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

AMBASSADOR JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN

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INTERVIEW

Q: Okay, today is the 9th of January 2009. This is an interview with Joseph G. S-U-L-L-I-V-A-N. What does the G stand for?

SULLIVAN: Gerard.

Q: What do you go by, Joe?

SULLIVAN: Joe.

Q: Well, let's start. When and where were you born?

SULLIVAN: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in August 1944.

Q: Let's look at the family say on your father's side. Sullivan and Boston one thinks of the Irish.

SULLIVAN: Sure.

Q: What do you know about the Sullivan side of your family?

SULLIVAN: Well, not a lot. My father was from the third generation of emigrants but had lost all connection with Ireland certainly. He was one of nine children, brothers and sisters, but didn't have real close family relations outside that immediate group. His mother actually happened to be of Austrian descendency and so it wasn't perhaps the typical Boston-Irish family.

My mother, on the other hand, was also Irish. Her last name was H-O-A-R and both sides of her family were Irish. My father grew up in South Boston and my mother grew up in Dorchester and Roxbury and they were typical of the depression era. My father's father died when my dad was fifteen. So he had to leave school and support his younger siblings and only was able to go back and get a GED later and study accounting at night in order to work for the city of Boston where he eventually became acting auditor of the city of Boston. He probably had the capability to do much more, had he not had difficult circumstances, but did amazingly well under these circumstances. Nonetheless, he wanted very much for his four children to have the educational opportunities he never had.

Q: I'm still talking to people who represent your generation and my generation, which was the generation before of Foreign Service officers whose parents for the most part didn't graduate from college.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: It was the times and also the era; they got self-educated and probably did as well as the ones who went through a more formal education, but it's still that era. On your mother's side where did they come from and what do you know about them?

SULLIVAN: Well in her case, she was only second generation born in the U.S. so she had slightly more knowledge about her background in Ireland coming from County Mayo

and County Galway. So on the one occasion I got to visit Ireland I had no connections to look up. In my father's family, the emigrants who came in potato famine years lost all connection and many of their relatives in Ireland would have died. The further back that emigration occurred, the less likely family ties to Ireland were maintained. My mother's childhood was also complicated as one of seven siblings with very modest income. Her mother died when my mom was in her teens. Nonetheless, my mother was able to complete high school, do some post-secondary clerical studies and work for the State of Massachusetts Health Department.

My mother and father originally met and wanted to getting married when they were 25 but their finances and the depression just didn't permit it. Then began dating again and did get married when they were each 30 in 1937. They lived those times and imparted that experience and values of frugality and desire for education to their four children. I had three sisters and our parents inspired us to secure what they had not been able to have themselves, education first and foremost for its own sake and as the means to a successful life. They sacrificed constantly to provide everything possible for all of us children to achieve the college education they had not been able to afford. So they lived very frugally, both because of their depression background and difficult childhoods but also in order to provide the maximum possible for their four children. I remember that they rented the same rent-controlled two-bedroom apartment for $35. per month until my older sister was 15 and my youngest sister 2 and only then thought they were sufficiently financially secure to buy a single-family home in the same Neponset area of Dorchester, a district of Boston.

Q: At looking at sort of influences in the first place being Irish and from Boston I will ask where did your family fall politically?

SULLIVAN: They were like 95 percent of Boston-Irish Democrats, relatively liberal Democrats. My father fell in the in-between war years and already had children by the time of World War II so he did not go into the Armed Services. They were interested in politics but more local and national politics than international and did not have much contact with international issues. I do recall him being appalled at Senator Joe McCarthy's tactics and red-baiting in the early 1950's and my father's strong arguments with his very conservative brother.

Q: How about did the Democratic machine Michael J. Curley and all that was that an element in sort of your awareness in things as you grew up?

SULLIVAN: Curley was a few years before me and I don't know how my parents would have regarded him, probably as somewhat of a rogue. But on the other hand a rogue who helped people, sent Christmas packages to poor families, etc.

Q: Yeah, he reflected produced the political bosses of the time.

SULLIVAN: Right and the other element of that in my case not so much associated with Curley but my own collective history on this talking to family members and other people

in Boston who knew those old machine politicians was that they provided jobs. Jobs for people, jobs for family members, and the attitude at least among Boston Irish who were probably the principal beneficiaries of this, was that, even if one's own family wasn't benefiting at the moment, they might the next time around. So in many cases, only the most blatant violations of trust, giving phony jobs to people who didn't really work would be considered unacceptable. My dad, working for the City of Boston in the Auditing Department, was aware of some of the shady practices that took place and disliked it greatly.

Q: Did you, as a kid, or your father were they involved in passing out leaflets or elections or anything like that or was there much?

SULLIVAN: My father was a little bit, and the first political activity that I remember was probably the John F. Kennedy race for Senator in 1952. My mother's father, I believe, had at one stage been a selectman for the city of Boston at a time when those were elected on a very small regional basis. My father had also participated a little bit in politics as a young man, but by the time I was born, their politics for the most part was not active engagement but rather active interest and maintaining themselves involved in that way.

Q: I'm going on the assumption that your family was Catholic and how important was the church in your family while growing up?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, it was important to certainly both of my parents and was transmitted to the four kids. My father was involved in the St. Vincent De Paul Society, a charitable organization in the local parish church. He was for over twenty years of his active life the president of that association in our St. Ann's parish in Neponset which is the part of Dorchester right close to the Quincy line in the southern part of Boston. My mother as well was active in the women's church organization and all of the children went to the parochial school for at least the first six years and were encouraged to be active as altar boys or choir or something else.

Q: Let's talk about your neighborhood. Did you live more or less in the same neighborhood as a kid?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I lived until I was ten in a rented two-bedroom apartment in one of Boston's typical three-decker houses in the Neponset area of Dorchester. It was rent controlled so I remember that my parents paid rent of $35 a month from the time they moved in 1937 after their marriage until 1954 when they moved away. They saved and managed to buy a single family house in the same St. Ann's parish a ten minute walk closer to the school and the church. The area we moved to was mostly single family or two-family homes and didn't have the three-deckers which were only a block or two away. So it was for my parents a great achievement to provide more space and better conditions for their family.

Q: The three-deckers normally had only three families living in it?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Well let's talk a little about growing up as a young kid out in the street. What did you do? Before we go to school let's talk about life outside of school.

SULIVAN: All right. Well during my first ten years, I lived in a neighborhood in which almost everybody, had three, four, six, eight, ten, twelve children living in one of those three-decker flats. So my memories are of never lacking for kids out on the street. On summer nights you could go out and have forty kids out there playing red rover or whatever games you played out on the street. The ice cream man would come and you got a treat, which might have cost a nickel or so at the time. I had a small play ground within a five minute walk from where I lived those first ten years and by the time I was probably five years old walked down there myself to play baseball and other sports with other kids. There was not a basketball court at first but we would sled in the snow, or ice skate on the fields that were flooded each winter. Most of it was of on your own with much less organized sports for kids than there are today.

Q: You know I use the term I grew up in the same sort of thing as almost far you know, okay go out and play, and you should be back home by six or something for dinner. Just get out of the house.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, there were no parents organizing activities.

Q: And it worked.

SULLIVAN: It worked fine and I know my sister enjoyed having me as a younger brother because in that neighborhood it was so unusual for her to be an only child. My mother had miscarried between the two of us and that actually by the way is where my middle name comes from. Gerard is the French patron saint of mothers so that's why I have what is rather an unusual name in an Irish Catholic background.

Q: I was wondering, it sounds more French doesn't it.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah exactly. So in any case when I came along oh my sister was thrilled she actually had a baby brother to push around in the carriage and visit in the neighborhood. She was concerned that while she was at school my mother would actually let me go out of the house alone at probably age two and just walk across the street and play out in the sun on the porch across the street. We children we were never hungry, although we didn't eat well at times. There were times when we had fried bologna for dinner, but we didn't starve; we had enough to eat. We had a good neighborhood background. When we did move when I was ten, I mostly returned to my old neighborhood because that was where my closest friends were. That meant a ten minute walk or shorter bike ride and then I played at the same neighborhood park, which by that time had installed a basketball court. So there was a little more to do even apart from baseball and football.

I remember in my first ten years, that ten or fifteen minute walk was a relatively long for little kids, fifteen minute walk to school each way and they used to actually break at lunch time and so you would come back and forth four times a day. In the snow and ice if you threw snowballs, that meant your woolen gloves were soaking wet and at least on one occasion I got frostbitten as a result. But overall they are good memories and a normal childhood for that period.

Q: Given let's stick to the street life to begin with, was this all Irish? You particularly think of Italians in that area. How did things mix?

SULLIVAN: Indeed, while the city was broken up into ethnic neighborhoods: South Boston was an overwhelmingly Irish; East Boston and the north end overwhelmingly Italian. Dorchester was probably more mixed and my estimate would be Irish as much as fifty percent, Italians perhaps 30 percent, Polish maybe ten percent and Lithuanian another five percent. I'm just speaking Neponset here, not Dorchester more broadly which had Jewish and other neighborhoods. But Neponset alone had a mixture about as I described and overwhelmingly Catholic and Caucasian.

Q: Did the ethnic groups; you said you went to St. Ann's?

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: Were there Irish churches, Irish parishes, Italian parishes and all?

SULLIVAN: Not there. I know that even in South Boston there was some of that. In the north end, there were Italian parishes. But perhaps as a result of the fact that Neponset and much of Dorchester were more mixed and often the second point of resettlement for families originally from somewhere else like South Boston, as was the case with my father. As families began to do a little bit better, they could manage to move out of South Boston and move to Neponset, even if they were living in a three family house. So the neighborhood being more mixed, people went to the nearest church overwhelmingly rather than an ethnic church.

I think there were some families of Polish origin who continued to go to a Polish Church and Polish clubs in other areas of the city, but the majority went to the local parish church. And while a small percentage went to the public schools, the large majority of kids of all ethnic groups went to the local parochial school and were members of St. Ann's parish.

Q: Okay, let's talk about school; let's keep to elementary school.

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q: A Catholic school?

SULLIVAN: A Catholic school and I went to one year to kindergarten which was a public school very close to where I lived at the time, Hemingway School, and then went six years to the Catholic Parochial school.

Q: Who ran the Catholic parochial school?

SULLIVAN: An order of nuns called St. Joseph's in the traditional old habits. As I learned later from my sisters, some of those nuns were as young as 19 years old and thrown into a first grade classroom of 48 children and told to manage this. My years and certainly my younger sisters' years in elementary school would have been the early years of the baby boom so that the numbers of children were enormous. And this parochial school education cost each child a grand total of ten cents per week in stationery fees.

Q: We are talking about the post-World War II result. You were born in '44 you were a part of the beginning of the cusp of all this.

