're going to be focusing on are in agriculture and some on education. They have a PL480 program and it's pretty stable, so we don't expect any major shifts in the program."

Maybe I sort of took that as a little bit of a challenge knowing that the development process is never static. When I was out there one of the things that I did was to expand our program for primary health care, reorient it, and expand it. We built primary health care centers. As part of that we had brought a few midwives to Yemen to be trainers of Yemeni nurses and midwives. One of the things that I sort of decided was that I had about seven or eight very bright Yemeni women working in my office. I sent them out on a survey (since only women could talk to women) doing a very informal general survey to find out what women thought their biggest needs were and the biggest problems that they faced were. When they came back, family planning was one of the biggest things. Women wanted it; the men didn't.

*Q: So they knew about it. They knew there was such a thing.*

SHERPER: They knew it existed. They knew what men thought. They were listening to the mullahs and they believed what they were told in terms of the Koran. When I went to villages, I visited families that had 10 and 12 and up to 18 children. Not only the infant mortality rate was unusually high (about 170.), but also the maternal mortality was running around 11 or 12 per thousand, which is outrageously high. I thought this was a terrible situation and something needed to be done about it. What I devised was with the Ministry of Health, which was very antagonistic to USAID, but they did agree to do some education of women through health services. I brought in a couple of women health professionals who specialized in women's health and ran a series of workshops on reproductive health. They were very well accepted. The women just crowded to get into these workshops that would last for about five or so days. They would have to travel long distances, but they would come to these. I always made sure that it was opened by a mullah and got the blessings. These women when they would talk about reproductive health got into family planning matters, obviously. I thought this might be a problem, but, in fact, the women wanted it and it went off very, very well. I did this each year. I ran a whole series of workshops around the country in all of the major towns. That was one

thing that I got very---

*Q: You found American specialists who could do that kind of thing well?*

SHERPER: No, usually the two that I used most were Americans, but they were Egyptian naturalized Americans, so they spoke Arabic. They were from California, but they had been raised when they were young in Egypt. Then what I did was after the survey was conducted by my staff, I said, "Do you think of women leaders in government positions, in political positions?"

*Q: There were some?*

SHERPER: There are some, that's right. Many times they are wives of the wealthier or whatever. I said, "Do you think that they would have lunch with me?" They didn't think so. I said, "If I had a lunch in a hotel, do you think they would come?" They said, "Well, maybe." I said, "What I want to do is discuss with them some of these development issues. We have to Yemenize this process." I invited them to lunch. I think I invited about 35 women. These were women leaders around Sana'a. I had my staff carry the invitations and talk to them and then follow it up with telephone calls right up to the day of the luncheon. I got 32 of the 35 that came.

*Q: My goodness. Very good. Did they know what they were coming to?*

SHERPER: They were coming to lunch and they were going to talk about women's development issues with the USAID Director. They didn't know what that really meant, but it was a free lunch, I guess. It was in a hotel, a relatively neutral place. The hotel people said, "The only time we've seen that many Yemeni women together is when there's been a wedding." They were quite surprised that I was able to get that many people for lunch. In this luncheon, after lunch, I asked them, "Would you be interested in helping me? I want to help the women of Yemen, but I don't know what to help them with and what is the most important or the highest priority. I would like to have a workshop with women attending it. I would bring in some women facilitators. We would have a little opening ceremony with a couple of government officials and myself. You won't see any men then until the last day when I want to hear what your conclusions are, what your results are. Here are the tasks that I would like you to do. I would like you to just brainstorm for three days. There will be a facilitator to help guide you, but when you come to the end of that three days, tell me what are the most critical development needs that you see." They had talked among themselves for some time and then they said, "Well, yes, that could be possible," and they would help arrange it. I set that up and we had participation of more than 60 women, not many of these leader women by the way. They came by bus from every little town all over the country. We had this seminar. I had facilitators there. Then I got this list at the end. I said, "You not only have to tell me what



they are, but you have to prioritize them. If you can't prioritize them one, two, three, then I want them in clusters of the top five and the next five and the next five." So, they did this. This gave me sort of the best indication that I've had of what to do. From that, I was able to initiate programs to help women learn some basic skills about accounting-

*Q: What were their priorities?*

SHERPER: One of the priorities they wanted is they wanted to get into business, but they had no clue on how to do it, except they thought they could generate the resources. I said, "I'm not here to give out money. I'm here to help you in other ways." They had no management skills, no accounting skills, and no supervisory skills if they hired somebody in how to deal with them and so on." Most of these women, probably half of them, wore veils. Others were a little more liberal.

*Q: Had they had any schooling at all?*

SHERPER: Many of them went for about four grades, so they had some schooling. Some never went to school. If you look at the overall literacy rates in Yemen at that time, it was about 18 or 19 percent. For men, it was about 30%. For women, it was about 11% or less than that. Maybe it was nine. So, it was very, very low. They wanted to run shops and to be tailors and dressmakers. I set up this program that helped some of them.