SULLIVAN: Yes, I think that somehow '44 counts as the first year in the baby boom. So the numbers were huge, no matter how competent the teacher might have been, managing and teaching 48 kids in a class was a huge challenge. My sisters and I were happy to be right up near the top of those classes so for us it was relatively easy and good. We could get the benefit of it, I know that a lot of kids in the lower part of that class were lost, there was just no way that the nuns could manage to teach everyone well in such large classes..

Q: You know the stories of nuns being very tough. How did you find the nuns, this was in elementary school?

SULLIVAN: Right, they were tough. I don't remember any times of physical discipline but certainly in terms of being extremely tough, extremely stern and administering collective as well as individual punishments, for instance to write I will not do this again a thousand times or something like that. Family backing for this total: the nuns' writ was absolute.

Q: So I mean if there was a dispute the nuns trumped.

SULLIVAN: There were not, as you indicated earlier, helicopter parents in those days. You were on your own, you went to school and you did your own homework and so on. I could look to my parents from time to time on homework, but essentially you were on your own. If you got into any trouble at school it must be your fault and therefore punishment will be doubled at home.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

SULLIVAN: Yes and that was one of the things that both my parents instilled at home. My parents were big readers. They were always reading, they weren't playing with the kids the way parents do today but they were reading at home and talking about what they were reading with each other, but also with us as we grew up and encouraging us to read

as well. There was even some degree of competition among the kids. I remember one time my younger sister who was three years younger than me and very bright was intent on matching me book for book through the summer, which sometimes amounted to five books a week or something. Most of that was from the library, of course. We had a public library, which was maybe a five, or ten-minute walk from the house. We would go there and take out maybe the maximum number of books allowed, perhaps seven a week and read all of those.

Q: You know the library system in the United States particularly in the city is magnificent. This is mostly a legacy of Andrew Carnegie.

SULLIVAN: Yes, and the Boston public library system was quite good and these branches were well dispersed through the city.

Q: Were the librarians helpful?

SULLIVAN: I don't have great memories of the librarian per se. Just of what we were interested in reading. I remember the Landmark series of books, biographies mostly. I think historical figures that would have been something that I would have been reading probably in second, third or fourth grade. A lot of historical, mostly non-fiction probably occasionally fiction, including, as I got older, the classics like Two Years Before the Mast.

Q: Were there any subjects that particularly turned you on or turned you off?

SULLIVAN: Well if we are still in elementary school I guess they were all relatively easy for me and I did well. So it was not a time in which I had a subject that maybe penmanship was my least favorite at that time; one, which you can see, is still a problem today. Maybe art as well. I did less well in the artistic subjects and, when I reflect back, there wasn't much of the extra curricular subjects that there are today; music and so on, that just really wasn't available.

Q: You say your parents read as well. Do you recall was the radio or TV or newspapers were your family keeping up with the news and these sorts of subjects that we talk about at home?

SULLIVAN: Yes, they did keep up and I actually think the first television we had was probably when I was about seven. I don't really have memory of the pre-television years other than they listened to radio I know. But on television they did watch the nightly news and did talk about it. I'd say probably more than anything the political aspects were what they focused on. I think I remember actually when McArthur was relieved from command there was a parade.

Q: About '52, I guess.

SULLIVAN: Yes and we somehow went to that although I don't think they were terrific supporters of McArthur. Indeed, they admired Harry Truman much more.

Q: Well then you started when you were ten you went to…where'd you go? When did you switch from Catholic school to public school?

SULLIVAN: After finishing sixth grade at age 12, there was a Boston Latin School that took people entering either in seventh or ninth grades. I had a friend who was going there who had already had three older siblings, I think, who had gone there as well as his father who had gone to Latin school and then to Harvard and was a high school principal. David was going and I don't know how much I was following his example, how much I thought that this would be a good thing but I decided to do it which was somewhat controversial with my parents because I would be leaving the Catholic school system.

Q: The Boston Latin School I guess is one of the oldest in the country but it is also highly selective. This is pretty hot stuff.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I'm sure they were aware of that. My older sister who is five years older than me just told me recently that she had sought to go to the Girls Latin at the time, I guess probably from ninth grade and my parents had essentially prohibited it and had the pastor talk to her. But by the time five years had gone by, my parents had perhaps been softened up and were less absolute. They still talked about it are you really? Why are you? Then the nuns were also upset and I had to deal with that. I think that the alternative vision would have been going to Boston College high school in ninth grade. But I stuck with it and I went and my parents were always very supportive once I make the decision to go; in retrospect it was very good.

Q: Had there been any interventions from anybodies part that maybe Joe Sullivan is on his way to be a priest or not?

SULLIVAN: No not really I think my parents would have been positive about that but they never pushed that either on myself or my sisters.

Q: Well then let's talk about Boy's Latin. You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: I entered in 1956 when I had just turned, I guess, 12 until 1962 when I graduated.

Q: How did you find Boy's Latin?

SULLIVAN: Traditionally, it was large, intended to be intimidating, particularly for a seventh-grader. At the initial assembly they would tell the new students to look to their left, look to your right only one of you are going to make it through here; the other two are going out the door. In fact, the numbers who failed out were even greater than that. I think that of every six that entered, only one actually emerged at the other end.

Now I managed to get in without taking the examination. At that time they used to allow you in if you had all A's and B's you could skip the entry examination. There were a lot of smart kids there, a lot of very competitive kids, a lot of kids whose family environment was very much push, push, push. It was a fairly intensive academic environment which I gradually got used to and could manage but not without my share of mediocre grades.

Q: Was there a significant Jewish element there?

SULLIVAN: Yes there were. In Boston at the time, the Jewish population was perhaps ten percent, mostly in a part of Dorchester called Mattapan and other parts of Dorchester, but at Boston Latin School, Jewish students might have been as much as a third. These kids, because they were city kids as opposed to kids from the suburbs of Newton or Brookline were frequently the first generation in their families with an opportunity to go to college and therefore really carrying their parents' ambitions that they be successful through education.

Q: You said maybe one out of six stayed. How was the weeding out process?

SULLIVAN: I forget the specifics of it, but certainly if you had failing grades or a failing average over the course of the eight grading periods, you were expelled. I don't remember the seventh and eighth grade process of where those kids wound up going, but in the ninth grades on the typical place was Boston English which at that time was directly across the street on Avenue Louis Pasteur in the Fenway area of Boston. Hopefully most of them graduated and some of them, including some I knew personally continued on to college, although their chances of getting into the best colleges were less than those from Boston Latin.

Q: What courses did you particularly like and any particular teaches that particularly inspired you?

SULLIVAN: Well we had of course a pretty rigid program of which you had to take. You had to take essentially six years of Latin and several other languages. Not too many years before me, Greek used to be required, classical Greek. It was not required in my time but other languages were so, I wound up taking two or three years of French, two or three years of German. I enjoyed languages, although not French, because I didn't have very good teachers. Latin I had good teachers, Joe Desmond being one of those teachers, and a good German teachers named Van Steenbergen and Donovan. So I liked languages.

I liked history I know; there was very little science. In math, I did okay, not great and wound up taking trigonometry as a high school senior. There were very few science courses at Boston Latin. I took physics in my senior year in high school. There were no biology courses at Latin School then and the only other science option would have been a chemistry course. But Latin School had overwhelmingly a pretty narrow classically oriented, liberal arts curriculum.

Civics was another course that I really liked. I enjoyed the subject matter of all American systems work, the constitution, the electoral process and civic institutions. That course had some impact on me in thinking about where I would like to go to university and what I would like to study there.

Q: Well now did the election of 1960, Kennedy versus Nixon, did that hit you?

SULLIVAN: Sure, both because there was, in fact, a Boston Latin School connection. Kennedy's grandfather, Honey Fitz, had gone to Boston Latin and there were other connections with the family and Boston politics in general. The Boston Latin School band, I remember, was invited to play at the inauguration and so the Kennedy presidency had a big impact at Latin School. There was also the Boston connection of the Kennedy's that made his presidency a point of pride. At the time of the inaugural address, I would have been sixteen and therefore the appeal of "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country" was something that made an impact and certainly was something that fit into my parents' own values. Since my father didn't have a military background, my parents' interpretation of this was not that the children should think of a military career, but rather think of the other ways you can go into government and be helpful to others. There probably was another element in their mind, which was that government jobs are good secure jobs, which in times of depression don't lay off people the way the private sector does.

Q: How did the Cold War affect you or intrude on you?

SULLIVAN: I can remember vaguely the McCarthy hearings, which were relatively soon after we got a television. Watching those in the afternoon, my mother watching those. My mother had strong, anti-communist attitudes and had, at an earlier stage been attracted to Father Feeney's radio addresses, as were many Catholics at the time..

Q: Oh yeah.

SULLIVAN: In the pre-World War II period.

Q: I saw him a couple times and he used to preach in The Commons.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, that's right who was almost…yeah but Feeney was sort of similar.

Q: Very anti-Semitic.

SULLIVAN: Yes. She was, I don't think anti-Semitic per se. She had Jewish friends and colleagues from when she had been working that she stayed in touch with. But she had some emotional pacifism, a feeling that we should stay out of war at all costs and that if we are being drawn into war, it was at others' behest, particularly the Soviets', and therefore not a good thing for us. I don't think my father was with her on all that stuff.

In any case, when the McCarthy hearings began, as I recall, my father's disposition on that was that McCarthy had gone overboard and that this was a craziness that he was advocating and they were not supportive of that. I think again there was probably some elements of resistance to strong military action that was somewhere in this. So their attitude towards the Cold War was not as black and white as would have been the case in many other people that they knew and certainly people that I encountered, their friends and family.

Q: At this time you were in Boston Latin? Did you feel any of the class warfare the Boston Irish versus the Yankees?

SULLIVAN: Sure that was all part of growing up you know and I can't say that I experienced any of it myself. I think my parents felt that they had and my mother certainly recounted the stories of signs stating that Boston Irish need not apply for jobs. I don't know whether it is true or fiction, but they recounted the stories that Irish were made to work Sundays so that they couldn't go to church and things like this. So, yes, there was very much a feeling of us versus them.

Q: Yeah. What about social life there?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, well it was pretty structured and rather limited. I guess I should say from the time I was fourteen I began to work summers in any case. I was fortunate my father actually managed to find a way to have me interviewed and hired at Fenway Park, working during the Red Sox games selling ice cream and programs and so on. I did that for seven years even though about three years into it I began to work other summer jobs as well.

But the social life was school dances or something. There used to be a weekly dance at Boston College High School, a Friday night dance that I went to throughout high school with friends. Most of my close friends were probably either people from the neighborhood; there were about five or six of us from the neighborhood who played CYO baseball together and went to Boston Latin School together. So we commuted together, which required three separate transports to get there each day. That was a bonding experience there in the subways an hour each way each day. Other social life, not a lot, I didn't have a lot of money so it was an occasional movie or something, certainly not a regular deal. Hanging out in the neighborhood with mostly guys and that was largely it.

Q: Boston, of course, every city has its own thing. When I got out of the military in '54 I spent a year at Boston University getting a masters degree and with a name of Kennedy and I'd grown up Episcopalian but I was really A-religious and I could see girls that I would meet sound me out to see if I was Catholic or not Catholic. For them this was important one way or the other. To me this never occurred to me that they would give a damn.

SULLIVAN: I would say there was probably both some feeling transmitted from my parents that certainly you would want to marry another Catholic and nobody else and

probably another Irish because Italians were different. In fact, my parents proved far more open-minded than that in practice with women that I eventually dated or even married. Once I made a decision, they were always supportive. But it was what they had been taught or absorbed.

Q: Well we've come to 1962 you graduate. Obviously you were pointed toward higher education weren't you? What were you looking at and what did you do?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I had done very well in the SAT's and those were years, fortunately for me, when the SAT and Achievement test scores counted more than one's high school grades. So I applied to those schools that I was expected to do. But I wanted to apply to a place where I might get a scholarship. I still had two younger siblings. My oldest sister had actually opted not to go to college and got married soon thereafter, although she later went back. But two younger siblings were still coming up and it would be a good thing if I could get a scholarship. I had been able to earn and put away probably about as much as a thousand dollars per summer which at those days came close to paying some tuitions; helping substantially. So the three schools that I applied to initially were Boston College, Holy Cross and Notre Dame. Ironically, at almost the last minute in some ways, in the month of December of my senior year in high school, a neighborhood friend was working as a license plate runner for an insurance company for the Christmas season. Everybody used to have to change their plates in Massachusetts of all the bad days between December 31 and January 1 so they all needed their new license plates by that date. So the insurance companies wanted people to run between the insurance company and the registry of motor vehicles near North Station in downtown Boston in December. So a friend encouraged me to work with him at the Travelers' Insurance Company, where I met one of the company's very successful insurance agents named John Baronian who was a Tufts University graduate, a good football player at Tufts and a strong alumni member until he passed away within the last year. But John encouraged me to apply to Tufts as well and arranged for me to visit and interview at Tufts.

So I got the university catalogues and one factor of greatest interest to me was Tufts' relative freedom to choose my own program. Certainly Tufts students had much more freedom to choose their courses than any of the other three schools I had applied to. At that point I was drawn to government, political science, and history, and I could do that early on as opposed to going through a fixed curriculum in the first several years. So I applied to Tufts. There, I knew I would definitely need a scholarship because, as I recall, the tuition was an "outrageous" three thousand dollars a year. Well I got into all of them but Notre Dame didn't offer a scholarship; Holy Cross may have offered a partial scholarship and Boston College offered a full tuition scholarship, but with the expectation that I would commute. Tufts offered a scholarship with extra money so that I could live on campus. They weren't going to cover everything but they were going to provide enough so that together with a work scholarship and my own summer earnings I would be able to do it without asking my parents for anything. It was a school with a good reputation and so that is where I opted for.

Q: Okay, you went to Tufts from '62 to what '66?

SULLIVAN: ’66 right.

Q: What was Tufts like at the time?

SULLIVAN: What was Tufts like? Well relatively small I guess it was about 3,000 students. There was a girl’s part of that, Jackson. There were a number of students, I don’t know what percentage, at least ten or fifteen percent probably who were pre-med, pre-dent students and they were pointed in a specific direction and knew they had to be super grades or else they had no chance of getting into medical or dental school. There was a significant engineering school that was also a substantial part of the university. But within social sciences there was a good number of students, the English department was very solid and enjoyable. It was a different life, of course, a social life as well. Living on campus it’s a different world and a whole new world opens up.

Q: How did your parent’s feel about you had already been to Boston Latin, which had sort of severed the church education ties you might say?

SULLIVAN: Correct, I think they didn’t know Tufts particularly other than it was a pretty good school, but they didn’t know very much about it. They knew much more about Boston College. They might have leaned in the direction of Boston College but when I made up my mind they were fine and supportive.

Q: You said you had sort of a work/study arrangement. What were you doing?

SULLIVAN: For the first couple of years working on the switchboard serving several of the dormitories and then my last two years being a “manager” of that operation. So that was the official work/study component of the scholarship and then I also wound up actually joining a fraternity. By the time I became a junior I was assistant steward and then later steward of the fraternity, responsible for food orders and service, which gave me free board.

Q: Which fraternity was this?

SULLIVAN: Zeta Psi.

Q: What was the student body like?

SULLIVAN: Let’s see what was the student body like? I think they were pretty serious in that it was academically pre-med, engineering, and fairly rigorous.

Q: That sets the real tone.

SULLIVAN: Yes and while I think probably at least a quarter of the engineering and pre-med students eventually would wind up dropping back and being economics majors or something else because they couldn’t handle the demands. But all the students were

pretty well integrated, in part because from the time I joined the fraternity and particularly from sophomore and junior years on, my closest friends were fraternity members and a number of them were engineers. They worked hard; they had to work hard to make it.

Q: It wasn't coed at that time?

SULLIVAN: Well the Jackson College was virtually identical to Tufts; they had a separate administration but we all took classes together. There were also at that time other schools which were part of Tufts, including the Boston School of Occupational Therapy as well as physical therapy school,

Q: Did you ever run across Fletcher or was that there?

SULLIVAN: Oh yes, Fletcher was a graduate school of law and diplomacy under both Tufts and Harvard, but on the Tufts campus. And from freshman year, the first time I ever even had any acquaintance with Foreign Service as a potential career was because Fletcher students were our graduate assistants in the government and history courses. So here were folks, some American and some non-American graduate students, sometimes being sent there by their own governments to eventually become diplomats or in the midst of their diplomatic career. So those were our graduate assistants and I learned a lot from them and about career options.

Q: Did you get involved with foreign affairs? What was happening beyond Boston?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, probably only a little bit. Tufts had a few demonstrations in my time. I think Hubert Humphrey spoke there and had some anti-Vietnam demonstrations but for the most part no; I was aware of them, I followed. I remember a paper I wrote in freshman or sophomore year in which the subject was what to do in Vietnam. The professor's bias was, in fact, that we should send in far more troops and deal with the situation, but you could write whatever you wanted defending your view. So those things were very much subjects of both course work and things people would talk about. But I think the degree of activism through 1966 was a lot less than it became several years thereafter.

Q: Really the next couple years really were when the things really got going. What was your major?

SULLIVAN: Government, political science.

Q: Were you looking at government at the sort of how the United States worked or was it a broader sweep?

SULLIVAN: It was both the United States portion and also international aspects and certainly I took a fair amount of course work on Latin America, in particular, and the

usual European history and political systems. So yeah by that point I had an increasing interest in international affairs.

Q: As you moved up and you were getting near graduation in '66 how did you stand military wise and just in career wise?

SULLIVAN: I had actually been in Air Force ROTC my freshman year, but dropped out after that year because I did not find it very interesting. As I approached graduation, the military draft was a factor, but there was deferral if you went to graduate school and I was interested in graduate school. I took the Foreign Service exam while I was a senior in college and the oral examination thereafter and passed. But, I think, at that time I just decided that it would be better to get some graduate studies first, almost a wrong call, but I did that. Then I got into Georgetown and went to Georgetown Graduate School. I also had the feeling that living in Washington and being closer to government and in a less provincial setting -- yes, Boston is provincial for Bostonians -- would be good so I went there and the deferment was automatic for those going to graduate school.

By the spring of my first year of graduate school, I also began to work part-time in the academic year and then full time in the summers for the public health service in NIH (National Institutes of Health). It was interesting and I was actually considering a public health service career, because they had something called the Public Health Service Commission Corps. So I finished the two-years of graduate school at Georgetown with a heavy focus on comparative politics and international relations. But as I was finishing up my masters at Georgetown, the time of eligibility for me to enter the Foreign Service based on my earlier exam results was winding down and the Foreign Service was not taking new entrants at that time. I was told that yes, you are on the list but we are not going to be taking people at this time. So I had to make a decision what to do and I was offered the opportunity to join the Public Health Service Commission Corps and did that.

Q: Well let's talk about Georgetown.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: You were there for two years?

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: How did you find Georgetown as compared to other schools you had been to?

SULLIVAN: Well it was a lot less good than it is now or than it was in 1992 when I did a diplomat-in-residence semester there. I found the courses were overwhelmingly in the evening, the professors often had another job or were doing other things and so it was often a part-time experience for them. I was not in the masters in Foreign Service program, but rather in the government program and I would say it was mediocre. There were some good professors and some not very good. It was good for me because I needed both the additional course work and the experience of living in Washington, which gave

me a much better feel for foreign policy that I would not have had otherwise, but Georgetown was not a terrific school in those years.

Q: In the first place while you were at Tufts what had attracted you towards the Foreign Service?

SULLIVAN: I think in part that there were Fletcher School people who had either that career ambition or at least were well aware of it and talked about it. It was something where this was interesting, these are the things that really interest me and these are jobs which I could do that would also be very interesting for me for a full career. So there it is and that is what attracted me from undergraduate on.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions asked you on the oral this first time around?

SULLIVAN: Whether they offered a cigarette and no ashtray and so on? No I really don't and, in fact, I would up taking the oral twice, once in my undergraduate senior year and then again when I had to retake it about three years later. I actually did less well on the written exam the second time so I barely qualified to make it into the oral, but then made it through that the second time as well.

Q: While you were with the Public Health service what were you doing and how did that impress you?

SULLIVAN: I was what was called a health service officer which is a generalist, but was working in a health manpower statistics office. In effect, I was doing statistics with health numbers. I'm not a statistician, but the office director and other people in the office were statisticians and others focused on administering programs to promote education in allied health professions. The majority of our work was projecting numbers of people, projections, rather than sophisticated statistical formulas. It was something I could do also and I had common sense and I could function in an office environment and deal with people. So projecting needs for health professionals and educational production of needed health workers. My office focused on allied health, meaning health professionals other than doctors, dentists and nurses and projected needs and promoted higher numbers for education in these areas. We had a number of grants with the state of Washington health department, the Oregon medical association, and the Pennsylvania hospital association so we managed these contracts as well and agreed on scopes of work and measured and talked with them about carrying out their activities.

Q: How long did you do that?

SULLIVAN: Well I was doing it already probably about a year as a civil service worker, initially part time, and after a while full time, while going to school part time during my second year of graduate school. So when I switched to the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service in April of 1968 I had already been working in that office for about a year and then did two additional years as commissioned corps. In that period I did take the Foreign Service exam again, but at the same time was considering a career in health

and staying in the commissioned corps. If I had done that, I would have needed to go back and get a masters degree in public health. Certainly my own office would have supported that and encouraged it. They would have wanted me probably to do it in health statistics, but I might have been interested in doing something less statistical and broader. In any case, I seriously considered it but then the Foreign Service opportunity was there again and they did indeed have a place for me in an upcoming class in June of 1970 so I left the public health service in April of 1970.

Q: So you came into the Foreign Service in 1970. What was your training group, your A100, like?