*Q: You didn't have objections from any of the men, mullahs?*

SHERPER: In the case of the entrepreneurial kind of orientation, there weren't problems. The problems came when they started talking about getting family planning information.

*Q: Was that on their list?*

SHERPER: It was, but they knew that they would have problems with it. There was a list of about 35 or 40 things. I would say family planning came in there around seventh or eighth. It was still very high, but that I approached differently, which I can mention in a minute. The only thing I would say is that what I did was, I was able to start a project to support women's activities. Some of them were quite successful. Some were in handicrafts. Some were selling baked goods. Some were making school uniforms. There were a number of things, as well as basic skill training. It went over very well. The government was quite pleased with that, too.

On the side of the family planning issue, one of the difficulties you have is that women who go out during the day have to come back to their village at night. They can't sleep away from their village unless they have a very enlightened husband or they can stay with a friend or a relative where they go. We brought from Sudan a number of midwives

to teach family planning in the villages. They would go out and bring the mountain to them, so to speak, and train them. The traditional midwives were oftentimes the old grandmothers who had lived through the process of delivering a child, but really had no new technologies or weren't aware of a lot of the things they should be aware of. That was going really quite well. We attached these Sudanese midwives to our primary healthcare centers and then they did outreach and spent their time in a village teaching women from that village and maybe a couple of surrounding ones.

Then I was requested to assist in the nurses training as a result of this work. I asked if we could review the curriculum to help strengthen it. I brought in some specialists and they rewrote the curriculum for training nurses. In there we were able to get a whole chapter and a module on family planning that didn't exist before. That became part of the training program. As you know, these things always take a long time before you get to the end. On the upside of this, I worked with the Ministry of Economic Planning, which was my counterpart. For the first time, I was telling them, "You need to have a family planning policy." I gave all these examples of what I saw in the villages, the kids, the educational and health issues, and so on that are associated with this. The deputy minister became a good friend of mine.

He would call me and we would talk on the phone from time to time. One day, he called me and said, "Can you come over to see me?" I said, "When?" He said, "Well, if you've got time, I'd like to see you now." I said, "What about?" He said, "We'll talk about it when you get here." I didn't know what to expect. He said, "I've been thinking about what you've been saying about family planning. It really is the root of a lot of our problems. We've got too many people we can't take care of. We can't educate them. We can't provide them with health services. We have problems with shelter and food." I said, "That's a situation we're working on." He said, "I would like to propose to the Cabinet a family planning policy that you had suggested. Can you help me write it?" I said, "Yes, the policy we can do. It has to be your policy, but I can give you some ideas. The policy needs to have attached to it some sort of strategy on how you're going to do it to implement it. The policy alone will just sit there unless you bring it down to concrete terms. Why don't we work with the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) person who is here?" He was there all by himself, and had not been able to make many inroads. A nice guy. He was from Sudan. I got him involved and we developed the first family planning policy they had in Yemen. All of these areas about working with women and family planning and so on, I think, we got some movement on, some real positive changes, and a tremendous amount of awareness created about the problems and issues related to it. Again, I don't know if it stopped, but I---

*Q: This was the first time?*

SHERPER: This was the first time, yes. One of the other areas that I was working on

there prior to me being there, agriculture was a big thing. We were helping to develop the College of Agriculture. We had a big program (\$28 million) for several years. But none of it was in bricks and mortar other than a research farm that we had supported. In terms of building, creating this new College of Agriculture, we negotiated with the Arab Fund and the Kuwaiti Fund to provide \$20 million for the bricks and mortar. Then we trained all of the staff.

*Q: You had a university contract?*

SHERPER: A university, yes.

*Q: What was the university?*

SHERPER: It was with the University of Oregon.

*Q: Did it work?*

SHERPER: It was well on its way to near completion when I left. It was going well.

*Q: They had trained Yemenis?*

SHERPER: Yes. We had started the training in old facilities where we could get them. Again, one of the things that we kept asking was: "Why aren't there more women in the College of Agriculture?" There was this old thing about, "Well, they can't stay in dormitories with men." I said, "Would they stay in their own dormitories if there were such facilities? Would they enroll?" Apparently, there were a lot of women who were expressing interest in this. So, before I left, I had a plan with Arab Fund money to do the building and build a facility for women's quarters at the university. That would allow women to attend.

We had a major training program in cooperation with USIS on English language training to prepare trainees to go to the U.S. to study. That was a very major program. We made sure that our project people that we wanted to train got into that area. We had a couple of major research stations that we had built over the previous decade that we had supported. I was phasing out our support for those research stations.