SULLIVAN: Forty-two members, three women, about fourteen as I recall USIA. As I recall two or three Black officers, two or three Hispanic officers, I know these numbers more or less because doing recruiting as a diplomat-in-residence, I would sometimes compare the numbers from my entry class to more recent incoming classes. So the entry classes at that time were not very ethnically or gender diverse. They were from various places around the country certainly, but were less geographically diverse than today's FSO's as well. Ron Neumann was the son of an academic and Ambassador; others also had a foreign service background, like Rusty Hughes whose father had been a consul. So there were several who were second generation Foreign Service but I would say that the class was not predominately what people used to regard as the old Foreign Service from Ivy colleges and perhaps Berkeley or Stanford. They were more diverse than that but were mostly about my age, 25 or 26, some a little bit older, average maybe twenty-eight or so as a median. Now new classes are coming in with the median age of about thirty or thirty-two so it's a little bit older these days. From my class of 42 officers, about six became Ambassadors, including two African-Americans. Most striking, of course, is that there were only three women among 42 entrants.

Q: How were your class and you…how was Vietnam viewed at that time?

SULLIVAN: I had a close friend who had come into the Foreign Service, who entered in one of the immediately previous classes whose class had gotten involved in a major confrontation over what, I think, had been the intention to send that entire class to CORDS program. They wrote a letter of protest to the secretary of State or the Director General, as I recall. Henry Kissinger, then at the NSC, reportedly preferred to fire them all, but Secretary of State Rogers disagreed and most of the class didn't go to CORDS. But it was a protest, I think, specifically over the Cambodia incursion.

Q: Which was in the …spring of '70.

SULLIVAN: '70 yes so just before I came in. So we were not presented with Vietnam as a first posting but there were several people assigned to Laos. But the Vietnam war was a point of controversy?

Q: Well how did you feel about Vietnam?

SULLIVAN: How did I feel? Well in the years that I had lived in Washington it was indeed a very much more active issue and yes there were a lot of demonstrations. I did participate in some of them; not the loudest of them at the Pentagon; that I avoided deliberately. As time went on, I became increasingly opposed to our engagement in Vietnam.

Q: How did you find the training?

SULLIVAN: Training was okay but rather superficial when I look at it in retrospect. When I see how much more rigorous it is today, the entry class in 1970 had just six weeks of orientation. I would say probably when I compare myself to my Foreign Service classmates I was probably both less sophisticated with less background than they had in how the world worked and particularly how the U.S. government worked. So at times in that orientation class, I felt like I was playing catch-up. I remember actually accessing my records recently in which one of the class mentors wrote that I might make a good personnel officer in the future, a comment not meant as a complement, I'm sure. Then because I was assigned initially to Vera Cruz, which later became an assignment in Mexico City, I did the consular training which at that time consisted of rote training by non-trainers who came in and read the consular law with respect to visas and passports. But there was no hands-on experience included in the training.

Q: This is before ConGen Rosslyn.

SULLIVAN: Absolutely, totally.

Q: Was Alice Kerr running the program then or not?

SULLIVAN: I don't remember the name, no.

Q: But anyway it was pretty awful.

SULLIVAN: It was deadly. They gave a little test so you had to memorize the law to be able to pass the test the next day, but other than that it was just a waste.

Q: Yeah, well how come your class was able to avoid CORDS?

SULLIVAN: I'm not sure, I think they must have decided by that point that either it wasn't worth the hassle or maybe they would do better taking people who were second tour or third tour and sending them rather than first-tour officers.

Q: Well we were also sending our troops out.

SULLIVAN: Yes. The other thing I remember if you are interested in the training experience. I remember, probably part of the orientation class, getting the old diplomatic security briefing in which indeed we may have been one of the last classes that had the

chart put up on the wall of how many homosexuals had been caught in the Foreign Service. It was really just right out of the book from that era.

Q: Oh yeah. Well when I came in in 1955 we were all struck by the fact that we used to go up to the security corridor of the State Department and start giggling because it seemed like everybody's middle initial was X as for Xavier or something. It was extremely Irish there and we were told that these Irish men felt that you were somewhat of a deviant if you were having relations with your wife and kept the light on you know. Well Joe I'm looking at the time and I think this is a good place to stop.

SULLIVAN: Okay.

Q: So we will pick this up when you are off to where? Mexico City?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, my assignment was but I guess I should add one personal note in there as to sort of close the chapter here. I did get married in December of 1970 shortly after joining and very shortly before departing for post in February, 1971. Obviously this was a relationship that I had before entering the foreign service and being assigned overseas helped prompt us to make a decision at that time, so we got married in December, 1970. As they still do today at the end of the A-100 orientation course, I was assigned as Vice Consul in Vera Cruz, Mexico via five months of Spanish language training.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

SULLIVAN: She grew up in Atlanta and in D.C. as the daughter of a public health service physician. I guess that is how we met while I was working in public health in NIH. She was working there as well as a management intern a graduate of Wisconsin University.

Q: Okay, well we will pick this up in 19...was it '70 or…

SULLIVAN: '70 or '71. '70 I did the Spanish training, twenty weeks of Spanish training and then a scheduled February 1971 departure for Vera Cruz. In the course of my Spanish language training, I was in touch with the vice consul in Vera Cruz, who was telling me the good as well as the bad of life and work in Vera Cruz. I was doing the usual stuff such as reading about Vera Cruz and all the history and getting excited about it and packing off all the winter clothes for storage. Then I was told maybe three weeks before departure that, oh, by the way, you are not going to Vera Cruz. They told me that they were going to close Vera Cruz so you are going to Mexico City instead.

Q: Welcome to the Foreign Service.

SULLIVAN: That's right, that's it.

Q: Okay, today is the 6th of April 2009 with Joseph Sullivan. Joe we're what 1970?

SULLIVAN: In 1970 I entered the service. In ’71 I went overseas for the first time and going off to Mexico City.

Q: ’71 and you are off to Mexico City instead of Vera Cruz. Okay, we’ll talk about the job in a second but how would you say from your colleagues and all were you given a feel for Mexican-American relations at the time?

SULLIVAN: I’d say that I read a good bit on my own and developed a feel over the two years I was there. At that point, there was no country-specific training at FSI, although there may have been two weeks of training on Latin America.

Q: Okay, let’s talk about that.

SULLIVAN: Yeah; and one portion of that was the Tlatelolco massacre had occurred in 1968 in a repression of civic sentiment and we, the United States, were associated directly or indirectly with that in that we had a close relationship with the Government of Mexico and did not question how they dealt with internal dissent.

Q: You might say what this was.

SULLIVAN: Well it was an uprising for greater citizen rights, a movement of the Left coincident with 1968 uprisings around much of the world. Luis Echeverria was already president of Mexico by the time I arrived in 1971, but he had previously been Minister of the Interior during the time of the Tlatelolco massacre. That Ministry always had close relationships with the United States, and particularly with the CIA, so the U.S. was viewed by the Mexican Left as the enemy. Now ironically even the Mexican establishment such as Echeverria, would have in public been very critical of the United States because that’s how Mexican foreign policy balanced very conservative authoritarian internal system of controls with the myth of the Mexican revolution. The revolution and Mexican politicians of the dominant PRI party portrayed theirs as an institutionalized Leftist revolution giving benefits to the people and resisting domination by the United States, which had after all invaded Mexico several times and taken a good deal of Mexican territory.

So that was in the background. I recall developing friendships with Mexican university students who felt a little bit adventurous that they as university students at UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico), the large public university with a great deal of anti-Americanism could be friends with me. One of them invited me to his presentation of his thesis and at that presentation of the thesis, he was criticized by his professor for not having integrated sufficient Marxist dialectic in his analysis in whatever issue he was writing about.

Q: Well there had been shortly before the Olympics there was basically a massacre of students hadn’t it?

SULLIVAN: Yeah that was the ‘68 uprising, the so-called Tlatelolco massacre for the Mexico City square where students were shot by security forces.

Q: Was this something that people kept alluding to or not?

SULLIVAN: I’d say it was mostly below the surface. You would hear it in dealing with university students, but for average Mexicans probably not. It was an uprising of a minority led by university students and intellectuals, not a generalized uprising, but it was handled very repressively and with a lot of deaths. So certainly among that group of people it left deep scars.

Q: When you got to Mexico, who was the ambassador?

SULLIVAN: The ambassador was Robert McBride. I recently inspected The Congo, Kinshasa, and it reminded me that he had been ambassador to Congo Kinshasa back prior to that, probably in the late ‘60s.

Q: Did you get any feel for him or were you so far down the food chain that you didn’t really?

SULLIVAN: I didn’t have very much direct interaction, although I was invited to the large receptions. He was always pleasant, a little bit distant. I recall his wife being I guess I don’t know the right word…sorrowful perhaps. In the course of the two years that we spent there, the rules changed and she no longer had junior wives like mine, in effect, reporting to her; they had been emancipated. So the system in which Mrs. McBride and the other senior spouses had paid their dues was ending.

Q: Well then, where did you work?

SULLIVAN: I worked six months in the non-immigrant visa section pushing out as many as 200 visa interviews a day; It was basically a machine process. People were pleasant. That was an observation point for me though because I had a few colleagues, like Mike Hancock, who came in as consular officers committed to consular work. The contrast between him and some of those people who had been “Wristonized”, the Foreign Service staff officers who spent their whole careers issuing non-immigrant visas with minimal chance of promotion, was dramatic. Many of the staff officers developed negative attitudes toward their work and the visa applicants. I would hear them complain that “these people are lying to me or I’m tired of what I am doing.” Many of the new officers who came in with me committed to a career in consular work had a much broader perspective on life and realized that these people coming before them were looking to change their lives for the better, whether they were telling the truth or not.

Q: You are at this desk or whatever; I guess it was a counter wasn’t it?

SULLIVAN: Counter yes.

Q: One, you see 500 Juan's or whomever, how did you make up your mind?

SULLIVAN: Well doing 200 interviews a day in the six hours you would be at that counter, you really are making up your mind in the first instance based on their appearance.

Q: I'm told some people said they used to look at the hands.

SULLIVAN: I don't recall looking at the hands but people walking up, you would notice their appearance. You would ask three or four questions and if they met your expectations, then you went ahead either issuing or not issuing. If the answer to my questions didn't meet my expectations then I would continue the interview for perhaps a maximum of three or four minutes more; that's all you could afford and then make a decision and move on.

Q: Did you find it hard because most people come up through the academic route really aren't having to make these very important decisions and it's hard to put a new guy or gal into this.

SULLIVAN: Right. I'd say the pressure of rapid-decision making process was difficult. It was not difficult in Mexico compared in other places, like Israel, because most Mexicans accepted the decision whichever way it went. In part that may have been mitigated by the fact that they had another alternative; they could cross the border illegally, if all else failed. But Mexicans didn't resist, they didn't complain, they didn't cry in front of you. They maintained their stoic disposition and said thank you very much and left, but yes you would think about it a little bit as this was something that was affecting their lives, their whole future.

Q: How did you find your supervision?

SULLIVAN: Almost all of my immediate supervisors had come up through the staff route which was the predominant route for consular officers until the late '60s early '70s. Some of them were good, professional, etc. Some of them had alcohol issues and it may have had something to do with Mexico as well in that people who had problems with alcohol issues were kept close to home.

Q: I was in personnel at one point and Canada and Mexico had a disproportionate set of people with personnel problems because we didn't want to send them too far. Of course, this created…also London got loaded with.

SULLIVAN: The transport costs if they had to come home were relatively less.

Q: Well then after six months doing non-immigrant visas, what happened?

SULLIVAN: Then I worked in the American citizens services section and had a terrific supervisor Lou Goelz, who I think later became at least a consul general.

Q: Oh yes, actually Lou replaced me twice once in Seoul and once in Naples.

SULLIVAN: He was a delightful fellow, very knowledgeable and he also showed confidence in his people and let them do what they were capable of and encouraged his officers. So I was placed in a position called operations officer, which was anything that didn't fit neatly into a category of a death or arrest or a notarial case for which we had designated officers. So I would receive the people who were lost, the whereabouts cases, the people who were wandering the streets. It was a challenge sometimes. Some of them mentally unbalanced and having two or three of them at times even in my office together and trying to deal with that.

Q: The words of wisdom our consuls often have some of the best stories. Do you have any stories from that period?

SULLIVAN: Sure and some of them are not my proudest moments in that you would have a case of a fellow, probably in his 70s, retired, who comes in and says he has no money. The first thing is you don't hand him a bunch of money. You ask for his relative's contacts and you contacted his children. His children apparently have heard this story before and they were not particularly interested in shipping more money to him, I think we eventually squeezed a small amount of money out of them sufficient to get him a bus ticket. We were supposed to do was reach out to what is now HHS so they would receive them at the border.

Q: Health and Human Services.

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q: I think it was the public health people.

SULLIVAN: But the reality was they worked forty hours a week, they weren't interested in doing anything on a weekend and if you had this problem on a Friday you were supposed to baby-sit people who did not want to be baby-sat over the weekend and then send them on up the road. Well I think we wound up babysitting this one fellow over the weekend, but then putting him on a bus on Monday. At that point, he sold his bus ticket, got off the bus, took up drinking and carousing at the next stop with the remainder of his money. So a day later, hopefully in the next consular district, he was discovered again without money and had to be pushed on up to the border in stages.

Q: Did you find yourself involved in sort of confidence men and that type, people who were sort of milking Americans?

SULLIVAN: Well there were some terrible stories really and the worst circumstance would be if an American got into an automobile accident in Mexico. There was one terrible case in which a fellow was involved in an accident, his wife died and then he was being extorted by everybody in the system down in Vera Cruz state. By his account,

somebody else had caused the accident. The person who caused the accident was a local person and therefore that person was exonerated and yet Mexican law required somebody to be held responsible for the death of the American's wife. Well, it was this American widower. We would put him in touch with the local lawyer who basically joined in extorting as much money as they could from him. The fellow spent at least the weekend in jail and eventually paid what was necessary to get out of there, and there was very little that we were able to do to help him in the corrupt system that was Mexico at the time.

Q: Did you get involved in prison visits?

SULLIVAN: I did, not a lot, because we had an arrests officer who mostly did that. But we used to cover Acapulco by periodic visits maybe once a month for a couple of days and there were inevitably some Americans in prison there usually for marijuana possession. The majority of them, I think, were fairly happy in prison because for a small amount of money they could still get that marijuana, they could have conjugal visits from whomever they wanted and spend a month or two there reasonably happily.

Q: I've heard people say and I don't know if this is during this period but movie actress Merle Oberon lived in Acapulco and was quite generous with trying to help Americans in trouble. I don't know if you ran across this?

SULLIVAN: I did not, no, no.

Q: Well you did this for a time then what?

SULLIVAN: Then I actually was moved, it was a formal rotational assignment and so I rotated out. Let me add one feature on Lou Goelz. Lou Goelz as I remember as terrific as he was and he gave me a good evaluation report, but as my fitness report was coming up he said, "Something I need to comment on is how your wife entertains. So could you invite me over to dinner." We did and that became part of the fitness report. I think that year was probably the last one in which spouses were rated in the employee's fitness report.

Q: Somebody looking at this up until the very early '70s wives were rated.

SULLIVAN: That's right. That fitness report by Lou would have probably been in about January 1972.

Q: Most of the time most of us said the wife is a wonderful support who entertains well even if they were falling down drunk. I mean what the hell are you going to say? Although I have seen at one point when I was in personnel I remember having to show somebody the same thing that she entertained too well, too many other gentlemen and all. Oh God, I had to show this report to the man and I mean this was…

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah and that used to be a confidential section.

Q: I did show that and he was rather stoic about it. I was very unhappy to have to do this. But anyway that was cut out although you might say that the situation didn't change because if the wife didn't help entertain it cut in, I mean they were expected to.

SULLIVAN: Oh yeah.

Q: And it continued basically although…

SULLIVAN: Well I don't know, hopefully not. I mean Lou to his credit I think really only did it as his obligation as a rater to have a feel for this and put this in. But in any case I then moved on after about a year in Mexico City into the political section and wound up working for a year in the political section. We had a pretty good group of people: Dave Zweifel, whom I'm in touch with today who was a middle grade officer there. Dick Teare was my immediate supervisor; they both went on to be ambassadors. Free Matthews was the section chief who was good but never quite lived up to his father's…

Q: His father was Doc Mathews.

SULLIVAN: He was H. Freeman Matthews, Jr. so I think his father must have been Freeman Matthews as well and was, I think, undersecretary in the late '40s.

Q: Well what were you doing?

SULLIVAN: I was mostly doing multilateral affairs, which meant going over to the foreign ministry and dealing on issues like China and whether the PRC should acquire a UN seat or whether the previous arrangement should continue.

Q: That was a battle we fought and fought and fought and lost.

SULLIVAN: Yes, that's right. I learned a lot. The person who I dealt with in the foreign ministry most frequently was the deputy director for international organizations, Sergio Gonzalez Galvez, who later went on to the most senior career position in the foreign ministry. He told me at one stage as I presented this demarche and pressed for a response, "I've taken note of your position and that's all I'll say at this point." So I learned the lesson that "take note of your position" means "no way".

Q: No way, well this is one of the hardest things in a lot of countries people don't say no. But our people come out from Washington and, for example, the Japanese will take this under serious advisement, which is again no way.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: Well did you find or did you get a feel for it I'm told that in the political complex in Mexican government the ministry of foreign affairs is the place where they put the Leftists, the people coming from the Left their because it didn't make a hell of a lot of

difference whereas in matters dealing with law and order and all that the FBI and their people are very close, the CIA and all that. But the ministry has lots of fun with Cuba and all because again it's not of primary importance. Did you get that feeling?

SULLIVAN: The only thing I would add to that is that it is not just the foreign ministry, but the Mexican Government of the time's attitude toward international relations in general. That was epitomized by the fact that Echeverria had been minister of interior. Internally he was still very repressive, very controlling but on international issues he often took a very Leftist position advocating for a charter of economic rights and duties. His positions oftentimes were anti-American in public as well, but that was in part, due to the contradictions of the Mexican revolution, the revolution that had promised to work for the people. But certainly by the 1970s, he wasn't doing very much for the people and was putting a lot of the benefits in leaders' pockets instead.

Q: Yeah, did this work give you a good feel for political reporting and looking at another government was this giving you this feel for the profession?

SULLIVAN: Both of those things, in part because I had a good supervisor, Dick Teare, who, when I produced a forty-page airgram on student activity around the country, patiently worked it down to about a dozen manageable pages. So I learned how to edit and how to write better. So certainly that tradecraft and the learning the multilateral issues as well. Certainly on the multilateral issues in a country like Mexico, if there was a major issue to us, it was not me the third secretary going over and presenting the demarche that would have effect, it was the ambassador utilizing at that point the station chief as his contact to see the president personally in a private setting.

Q: He was very much a creature of that whole FBI, CIA law and order type.

SULLIVAN: Right, absolutely.

Q: By the way for somebody doing this I've interviewed Dick Teare so they can go to Dick's…he got involved in Australia and all of that.

SULLIVAN: He did, he spent, I think, the last ten years of his career in that area in Australia, New Zealand and I forget where he was ambassador but somewhere in the Pacific.

Q: Well then how did you find social life there?

SULLIVAN: It was terrific, the Mexicans in general, notwithstanding students' often wearing anti-Americanism as a badge of honor, were friendly and approachable. Generally you could engage them and they are interested in engaging. Also, the diplomatic community was an active one. We developed a very close friendship with the Mexicans who were our landlords; he an architect and she a kindergarten teacher. We used to travel around the country with them and visited thirty of Mexico's thirty-two

states. Rafael and Pilar were godparents of our first son, who was born in Mexico. I also met a USIS officer who became a my closest friend until his passing early this century.

Q: I think things have changed now because one has to be much more careful because essentially of banditry.

SULLIVAN: There were always risks, the sort of risks that I mentioned that the fellow who got in the auto accident. Bad things could happen; if you got in an auto accident you were at the mercy of the local justice system, local corruption, corrupt lawyers and everybody else. But if you are fortunate and careful, Mexico was a great place. You often had, even among Rafael, the fellow who was my landlord and "compadre", ambivalent attitudes toward the U.S. It was interesting that he had never visited the United States and never did visit. He had been educated in the Sorbonne for his graduate studies, so I think he probably had some anti-Americanism and the only other time I saw him outside of Mexico was while I was later serving in Portugal. He had been in Spain and at our invitation came over to Lisbon for a long weekend.

Q: At this time you were how old now about?

SULLIVAN: Let's see I came in at 26 and was 28 when I finished in Mexico.

Q: Did you feel part of the '60s generation and was there in a way sort of a gap between you and the more senior officers because this was sort of a dividing line don't trust anybody over the age of 30 and well this whole 60s thing.

SULLIVAN: I had a beard at the time and I guess I would have been considered suspect but you know I wasn't on the radical fringe either. I could always talk with anybody and so while there was probably some distance with my elders, it wasn't a huge distance and it wasn't a sharp divide there. I think we went over in the last discussion one of the classes prior to mine had had the split over Cambodia and many of them wrote a letter and really it was a major divide. I think from that point probably the Department began to deal a little bit more sensitively with younger officers and it wasn't quite as absolute a position as it may have been before.

Q: Well then you left there in what?