*Q: They were pretty well---*

SHERPER: Transferred to the Yemenis. We had a major poultry program. We had been working in poultry for many, many years. We had these big poultry facilities set out as a demonstration and training location. The Minister of Agriculture didn't want to let go of it. We were coming to the end of our work with it and I wanted it to be phased out and be

transferred outside to a non-government sector somewhere. Now there were training facilities that were built separately. The poultry production facilities were now producing a lot of chicks that were sold, also a lot of eggs, and it was making money. The Ministry didn't want to let go of it. We had these PL480 programs. We had anywhere from a five or six up to 11-12 million dollar Title II program. Under Title II you negotiate the terms. One of the terms that I negotiated was that they would privatize this poultry facility, which they didn't want to do. I laid out the options. I said, "You can sell it and have the resources and we can direct the resources into some development program related to poultry or others. You can basically lease it, but move Ministry of Agriculture employees out of their facility entirely and let somebody else run it and manage it. You can basically give it to some other board or an organization to transfer it to them to manage as long as it is a non-profit." Eventually, they chose to lease it because I was withholding their PL480 grant until they did it. It was very interesting.

There were some real significant things I was able to do with PL480, which is a tool I hadn't really been familiar with using that much before. I never had it in Lesotho and so on. For example, there was a big shortage of fertilizer and they wanted fertilizer. What they wanted was local currency for a rural development project that they had with the World Bank, a big project. Their commitment was local currency and they didn't have it. I said, "If we bring in fertilizer and it's sold on the local market, if I can generate \$5 million worth of local currency, you could use it for the World Bank program as your contribution, but there are a few things that you have to do. First of all, the Ministry of Agriculture can't import it. It has to be done through private licenses of private entrepreneurs. Secondly, it has to be distributed to areas that are deficient in fertilizer and it can't just go to large holders." They finally agreed to those conditions. It was interesting because it was the first time the private sector had gotten involved in importing fertilizer and distributing it. It got it out of the Ministry's hands, which was fumbling with it.

*Q: There was a private sector that could take on these investments and activities?*

SHERPER: Yes. There were some things that I could do with PL480. I also agreed that they could build another research station with local currency generated by PL480 sales. Title II, it's one of those few countries that I'm aware of that got some double bang for our buck---that is, we got both the food and we got the local currency tied into some important development activities with some policy changes, or at least strategic changes in the way they operate.

We also had a big program for rewriting the curricula for primary schools, which was a very, very difficult task and was focused on math, science, and reading. We eventually accomplished that. There were a number of other more minor activities, but it was a very active time. I mentioned that we were there during the period of unification. This happened after the first elections were held. I think President Saleh allowed these

elections to take place and to establish their assembly, called a Shura Council, before the unification took place the following year because he knew it was going to happen. He thought it would give the north maybe a little leg up on what was happening. What happened is that they brought the entire politburo into this new Shura Council that had been in operation only a year or so. Then they greatly increased the number of ministries when they unified. In cases where they had a minister from the north, they would have a deputy from the south and vice versa. Of course, the president was from the north and the vice president was from the south. I think they had some bumpy spots.

*Q: What was the driving force that made them want to come together?*

SHERPER: I think there were a couple of things. One is, the Soviets had pulled out of South Yemen and they were their benefactors like they were in Cuba and so many other places. The economy was in shambles. The other thing that was happening was that Hunt Oil Company, an American company, discovered oil in North Yemen. It was right along the border with South Yemen. The Russians helped them start drilling in the areas just south of the border where they found some oil. The Russian technology was way behind U.S. technology and the Russian oil companies were not getting capital support from their motherland anymore. There was recognition that probably the potential wealth of the country might be in oil. The north was building pipelines; they had a very effective and efficient process. They pumped oil into an old tanker in the Red Sea off the coast as sort of a holding place for it and pumped it from there into the other freighters or oil tankers. They built the pipeline in a very short time under cost. Hunt had a lot of support in the north. It was seen what was happening in the north with oil and they didn't have the resources themselves in the south. I think that was a factor. Their infrastructure was crumbling. All of Yemen is the poorest country among all the Arab states, but the people are more active and ambitious and willing to work. It is quite a different sort of behavioral attitude than it is, say, in Saudi Arabia and in some of the Gulf states and so on. The Saudis look at the Yemeni as sort of cowboys, uncultured, uncouth, and renegade.

*Q: How did you find them?*

SHERPER: I liked to work in that kind of environment. Development can only come from within the country. It has to come from the people there. It's like I mentioned when I first mentioned my first post overseas in Korea. If you make suggestions to these people and give them ideas, they will run with them. It isn't going to sit dormant and say, "Oh, yes" or find some excuse not to do it. People have some drive, some initiative, and desire to get ahead. I found that to be true in Yemen. So, in that sense, it's a great place to work. I was offered positions in Egypt. I didn't want to work in Egypt. I didn't want a big program. I love a country where I can get my arms around it and have some understanding of what is going on and some ideas of how to influence the development

process there and feel I can contribute to it. That makes a big difference to me. That's one reason I really liked Yemen.

*Q: Did you meet President Saleh?*

SHERPER: I had met Saleh a couple of times.