SULLIVAN: '73 February of '73. We had our first child in December of '72 and then left in February of '73. At that point after some correspondence and seeking to go to Africa, I had corresponded with Janet Hall Diggs who was my assignments officer, spouse of Congressman Charley Diggs. She found me a good African assignment in Kampala, Uganda, and I was happy to take it. My wife was a doubtful because Idi Amin was President at the time, but we set about ordering our consumables and getting ready to ship out after a short home leave. About half way through the home leave I got a phone call, like my Vera Cruz experience, you know, "you aren't going to Kampala, we can't tell you why but we'll find something else for you". Then a week or ten days later another

call saying come on down to Washington and you'll work there as Costa Rica desk officer.

Q: Was this when Bob Keeley was evacuating the Embassy?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, that's right. Bob Keeley actually wrote a chapter on that experience in a book I would put together in the 1990's called "Embassies Under Siege." Bob Keeley as Charge d'affaires and the Department were indeed planning to close the embassy in Kampala and were being very discreet in leaving quietly.

Q: Like from The Sound of Music singing a farewell song because Idi Amin was well nuts.

SULLIVAN: And capable of doing anything.

Q: Yeah and so we just sort of backed out very quietly.

SULLIVAN: So I didn't go to Kampala and, as I learned later as well, the reason I became Costa Rica desk officer was after the Nicaraguan earthquake in December of 1972, our consul there who came under a lot of pressure, committed suicide and they wound up pulling the Costa Rican desk officer Dick Milton out to be consul in Managua and therefore looking for a replacement. So lo and behold, a new position was available for me.

Q: So you had…

SULLIVAN: The Costa Rica desk.

Q: The Costa Rica desk. How long were you on the Costa Rica desk?

SULLIVAN: Two years.

Q: That was from '70…

SULLIVAN: That was about from March of '73 through about April of '75.

Q: Now I've interviewed I think it was Curtin Windsor…

SULLIVAN: Windsor was not there in my time; in my time the ambassadors were Viron Pete Vaky and later Terry Todman.

Q: Well these are, of course, two…

SULLIVAN: Two super stars.

Q: …super stars and not just in the Latin American circuit but in the Foreign Service. But Costa Rica from what I gather is one place that not a hell of a lot was happens.

SULLIVAN: That's right. In those years there was something of greater interest to us. As always one of the interesting things about being a desk officer is there is always an issue and you wind up learning more about that particular issue than you ever thought you would in the world and in that case it was Vesco, Robert Vesco, and his swindling of Americans; I guess a predecessor of Madoff.

Q: It was a ponzi scheme and Vesco was very much in the headlines, he kept hopping around. He finally died a few years ago in Cuba.

SULLIVAN: Just a few years ago in Cuba. So later I didn't quite run into him while I was in Cuba in the 1990's, but I could have if I wanted to.

Q: Well could you talk a bit about Vesco and what was going on?

SULLIVAN: Well he had both perpetrated this scheme that was being investigated and for which he was charged and then he fled the United States. I don't recall whether he went immediately to Costa Rica but he certainly was in Costa Rica by the time I inherited the job and he used that presence to shelter himself from persecution. He contributed to the political figures there at the time, President Pepe Figueres, who had been a long time friend of the United States but was not above being seduced by money. Vesco invested together with Figueres in a lumber business. I don't whether in Pepe Figueres' mind, he might have convinced himself that he was not taking the money for himself, but investing in business that would be good for Costa Rica. So Figueres had a big lumber operation that Vesco's money was deeply involved in.

Then Daniel Oduber succeeded Figueres in '74 and he also was, I think, became beholden to Vesco and Vesco eventually beat the extradition case that the U.S. pursued in Costa Rica, I think it was an interesting precedent. On the one hand, the Security and Exchange Commission was totally focused on this extradition issue and pressing hard for Vesco's return. The State Department was working with them to try and resolve it through extradition. I think at that time probably we didn't do complicated extraditions very well, we expected people to hand people over based on "probable cause", once we had issued an indictment, without necessarily having to prove their guilt. A number of courts, particularly in Latin America, have been and probably, by then, were increasingly becoming reluctant to turn people over based on "probable cause". Do I think that was the critical reason? No, I think the critical reason was that Vesco managed to get into the Costa Rican system and corrupt the system. But the judicial process in Costa Rica is more independent than most, and had we done a better job of presenting our extradition, I think we would have had a better chance of prevailing; but in the end we did not.

Q: Was there anything else going on in Costa Rica? Dissident groups, people up in the mountains, that sort of thing?

SULLIVAN: None of that, but Pepe Figueres had a hare-brained scheme to impose a banana tax so that he could match the performance of the OPEC oil cartel to raise the price of bananas internationally. Of course, that was something that was not going to work, but also pitted him directly against the American companies who dominated the banana business.

Q: Well there had been banana wars with the Europeans too because they had in Somalia the Italians had…I mean bananas are not a benign fruit.

SULLIVAN: Yeah. Well that is sort of the left over of the colonial protections and advantages that Europeans traditionally gave their former colonies.

Q: You were sort of part of the Central American group. Were we concerned with various rebel forces around in the area?

SULLIVAN: Nicaragua at the time was beginning to be problematic and I was the backup Nicaragua desk officer while the Nicaragua desk officer was away. So there were several instances where that erupted. In one case, there had been a kidnapping of a group at a reception in Nicaragua; I don't think there were any Americans involved, but the American Ambassador had been there earlier that evening and Sevilla Sacasa, the long term Nicaraguan ambassador to the United States and relative of Nicaraguan President Somoza was there. The Nicaraguan government decided to pay a ransom and they wanted it in cash. They asked us to help them get it from their account in New York through the Federal Reserve Bank in New York. So on a late Saturday night early Sunday morning, I flew up to New York with the Nicaraguan charge d'affaires during the Christmas season, as I recall, and testified that he was a Nicaraguan diplomatic official. He was given a satchel of millions of dollars and flew to Nicaragua to deliver the ransom. The kidnapers, of course, were a variation of the Sandinistas who carried out that raid. There was a later raid that was even more spectacular, but the December, 1974 raid was one of the first.

Q: Well I'm surprised that you were allowed to do that because this is during the Nixon administration.

SULLIVAN: Okay.

Q: And we were taking a very hard line on pay offs if our people were kidnapped so the idea that we were helping somebody else sounds like it almost happened underneath the radar…

SULLIVAN: Yes, I agree with you and I don't recall the specifics but certainly one could have made an argument that we will not facilitate it, but nobody made that argument and the Nicaraguan President Somoza had authorized the payment to secure the release of Nicaraguan citizens.

Q: Did you pick up any reflections of the earthquake in Nicaragua where the ambassador, I think it was Shelton Vance, was it?

SULLIVAN: The ambassador was a political appointee, Turner B. Shelton.

Q: Turner B. Shelton, yeah.

SULLIVAN: There was a controversy and you undoubtedly interviewed Jim Cheek.

Q: Uh huh.

SULLIVAN: I'll provide a little bit of that but most of that is secondhand although I came to know Jim very well visiting him in my capacity as backup Nicaragua officer but also later on when we were both involved in Latin American affairs in Washington. But Turner B. Shelton was a very unpleasant man who had joined himself at the hip with Somoza. Jim Cheek made a very good argument in a dissent channel cable that we needed to distance ourselves from Somoza and force him to open up more and that we had such leverage that we had the capacity to do that and to avoid future problems. It was a very prescient cable in 1973; five or six years before the Nicaraguan situation really blew up. I followed the course of that cable and it was read, but I think overall the decision back in '74 would have been not to disturb sleeping dogs. Kissinger's attitude was not to look for trouble where trouble had not yet arrived. There were enough other problems in the world, there was a Middle East disengagement negotiation going on, there were all kinds of crazies around the world, we didn't need to go looking for trouble.

Q: I recall when I interviewed Curt Windsor he was saying the highest-ranking American government official to visit there was the lieutenant governor of Mississippi.

SULLIVAN: What I do remember being personally involved in the selection of a Congressional delegation to Somoza's 1974 presidential inauguration after an election of marginal quality that he had held. The administration wasn't interested in being represented at a high level. There were very few Congress people who were interested and the Senator who wound up heading the delegation, Curtis of Nebraska, as I recall, or Kansas, was pretty low ranked within the Senate itself. But, of course, once he went he then became a major advocate for Somoza alongside influential Congressman John Murphy of New York who had been a West Point classmate of Somoza.

Q: Our relations with Somoza were terribly personal.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, but not at the highest level, you know really relatively low stuff but it was high enough to…

Q: High enough because nobody else gave a damn.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: If you've got a Congressman who is really interested…

SULLIVAN: Correct.

Q: …in something and nobody else really cares it's just ineffective.

SULLIVAN: Johnny Murphy, as I recall, had one key appropriations committee position, but he wasn't a major hitter and Curtis certainly was anything but; but as things developed they became advocates for close relations with Somoza, and as you say, there wasn't anybody really at high levels at the Department or in the Congress who cared enough or saw it as enough of an imminent danger compared to all the other imminent dangers out there.

Q: Well looking at this here you are a relatively junior officer in a relatively junior country but you are also getting a look even if it's the country over the border of your area of Washington and political influence and all. This had to give you a fairly good idea of Washington and power didn't it?

SULLIVAN: Yeah and it was interesting. I mean the relationship with the Congress there was a then Senator from Florida, Lawton Chiles, who took an interest in Costa Rica and traveled there and it became a long-standing relationship. The relationship with the Congress was also a vantage point on that relationship and working for the first time on countries with assistance programs like Costa Rica and Nicaragua was instructive. I also could see that US post earthquake relief assistance to Nicaragua from 1973 become in a lot of ways the straw that broke the camels back. Somoza was, I think, mildly repressive before the earthquake but after the earthquake he really came to insist on dominating the cement industry so he could dominate the reconstruction efforts. He became ever more rich and ever more repressive of anybody who opposed. The US had the opportunity to object and we didn't object and we let our assistance go forward even though we knew that he was benefiting mightily from it and was being increasingly repressive.

Q: Was there any thought at all given…one of the things about Costa Rica is that it doesn't have an army, it has a police force. Was there any pressure within our own government to say hey these guys ought to have an army, everybody's got an army, or not?

SULLIVAN: I don't think so, although narcotics was a lesser level of preoccupation then and Costa Rica was not at that point a major transit point. In terms of efficiency of their own institutions, the security sector was terribly inefficient because the Costa Ricans would turn over the entire police leadership with every change of administration. This did, of course, have the benefit of not creating a powerful armed force capable of intervening in politics.

Q: Well then after two years there what?

SULLIVAN: After two years there actually what I did was I signed up to go to Angola. I went into Portuguese language training to go to Angola, which at that point was only an eight-week conversion course.

Q: Well also this was a critical time, wasn't it?

SULLIVAN: Sure, right.

Q: It was about '74?

SULLIVAN: It would have been by that point '75; I would have finished on the Costa Rica desk in about February or March of '75 and would have gone for eight weeks of training in Portuguese. So it was the critical time in that the Portuguese revolution had happened in April of '74. There was already internal conflict within Angola, a lot of fighting and the turnover to independence set for November 11 of '75. So in the lead up to that, certainly my wife began to have great concerns for our then two children and at that point, as I recall, the Department didn't even have a separate maintenance allowance policy. We had a second young child who had just been born and what was that going to be like going out there with two young children. So at a certain point in that process I expressed concerns and they said it didn't make sense for me to go so that assignment was cancelled and soon thereafter, Luanda was closed. At the same time, Frank Carlucci was staffing up Lisbon and he or somebody on his behalf asked if I would like to go to Lisbon.

Q: Okay so you were in Lisbon from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From September of 1975 until summer of 1979, four years.

Q: This was I think one of the most critical times of the Foreign Service. I mean the story of Frank Carlucci…

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: …in Lisbon. I interviewed Frank and some others but I wonder if you could talk about the situation there when you arrived and sort of what you were prepped for before you went.

SULLIVAN: Okay and I just read a book actually in Portuguese, Carlucci Versus Kissinger by Bernardino Gomes that relates to that period. So, some part of it I will try to distinguish what I actually knew then from what I recently read. But certainly it had been publicly in the press that Kissinger's theory was that Portugal was lost to the Communists and that therefore Portugal ought to be allowed to be lost, expelled from NATO and serve as the vaccine against Communization of all of Southern Europe.

Q: There is also the time of something, which was called Euro Communism. …Italy and other ones, it looked like there was going to be a new face of Communism more sort of civilized rather than Russiafied. But it was still extremely dangerous in our point of view.

SULLIVAN: Although the Portuguese were not part of that Euro-Communism as the Portuguese Communist Party leader Alvaro Cunhal was a Stalinist and not at all a so-called Eurocommunist.

Q: That was sort of our blessing in a way.

SULLIVAN: In some ways yeah but Carlucci had been brought in as Ambassador by Kissinger as a tough guy replacing a political appointee who had been out there who had sought to make the argument that all was not lost. Initially, Kissinger was reportedly disappointed in Carlucci, because he came to the conclusion that the situation could be saved and that the U.S. shouldn't give up on it and the U.S. should not push to expel Portugal from NATO because it had Communists within its government.

Q: At what stage was this going on when you arrived?

SULLIVAN: It was the hot summer of 1975 and it was really the critical period right through November 25 of 1975 when there was a Leftist coup attempt that failed and resulted in the consolidation of Democratic forces both within the military as well as in the government with Mario Soares and the Socialist and other democratic parties.

Q: What was your job?

SULLIVAN: I was in the political section and following internal politics. Initially we had one officer Rick Melton whom you may have talked to, who followed the Socialist Party. I followed the other political parties to their right the PPD they called themselves first and later the Social Democratic Party and the CDS, the Center Democratic Party.

Q: Herb Okun was DCM?

SULLIVAN: Herb Okun was DCM.

Q: Did you feel part of it when you arrived? Did you realize you were going to be part of a take over of the new guys who were going to be up against really the secretary of State and all?

SULLIVAN: Well certainly that had been part of it. I would say it was probably in the period immediately before I arrived that Carlucci came back to Washington and had a set-to -- and this is mostly from the book I've just read, at least, the specifics of it -- a set-to with Kissinger. But Carlucci, of course, was clever enough never to operate alone and never be dependent and called upon his Princeton roommate Donald Rumsfeld who was White House Chief of Staff both to give him his points of view and to set a separate meeting with President Ford.

Q: Carlucci had been deputy sectary of health and human services?

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: So he had a certain amount of political clout, which a regular Foreign Service officer wouldn't have had.

SULLIVAN: That's right. I wouldn't say by that point he had convinced Kissinger, but at least Kissinger had to respect that this person one, was beginning to show some results. There was some standing up by Democratic forces within the military, there was this ambassador who could access the president directly. Even Mario Soares, whom Kissinger had reportedly called the Portuguese Kerensky, was standing up in public in ways that merited respect. So Kissinger had begun to change his mind, and the Europeans were pushing back a lot.

Q: The Socialist side in Europe was a very strong supporter of…

SULLIVAN: Of Mario Soares and the Socialist Party and the incipient Socialist labor unions vs. the traditionally communist union movement..

Q: …Mario Soares.

SULLIVAN: So all those things were happening and this was really a critical point as I recall. I arrived in early September and there was still a lot of agitation in the streets, the newspapers were taken over by Communist workers in some cases…

Q: As you went out what were you getting from the desk?

SULLIVAN: I actually wound up working several months on the desk before going out in the summer and talked just the other day with Bob Barbour who was deputy director of West European affairs which encompassed Iberian affairs. So the Department was, I would say, chasing its tail a little bit. In this book I mentioned, Barbour recounts a November 25, 1975 staff meeting with Kissinger. Kissinger said, "Tell the prime minister this, tell this person that and tell this other person that and do it right away." Bob Barbour was there taking notes and passed this onto the Embassy. Then a day later, Carlucci wrote back and said, "With all due respect you know, I really didn't call all these people and at this point, they've solved the problem themselves and I don't think it would be productive for us to contact these six people and tell them what to do."

Q: Well this is one of the problems when you get a very tricky situation. You can get people back in Washington being tough as hell when sending out instructions, which may be basically counterproductive because it doesn't always work. In this case it probably wouldn't have worked; I mean we were very fortunate to have had Carlucci.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think he was very wise in many ways. One, he took a low profile so we did what we did, we did it mostly with a low profile, notwithstanding the fact that he was the object of continual accusations in the Leftist press that he had assassinated Lumumba and he had done whatever and therefore was an evil person and was coming to Portugal to overthrow the revolution. But he was wise, working quietly with Mario

Soares, with moderates in the Portuguese military such as Melo Antunes and working closely and cooperatively with the Europeans.

Q: Did you go out with the idea that oh boy this is going to be fun, I hate to say it but I mean this is the sort of thing that gets the Foreign Service moving actually?

SULLIVAN: Sure, I mean I think being in Portugal almost more than any place convinced me that if I had done anything else with my life, this is what I would have been interested in reading about, wishing I had done. I remember covering the November 11, 1975 evening mass demonstration by the Communists and other groups on the Left, celebrating Angola's independence and in effect turnover of Angola to the MPLA which controlled Luanda at the time. There was some risk there, but it was okay and I somehow had some instinct for how to control high risks. I could observe the demonstration without necessarily being conspicuous. One of my predecessors had been goose-stepped to the airport at one stage but I managed to avoid that, but still found it very interesting and exciting to be part of that.

Q: How did you find the Portuguese political types that you were dealing with? There must have been a lot of concern because this thing had been instigated by unsophisticated junior officers.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: And really didn't know what the hell they were doing, I mean they got into it. But then the Stalinist types who had been hanging around and they really were Stalinists, came out of the woodwork didn't they?

SULLIVAN: Yes, there were some military who were influenced by Communists and communists had major influence in several provisional governments over a period of probably about eight months in 1975 before that began to be rolled back. Political types were by the time I got there somewhat more positive. There had already been constituent assembly elections in April 1975 and democratic parties had won about 75 percent in that election. We were fairly confident that the next round of elections for the legislative assembly would be held in April of 1976 and that democratic parties would do well again. So the thinking was that things were headed in the right direction, if they could maintain the track of elections determining the outcome rather than the rule of the street or the barrel of a gun. The Portuguese looked to us, the United States, as a means of support, moral as well as economic and political. They didn't hesitate to ask for other support but for the most part were interested in moral and political support.

Q: Did you find at your level reaching out particularly to the Germans and maybe the Scandinavians and maybe the French, the Socialists, because everybody was involved in this thing?

SULLIVAN: Personally I recall that I was in touch with the Spanish who were involved particularly in the second phase of the Portuguese transition because their transition

process was happening simultaneously. Within weeks of when I got there, the Spanish embassy was burned down by leftist demonstrators in Lisbon. But the Spanish had a lot of concerns and the Spanish Socialists were active within their diplomatic corps. A fellow whom I later worked with in Cuba was one of those diplomats who was hoping for a moderate outcome that could then serve as the example for Spain. I didn't work directly with the other Europeans, as I recall, but certainly Carlucci did and other people in our embassy did. Charlie Thomas was the political section chief at the time.

Q: How did you find the Portuguese you were dealing with, the political types? I would think particularly since they were somewhat on the Right that they would be worried that this thing could turn into a really nasty Leftist government.

SULLIVAN: The party of the center-left, the Social Democratic Party(PSD, previously PPD) were by that time beginning to be slightly more assertive. Soares had shown more courage earlier, but the PSD was somewhat more assertive by the fall of '75 and the Spring of '76. The Center Democrats, the CDS, on the other hand only gradually moved from the shadows out into public light and did a little bit better in the elections of the spring of '76. So, yeah, those factors of a right and center intimidated by an aggressive left identifying everyone to their right as fascists, their term for longtime dictator Salazar, were present and they only began to dissipate over time. Socialists, on the other hand, had the strongest anti-dictatorship credentials and by far the strongest links with the rest of Europe. Many of the Socialists with whom I had dealt had been in exile in Europe, as had Mario Soares, and so knew a lot of Europeans and were part of the Socialist International. They used that to their advantage and were able to block the PPD, later called the PSD, the Social Democratic Party, from having any access to the Socialist International. So the PSD found themselves in somewhat of a dilemma, they weren't quite certain who their international counterparts were.

Q: Were we doing much Africa watching from Lisbon?

SULLIVAN: We were, and there was early on a particularly substantial CIA engagement, as has been documented in a book by John Stockwell. It mostly took place out of Kinshasa but there was some observation and activity out of Lisbon as well. We in the political section followed Portuguese decolonization, reported on it, talked to people who worked on Africa but I think probably the principal focus on Angola and Africa was from the station. In early 1976, a congressional amendment prevented any further U.S. assistance in Angola, so at that point the U.S. direct role in Angola ended for about ten years and we in the embassy became distant observers to a civil war in Angola which would last another 26 years of which I would witness the last several years in person. The Portuguese were so consumed with their own internal process that when the Angolan decolonization proved very messy with three separate groups vying for power, each of which had their own international sponsors, arms suppliers and financiers. the Portuguese backed away, let it happen and turned over the key on November 11 and sailed out of town.

So our involvement in Lisbon at that point became very much working with the Portuguese to help them absorb the returnees from Africa. We provided scores of millions of dollars for that effort. And it was pretty successful absorption of about a million people, a tenth of a small nation in about a year with minimal disruption..

Q: A small country yeah.

SULLIVAN: Right. So that was one of our first substantial assistance activities. We had talked assistance but for the most part we hadn't provided it until what we called the Sixth Provisional government took office with Pinheiro de Azevedo replacing Vasco Gonzalez as Prime Minister in late September, 1975. That promised a more moderate approach, a more sincere commitment to democracy and so at that point we began to actually provide more assistance and sent out teams from USAID, providing housing investment guarantees and small grant programs for returnees and things like this.

Q: Were the British at all a player? I mean they had this alliance going back to the 14th century.