*Q: What was your reaction to him?*

SHERPER: Those were both ceremonial times that I met him. I think, as a person who came in following the assassination of his predecessor, he was very good on the development side and maybe some of the things that caused that were not his own knowledge of what needed to be done. He had confidence in a few of his key ministers, particularly somebody like Abdul Karim Ali Al-Iryani (Foreign Minister 1984-93 and 1994-98), who was the Foreign Minister, again educated in the U.S. Even the Prime Minister, Haidar Abu Bakr al-Attas was very understanding of the needs for development and what role it played in political stability and so on. I think Saleh listened to these people that he had depended on for years and they were good people. They had bright ideas and gave him the right kind of orientation. There was also the Minister for Economic Planning and so on. I think that was really what was in my sphere of interest.

Politically when the Gulf War came and AID had to close down because Saleh supported Iraq, I was at the time on my way back from Washington to Yemen and was stopped in the UK. I got a call from the ambassador and was told to turn around and go back, that they were closing the AID Mission. That was really a sad time for me. I was very disappointed. Part of it was because I never came to closure saying "Goodbye" to my friends and to pack out properly. I don't like to leave under those circumstances. One of the amazing things that happened though about a year later at the time I was \_\_\_\_\_ Agency, my good friend whom I mentioned earlier who was the deputy in the Planning Ministry was in Washington to negotiate a World Bank loan. He had called to see if he could come by and see me. I thought, "He's coming by to look for some handouts, some support for something from AID." This turned out not to be the case. [end of tape]

---was simply to personally thank me for my work in Yemen. He said, "We never had a chance to say "Goodbye" to you." I was very moved by that, that he had gone out of his way to do that. About six months later, the same thing happened with the Foreign Minister. I got a call from their ambassador to the U.S., who asked if he and another person whom I knew and who was very good, asking if he and the Foreign Minister could come to see me. I said, "Fine." They came and visited me with the sole purpose of saying to me how much I contributed to Yemen. Again, I felt very humbled by the efforts that they made to just simply go out of their way to say, "Thank you."

*Q: Do you know what happened to the program?*

SHERPER: Actually, I don't. I know it was phased down and phased out. My deputy, who had just been assigned, everything was left in his hands. His name is Phil Gary. Phil ended up shrinking the program as a result of the position that Yemen took during the Gulf War. Our program was basically phased out.

*Q: Our political interests undercut the development program.*

SHERPER: Again, as it happens much too often. There is no needier group in the entire region than the Yemenis. For those of us who are development practitioners, it's sad to have to pack up and leave from our efforts to help some people who are really needy, who really want our assistance.

*Q: They closed up the program 100%? They just brought everything to an end? Did we ever go back?*

SHERPER: To the best of my knowledge, there might be some regional supported activities going on, but I frankly have not followed it since I've been up here for the last two years.

*Q: Anything else on the Yemeni side that you want to talk about?*

SHERPER: No, I don't think so. You always think in this business that every assignment you get is sort of going to be a highlight and you leave it and you have very fond, good memories of it. But it seemed like as my career went along (and I'm sure this happens to other people), each one seems to be a crown on top of the last. I must say that my Yemeni experience was certainly a highlight of my overseas work with AID. It was a country where I really felt that I did contribute something, that I left something that was useful. I felt really good about what I was able to do there.

One of the things that I'll mention is, on my home leave in 1989, my wife and I, as we came back to the States, we went to Korea, which was my first post in AID. We hadn't been there for 18 years, but I wanted to go back there to see my friends, my Korean friends, that I had met over the five years that I was there and to see what differences there were. It was absolutely amazing to see what had happened in the 18 years since I had left.

I rented a car and we spent about two and a half weeks, drove all over the country to places we had lived and provinces I had worked in and talked to people, everyone from my old drivers to my assistants and government officials I had worked with. It was quite an exciting experience to see governors that I had worked with, private sector people who

had become literally millionaires to the little Fisheries Bureau chief that was so good and had such a terrible time working in his provincial fisheries program. I had recommended to him, "You need to get out on your own and start your own fisheries business. You're wasting your talent here." He came to me and said, "I'm going to take you up on that. It's a good idea." He quit his job in the government and invested in about four acres of oyster beds, a lot of work. The oysters got a disease and he lost them all. He lost his home, his wife's jewelry. They were quite destitute. They had about half an acre that did not get infected with disease that he was able to sell and they lived on that for the next year. But he didn't give up. He went back. Now when I went to visit him 18 years later, I still felt guilty about that. He followed my advice and failed. But now 18 years later, we still correspond. He had his own fish-processing factory. He was selling all sorts of not just shellfish, but eels and other fish to Japan at a premium market. He had a lovely new home that he had built and his family was so happy to see us, which we wondered---

It was very nice to see the people, the drive, and the success that they had. Even my driver, whom I had for about four years of the time I was there, he saved everything he could to send his son to a good university. His son was just graduating from medical school in the U.S. That's quite an accomplishment for a driver. I talked to my Korean teacher. I studied Korean six months before I went and for the first two years, she taught me every morning from seven to eight o'clock in the morning. She was doing great. Her husband was a professor at the university. It was a very positive experience to see all the people that I had worked with who had become so successful. That was just a footnote.

*Q: That is quite a footnote. You went into your last assignment when you came back to Washington.*

SHERPER: Yes.

*Q: What happened?*

SHERPER: What happened was in Yemen my wife was working as a nurse and she had been volunteering her services at the embassy for some time and worked there, served as the embassy's nurse for a while. Then she was teaching English to Yemeni soldiers for some time. She had a medical problem that arose and it required a medical evacuation and surgery. That was in December of 1989 when we came back on home leave. That was after we were in Korea. We found out what her needs were and she had surgery (had to have surgery almost right away) in January and I stayed with her for that. Then she was recovering and I went back to Yemen. Then in July, she had a subsequent medical problem. So, I rushed back then and I stayed with her through that for the next six weeks or so. It was then that I was on my way back to Yemen when I had to turn around in August.



*Q: Then you had the Near East/Asia Private Sector operation.*

SHERPER: Right, from August 1990 until about March 1991.

*Q: What happened then?*

SHERPER: Then I had this call from the administrator's office, Ronald Riskins, who said he wanted to see me now. I thought, "What have I done? He doesn't even know me." I met him once on the street while he was waiting for a car out on 21st St. at the State Department and I was waiting for a car. We were both going to the same place. We were going up on the Hill. We were going to announce a big private sector program up on the Hill and he was going up there. I was waiting for a taxi; I knew that he was speaking because I had set up the agenda. I went over and introduced myself, told him who I was, and I had a person with me, hoping maybe that he would give me a ride to the Hill. He said, "Pleased to meet you." I said that I worked for Henrietta Holsman. He said, "Whoops, I have to go. My car is here." That was it. That was the only time I had personally met him. I had been in a few meetings where I was among the masses, but I couldn't imagine what he wanted to see me about. The secretary didn't indicate anything. I'm not sure she knew. I took my pad and pencil and I went to the Administrator's office and told the secretary who I was. The secretary said, "Oh, he's waiting to see you."

He said, "Ken, I want you to know that the counsel's position is open and I want you to take it." I said, "Can you tell me a little bit about the job, how you view the job? What do you know about me? What prompted you to choose me for this job? This is the most senior career position in the agency." He said, "I know all about you. I've talked to a lot of people. You're the person I want." Then I said, "What do you expect of me? What kind of responsibilities do you expect the counsel to have? I know the history of this position and when it started back in 1981 and why, but every administrator has a different view on how they want to use it." He said, "I want you to advise me. I want you to keep me out of trouble. I came from Duke University. I take pride in what I've done. I think I can do a good job here, but I realize that there are a lot of things about development that I don't know. I need somebody who has some experience in this area to help me." I said, "Well, do I have a choice in this?" He said, "No." He was very informal and very casual. That's how I got into this job as counselor. I went back to talk to Henrietta and she said, "Well, he's talked to me and I knew that he was considering you for this. I told him that I didn't want to lose you; I wanted to keep you in this bureau. I told him also that I could understand why he would want you. If that's his decision, then that's what we should do" and gave me her blessings. That's how I ended up in that job.

Interestingly, there were times that he needed to be kept out of trouble. I found that my predecessors were actively engaged in a lot of substantive issues in the counselor's job, that I was not doing the same things that they were doing. They had been actively

involved in resolving major policy issues, some of the program issues, but I was not being asked to get involved in those questions. There were a lot of issues related to personnel, to the Inspector General's Office---There was a big gap in the relations between the Administrator's Office and the Inspector General (OIG).

There were a number of things dealing with AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) (the Foreign Service union) that I was asked to deal with. In terms of substance, it was only on real special occasions where I got deeply involved. For example, when we were promoting trade between Central America and the U.S., the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) came out with these statements about how we were promoting the taking of jobs away from Americans and sending them down to cheap labor facilities in the so-called "Free Trade Zones." It was not handled very well by AID. CNN kept reporting that repeatedly and eventually Roskins decided he would go to CNN. He was invited. He frankly did not do a good job on fielding the questions. He wasn't aggressive enough and AID did not come out of that looking very well. We had a really good reason to be doing what we were doing. He sent me to Central America so I visited Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala and visited a lot of free trade zones, had a lot of talk with union people, with entrepreneurs who ran the companies and so on. I came back and did a report with Aaron Williams, who was the deputy in the Latin American Bureau at the time. That was one big fire that we had to put out. That was the kind of thing that I was used for on the substance side. I chaired a major committee with four subcommittees looking at incentives for AID employees. That was a very fascinating process. We published a book on it and recommendations on what should be done, some of which were implemented, some not. A lot of people devoted a lot of interest and attention to it. I worked some on the strategy for governance. We wrote a strategy on what we ought to be doing in this area and became known as the Tuesday Group because they met every Tuesday. It's still going on, by the way. I participated in that.

My other roles were really dealing with a lot of personnel issues, complaints that would come up that I would try to resolve informally, both individual and some group complaints. I was dealing with the promotions and the assignments and representing the administrator in those areas. He listened well on those things, responding to the OIG reports that were very one-sided and very critical at times, but sometimes suffered from basic facts being inaccurate. I researched that and sent messages back from the administrator's office. Then in 1993 Roskins left and Atwood came in after the elections. I worked with the transition team, organizing the briefings for Brian Atwood, which went on for weeks and weeks, waiting for his----

*Q: Do you think Roskins made any kind of impact on the Agency's orientation or anything about it?*

SHERPER: I don't believe Roskins contributed a lot to the leadership. He would go up on the Hill unprepared for his hearings. When I would tell him, "You need to prepare for this. You'll get a lot of hard questions," he'd say, "Oh, I've done this a lot. As a university president, you face a state legislature and go through this all the time." He never saw that as important. Then I would get feedback from congressional staff "Don't let him come up here again. He's making it worse for you guys" and that sort of stuff. He couldn't answer questions and would try to get off and respond to things instead of saying "I don't know. I'll get back to you." He would just go off on a tangent, go around it. That never sat well up on the Hill.

*Q: He left and Brian Atwood came in and you continued as the counselor?*

SHERPER: I continued in the position, but there was a lengthy hiatus. The hiatus came because the transition team was there and organized putting together briefing books for the administrator and also for the other new assistant administrators that were coming in. That was a major task. I worked long days and nights to get that done. Then I worked mostly with people like Larry Sayers, who was leading it from the Policy Bureau (PPC). Then we had, as you may recall, Atwood initially accepted a job at the State Department. I've forgotten exactly where it was. It was as Under Secretary in one of the departments.

*Q: Management, I think.*

SHERPER: Then they had a number of candidates, kept running through the interviews. A lot of wannabees. Eventually, Brian was selected. As I recall, Roskins left shortly after elections before the holidays, before Bush left office. I think it was in about December. He left for the holidays. From then on, there was this long hiatus. The deputy administrator also left. His name slips my mind. Jim Michael was assigned sort of as interim deputy. Brian couldn't take up his seat until he had been confirmed. It took several months. I think it was probably June or July. In May thru July, we were going through briefings every day, getting ready for hearings. I think he probably took office maybe somewhere around early August 1993.

The last year that I was counselor from the time Brian came in until I left at the end of July in 1994 was probably one of the more difficult times for me in AID. He was putting together his own appointees, selecting some from where he had worked at the National Democratic Institute, some political appointees that were not easy to work with. The reason it was difficult for me was for a couple of reasons. One is the new team that came in, particularly the political team and advisors to the administrator on the political side, were very skeptical about the senior career people in AID. I think the skepticism (This is my own personal view.) probably arose because they couldn't understand how these senior people, even if they were career, could be apolitical in terms of whom they supported or not after 12 years of a Republican administration. That lack of confidence

seemed to pervade everything. For example, one of the things that I started under Roskens was a meeting with him once a month with senior staff (that's mostly the DAAs from the bureaus) probably about a dozen people. We had a frank discussion once a month with the administrator; we had an agenda with maybe two or three topics on it. Whatever was said was kept in the room. It was an open, frank discussion whether it was personnel, policy, some activities that were going on, whatever, we had this. Roskens at first was very concerned about it. He told me as I walked with him into that meeting, "Ken, you've got to protect me. I don't want to be attacked by all these people." I said, "Don't worry about it. They're not going to attack you." It was a very frank and open discussion, but it wasn't personally attacking or hostile to the individuals. People told the administrator what they thought.

When I tried to get Brian Atwood to do that, he didn't want to have anything to do with it. As it turned out, it was a major effort on the part of management to clean out the top echelon of the senior career people in AID, move them in any way that they could, encouraging retirements, reassignments, giving them choices that were not good, pushing them in certain directions. I thought it was a terrible loss of talent and particularly when it was needed during the beginning of a new administration. I was one of the people who had been associated with the old senior career people, who were a lot of very good, solid individuals and who were so happy, by the way, to have a new administrator whom they thought really understood change, understood development, had some ideas about AID, where we ought to be going, compared to Roskens, who was sort of benevolent but he never really took initiatives.

People thought, "Boy, we've really got a chance now to move." Instead they found that they were left out in the cold, so to speak, that there was a stirring of the pot, that the influencing on who was, for example, to get mission director assignments, which was always a very important thing and was always a lot of weight put on the comments of the senior career staff who had worked with these people, there was a lot of trust and confidence, that was not set aside. It was more important to look at issues like gender, ethnicity, viewing things like putting GS people into mission director Foreign Service assignments directly. It never had been done to my knowledge in the past. The morale was very low. I became a counselor in the sense of almost a psychology counselor. There were people who wanted to talk to me, just bare their soul. Then there was an incident that created a gap that I was never able to close again. That is when there was an LTE (limited time extension) for the senior Foreign Service officers, and the panels had met, and made their recommendations. As you know, that's done totally independently, the rank ordering and all that, from the administrator's choice on where the line is drawn.

What happened was the head of the Management Bureau called the head of Personnel and the head of the Senior Foreign Service Personnel to his office and wanted to know the results of what the panels had and then proceeded to select five people who would get

extensions. When I heard about that, I first went to the handbook and picked out the sections that said how this process was normally done and I went down and talked to the head of the Management Bureau. I told him that, "This is really improper. There is a committee that reviews all of these. It's chaired by the deputy administrator. There are certain people. Right here it tells you who are the members, including the head of Personnel, the head of Senior Foreign Service Personnel, the counselor, somebody from a regional bureau. Those recommendations are then given to the administrator and it's up to him to decide to sign off on it or make changes or whatever, but basically he has the recommendations then of people who both know the system, know the people, and whatever." His only comment was, "Did we break the law?" My response was, "I don't know if you broke the law. That's a GC (general counsel) question. One thing I do know is that the handbook was not followed and the manual of the handbooks are the manuals that institutionalize the process. This has been followed for years. If there are changes in the handbook, that's one thing, but obviously, they weren't followed." We had an extensive, not so friendly discussion about it. I said to him, "When this gets out, the administrator could well have some letters on his desk. They could be from attorneys saying that this process has not been followed. There could be a grievance process that would be activated here as a minimum." His only question was, "Was it legal?" He was the person that called this other group together. He said, "Well, I'll talk to the administrator about it," but I wasn't sure whether the administrator would get the information, so I went back to my office, made copies of the handbooks, highlighted the proper sections, wrote a note, and took it in. I couldn't see the administrator, but I left it with his secretary. About three weeks later, I got a note back from the administrator with my papers on with a couple page memo from the head of general counsel saying that the handbook was basically a policy book and policy can be determined by the administrator and, therefore, the administrator could make changes. However it is not the standard way of doing things, that also, which I had pointed out to him, this part of the handbook was negotiated with AFSA and are we going to throw this out and have the problem with AFSA?

One of the biggest concerns in my note to the administrator was are we going to pick and choose those parts of the handbook that we want to enforce and those that we don't? Are we going to put ourselves in that kind of a position? What happened was that the administrator did what was recommended to him by his management advisor and his management bureau. My relationship with the senior management became very formal from that point on.

That's why I say my last year was not the most pleasant in my career. I had a wonderful, wonderful career with AID. When I left there at the end of July of 1994, I left on a Friday and Monday morning I started here in New York in UNDP (United Nations Development Program). The administrator was encouraging me very strongly to take this job or any job. He wanted to make sure that his position of the counselor was open. In fact, I had

literally sort of moved out of it about six months before I left. I moved to a different office even. It was a very interesting end of my career with AID. I sent emails to my closest friends saying "Goodbye" to them and that was it.

*Q: What do you think the effect was on the agency of that kind of approach to management?*

SHERPER: I think it was very detrimental. The effect on the agency was very significant. I think Brian Atwood was excellent in terms of what one would call an outside man. In his earlier career in working with the Congress, as the head of Legislative Affairs in the State Department, the contacts and friends he had there created a very strong, positive relationship. He had an excellent relationship and has an excellent relationship with the vice-president and the president. Relations outside of AID were superb, probably the best they had been in years. In fact, I think, presented us with many opportunities in AID that could have resulted in some real positive changes in the organization and in what we did. However, on the inside, management was left to the head of the Management Bureau. When we proposed the changes in reorganization when Brian Atwood came on board, I had really very, very strongly recommended that the Budget Office get out of Management and go back to PPC, Program Budget. Of course, this is where there became a lot of power in the hands of the Management Bureau.

We had a real problem internally because the deputy administrator was really a very nice person, but she came from academia. She was interested in development almost from the academia perspective, and was very good at the conceptual, the theoretical, the issues of that nature, but had said that she did not want to be the internal manager from day one. She has told that to many others and to me. It was left to her. If she wanted, I think, she could have taken hold of internal management and been the inside person. Not only was the budget put under Management but Personnel was put under Management. All of the power was there. Morale, I have never ever seen morale in an organization go so low so fast. The implications for AID in the short-run were quite disastrous in the way that things were handled internally. In some, you had this effort to move out the stability of the senior career persons. You had the choices made for the upcoming people based on factors other than merit in many cases. You had a person who was responsible for budget and personnel as a very directive person who had his own agenda. It upset so many apple carts along the way that need not have happened. There could have been a consultative process in bringing people along in the process of change and there could have been some listening and some changes made that people who had experience there would like to have had. Those things didn't happen.

*Q: Was there any major substantive change in direction at that time that you were observing?*

SHERPER: Under Atwood, I think, one of the biggest things that happened was the effort to reduce the number of overseas missions was started. We had something like 112 country missions overseas. Again, Atwood, to his credit, was able to convince the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, as well as Congress, that we needed to reduce that number. It had been tried before many times unsuccessfully. There were places where it didn't make a lot of sense for us to have country offices. The biggest problem has been ambassadors who don't want their AID missions to disappear. It weakens their positions in country and so every time AID proposed closing an office, the ambassador would write to the Secretary of State and it would not happen. In this case, Atwood was very close to Christopher and he was able to do that. They had 21 missions on the initial hit list. I don't know what the numbers are now. I know they are substantially fewer than the 112 and certainly more that closed than simply the 21 that were proposed.

*Q: What about change in content?*

SHERPER: I would say there has been a big movement to please the domestic constituency in the United States. That actually started under the Bush Administration, but I think it was elevated to new heights under the current administration. That is these partnerships with cities in the U.S. between them and AID show the benefits of development to the cities. This has been this major effort to involve domestic programs as partnerships with the overseas programs. I've seen that movement which I don't fully endorse myself. I think with an organization like AID where the resources are limited, it just does not seem to me to be the best use of it. I think there is an important information role that needs to go out. By the way, they had one of the best public relations persons I've known working in AID as the head of public relations. Again there was this effort to combine public relations and legislative affairs. To me that doesn't make sense, but there are stranger things that have happened. I see a major effort on the part of AID the last few years to really get involved with promoting AID domestically in the U.S.

I see some other changes. I believe that there was a major effort to please the Secretary of State with the initial reorganization to make the G Bureau consistent with the State Department organization. I've seen a tremendous loss of technical competency in AID. I think they really now have very limited capacity on the technical side. It's almost all contracted for through consultants. There is still some there. A number of the good technical people did move up into management positions, so I think that was maybe a good sign, but I see diminishing capacity. I had a meeting with Brian Atwood at one point and discussed this with him. I showed him a graph of what was happening to the technical capacity in the agency. He said, "That's very interesting." I had a bar graph by year the number of technical people in the agency by backstop code. It was kind of enlightening to him, but it was a very dramatic drop. I think we've become more and more an agency of contracting out for services.

*Q: Let's do some concluding observations and then you can add more later if you like. First, looking back over your career, would you say that AID and the foreign assistance program made a difference to development in the world? Some people think that they don't see any results. How would you view that?*

SHERPER: I would disagree with that. As I look back at the 29 years that I was with AID, of which I spent about half overseas, I think we did make a difference. I think we made some very important and key contributions in many different sectors, many different countries, and many different thematic areas.

*Q: Do you want to give some examples? We can't cover them all, but what stands out in your mind?*

SHERPER: The things that stand out in my mind are certainly in agriculture, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. I think we were deeply involved with the Green Revolution and the increase in agricultural production. Another area that very definitely we've been a leader in is in family planning and population and many selected aspects of health. I think in education, we've made a difference in a number of countries in such things as enrollment and school construction like in Egypt, which is terribly important, to curriculum development and school materials.

I think in the area of environment we had some impact, most in recent years, particularly on biological diversity. Then of course some despite the national policy, we've had some positive impact on global warming and climate change. I think what is probably more lasting and more critical in the long run has been AID's ability to bring equality as an issue and gender specifically as an important development issue to the forefront and play a very important lead in providing opportunities for that half of the population that remains underrepresented and underserved. I also think that we have played a very, very strong role as an agency in capacity development. That just doesn't mean the thousands of people that are trained in the U.S., but it is short-term training, skills, learning by doing, by being with our experts, with our consultants, with our contractors on a day-to-day basis. I think there has been a tremendous transfer of skills and knowledge through those kinds of mechanisms, many of which are sometimes informal, sometimes difficult to measure because they can only be measured on a qualifiable basis. Those are just a few broad areas. More recently, I think, the role the United States through AID has played in this area of governance has been absolutely critical in advancing this planet towards a more democratic---

*Q: This is the area in which you're now working.*

SHERPER: Yes, it is. It is one that I'm working on from this end, but I'm in constant contact with my colleagues in AID on this exchanging information and talking about it



and periodically visiting them to talk about these issues. I know that they are devoting more resources than UNDP is to many of these important areas. The interesting thing about UNDP is that it has gone from about eight years ago when about 15% of the budget was going into such things that could be governance related (public administration, decentralization, and so on), but that now has expanded to over 50% of the UNDP budget is in this area of governance and working with elections, electoral bodies, parliaments, judiciaries, and rural law.

*Q: Not just public administration?*

SHERPER: No. It's expanded greatly and I think it will probably have a long and lasting impact on the environment in which people live in terms of making it freer, more open, more transparent, and more opportunities for participation and access.

*Q: Let's have one final round about how you assess your career in AID. How would you characterize your 29 years in international development?*

SHERPER: I would give the first 28 years A++. I pointed out that the last year was a more difficult year, but I don't want to dwell on that. I don't look at it that way. I look at the time that I started back on September 12, 1965 until July 31, 1994. It has been a very exciting time of my life. It has been very positive. I think, as I look back at it, I learned an awful lot. I hope that I've contributed a little bit as I've gone along. Some of the hardships or blips in your career are quite insignificant (in my career, very insignificant) compared to the positive aspects and what I think was accomplished. I definitely would do it all over again. It was the right career choice for me. I started, as I said, in the Peace Corps and never was able to sort of shake that disease that you get. All in all, it was a very, very rewarding, exciting, and learning experience for me. I don't regret a minute of it. I really did enjoy it. I had a wonderful career.

*Q: Well, this has been an excellent interview. Thank you very much.*

*End of interview*