SULLIVAN: They were although I was not particularly aware of it at the time. This book I just read indicates how involved Callahan, the British prime minister at the time, was including through some military guarantees that were useful. Yeah, you're right. I think it was George Kennan's memoirs in which he talks about invoking an 800 year old alliance for use of the Azores in World War II. But the British did provide some assistance and then supported Mario Soares through the Socialist International as well.

Q: I would think that dealing with this revolutionary thing while we were trying to do what we could we still had to keep an eye on our interests which were the Azores?

SULLIVAN: Yes, although that is a very controversial point and it's interesting. The rumor at the time was that Kissinger was strongly tempted to allow the Azores to be carved off so that we would preserve our ability to use the bases there which had proved a critical linkage point in the Arab-Israeli war in '73.

Q: In '73, yeah.

SULLIVAN: In fact, this book in Portuguese by Bernardino Gomes that I mentioned has documented through Freedom of Information Act disclosures that the decision reached within the U.S. government was not to pursue that course. So, Jesse Helms was pushing that course and some other people in our political spectrum were pushing courses like that, and there were Azorean separatists out there who were looking for encouragement and support from the United States. We were maintaining contacts with everyone in the Azores and taking a very discreet position vis-à-vis separatism. Mark Paris, another fellow you've probably talked to at some stage, was a first tour vice consul, but brilliant. And with a consul, who was uncomfortable with political issues, so Mark, the vice-consul, did the business. But this book in Portuguese is my source for saying that at the end of the day we resisted the temptation to view the Azores as the key to our ballgame.

Q: Sort of the nuts and bolts how did you make your contacts with the political elements?

SULLIVAN: One at a time. There were probably a few that the embassy had in advance with the political parties and they would have been handed over to me and I would have pursued them, but then I would ask who else I should meet. There was one fellow in particular within the PPD/PSD who was very helpful and he was happy to introduce me to others and I would pursue those people. And sometimes I'd just call blind and just ask to see people within the hierarchy of the party. Later some of these people became Cabinet Ministers, but I could still see them and they were open to being seen. Carlucci generally reserved the party secretary general for himself but virtually everybody else was fair game. One factor in my favor was that most of the new political leaders, including cabinet ministers were young, in their thirties, my contemporaries.

Q: So you didn't find reluctance on the part of the Portuguese political types to talk to you?

SULLIVAN: No, I think maybe that might have been in part the specific timing arriving in September. At the July 4 reception, just two months earlier, the only prominent Portuguese politician who came to that reception was Mario Soares. I know Carlucci always gave him credit for showing that courage to come while all the rest politely declined the invitation; they were reluctant to be seen with us.

Q: But things rapidly changed?

SULLIVAN: Things began to change in that summer and the Socialists played a key role. The military moderates also stood up, the most prominent of whom was Melo Antunes, who became foreign minister and helped organize what they called the Group of the Nine, that took a social democratic position in opposition to any effort to use force or repression and opposition to ongoing efforts by leftist worker unions to take over enterprises, etc.

Q: Did you get around the country much?

SULLIVAN: Yes, all over, all over.

Q: What was your impression of the country?

SULLIVAN: It's an interesting country. It is true that beyond the individuals, the politicians, the military moderates, the single strongest reason the country did eventually revert it to a more moderate course is that it was a very conservative population for the most part. Starting about thirty miles north of Lisbon and including the Azores and Madeira, Portugal was a very conservative place and the Catholic Church was very strong. As that conservative population and the Church began to take stronger positions, that helped give others courage that the bulk of the country would not accept a Leftist Communist takeover. As a matter of fact, there was some discussion in that period before

1975, and Callahan, as I recall contributed to those preparations, on what to do if it were necessary to retreat to the North and maintain the government in the North in opposition to that from Lisbon to the south.

Q: As I recall, Ed Rowell was involved…

SULLIVAN: He was DCM my last two years there from 1977-79.

Q: One of the blessings was that the head of the Communist Party was one of the old style, sort of the steel teeth, I mean I don't know if he had steel teeth but of that ilk that really was pretty much out of touch with the changing face of even Communism as I mentioned wearing stylish Italian suits and much more open and all. The Portuguese Communists who came in really had been in Moscow too long.

SULLIVAN: Sure, he had been in Moscow. I forget where he had spent the years immediately before, a capital in Eastern Europe. He also had spent about 25-years in prison, many of those years in a place I just visited called Tarrafal in Cape Verde and then later in Peniche in Portugal, but escaped from prison and then went to East Europe. He was indeed tough, although in this book I just read, interestingly at one stage he had pitched our ambassador, I think Carlucci's predecessor, saying don't worry I accept that NATO is what it is. Communist Party leader Cunhal said the right things in that particular conversation, although he was also using every bit of force and threats possible to achieve his Communist revolution.

Q: Did you get any feel for the military because they had a real…well I mean the military essentially took over and also being part of NATO was a great advantage to them and to have the threat of NATO expelling them really was hitting them hard. Did you get any feel for that?

SULLIVAN: I wouldn't say that I got a personal feel, I knew what was happening and I knew our attaches and I knew Carlucci and others were engaged in that. I didn't have much personal contact with armed forces officers except for a few who were serving in civilian government positions. I'd say the perception I had was that most of them wanted to maintain their professional links with NATO. At a certain stage Bob Schuler, who was our army attaché, had proposed and secured an invitation for General Ramalho Eanes to visit NATO headquarters, probably in the spring of 1975. Eanes was very impressed and later he was the key leader in beating back the Leftist coup attempt of November 25, 1975.

Q: You were there in '75? What were you doing and what…

SULLIVAN: Yes, we were talking to a lot of people and writing a lot of reports. As a matter of fact, this recent book talks about maybe 12 or 14 sitreps being sent in during the day of November 25, 1975, including everything from what's going on in the street to what's coming over the radio to what we were hearing from our contacts. I remember our assistant army attaché tried driving into a base that had been supposedly taken over just

to see what would happen. He eventually got turned back but you know he could report what he had seen and heard. Every element of the embassy was reporting what was happening and, of course, Washington was reacting to that by to tell all these people what to do.

Q: When this coup attempt who was trying to coup?

SULLIVAN: Well there were particular units within the armed forces that were unhappy with the efforts of more moderate military to marginalize them. General Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho was one of the most known figures and was head of something called COPCON and he was involved and knowledgeable of the coup attempt. He was humiliated and marginalized by being implicated in that coup attempt. The degree to which the Communist Party was involved is still disputed today. I think they certainly had a deep involvement in creating all the conditions for a coup, in agitating against any rollback of the "gains of the revolution," in taking over the media, including the principal radio stations and the Socialist newspaper. The communist party and communist unions also joined with other leftist groups, some of which were clearly front groups, to hold virtually daily demonstrations. Now whether on the day of the coup attempt, the communist party was involved or not is unclear. Certainly by the second day they had pulled back and this book that I just read gives Costa Gomes who was the president at the time credit for having called the Communists and urged them to disassociate themselves. There is also the theory that the Soviets themselves were somewhat of a moderating force in that they didn't really want to see a major conflict with the West as far away as Portugal. We, the United States, as well as the Europeans, had made a major point shortly before in Helsinki meetings with the Soviets of urging them not to mess on our backyard.

Q: Was the Soviet embassy I mean were you both covering the same people and did you feel that they were…how did you feel about that?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think they were on their side of the street, which was the Communist Party, and we were mostly on our side of the street. I think the first contact I recall with the Communist Party was relatively late in my time there maybe late '77 or early '78. Rick Melton, I know, went over and saw one of the middle rank officials in the Communist Party and that had been the first time we had had such a contact. So there really was a sharp break and there was none of the diplomatic communication that came to be later with the Soviets or Russians.

Q: All right, did you have any contact with the church itself?

SULLIVAN: Oh yes, certainly with the Cardinal of Lisbon and other bishops around the country when I traveled around the country on working visits. If I visited almost any town or major city I would visit the local bishop. There were also Jesuits who had a fairly strong presence in Lisbon and I would be in contact with them. Some of it was basically political analysis getting their perspective on developments.

Q: I'm sure particularly some of the Jesuits must have been revved up too.

SULLIVAN: The principal activism probably came…well it came more discretely from the cardinal but most visibly from the bishops in the north because they had the most conservative populations. They actually were encouraged to have street demonstrations that showed it was not just Communists who could organize street demonstrations. In addition to the personal contacts I had, I know that Carlucci was in fairly frequent contact with the cardinal of Lisbon and the Cardinal was, I think, communicating with his people encouraging resistance to communism. At that point it was a very Catholic country and so he and the Bishops had a lot of ability to influence the population through pastoral letters that were read from the pulpit in every church in the country.

Q: Well in Lisbon itself, was there the equivalent that you had in France and some other country particularly France in sort of the intellectuals of the chattering class or somebody. Was this an important element or not?

SULLIVAN: I would say less so, less so. There was some of that and they were not as totally on the Left or as predominantly Left as they would have been in France. The most conservative intellectuals had left the country, predominately for Brazil after the revolution, but there were still plenty of people in the center and a number of people who had at certain stages associated themselves with Marcello Caetano, who had replaced Salazar as Prime Minister for the last six years before the coup. Caetano at times flirted with modernizing reform and there were certain people who associated themselves with that, people like Sa Carneiro, the leader of the PPD, later PSD, who could be viewed as centrist intellectual figures rather than Right-wing or Left-wing. There were leftist intellectuals close to the Socialist Party who mostly sought to influence the Socialist Party from within, but recognized that they had to make a choice against an authoritarian communist party. Because of the polarization caused by many years of dictatorship, the majority of left-leaning intellectuals who stayed in the country, such as the Nobel Prize winning author Jose Saramago, identified with the communist party or its front groups and even took senior positions in those post-revolutionary governments, such as editor of nationalized newspapers. The communist party took advantage of this historically based support from intellectuals in the early years after the revolution.

Q: Did you get a feel in the four years you were there that Portugal's, and correct me if this is wrong, that it was coming into the twentieth century? They really from what I gather was a sort of peasant, church-dominated country until this revolution. But the revolution itself was rather short lived as far as the Marxism but then it was more profound…

SULLIVAN: Portugal changed dramatically, it changed dramatically the four years I was there, and it changed dramatically while my sister lived there for seventeen years subsequently so I visited fairly frequently in that period. Portugal has changed dramatically, Portugal became part of Europe, Portugal ceased to maintain the illusion that it could also be part of Africa through its colonies. Portugal in the period, while I was there, was still largely a very religious country, a country whose northern half, where

about two-thirds of the population lived, was composed of mini-fundias, tiny little plots of half an acre or so divided among six children.

Q: It sounds a little bit like Ireland in the period before.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, so you know what to do with the other five but send them off to Africa. Only really in the 1950s and '60s did Portugal begin to encourage substantial emigration to Africa. For so many people, the second to the sixth sons would go to Angola or Mozambique to live or they would go to France or Germany or Switzerland to work as emigrant workers and send money back to support their families. So there were connections to Europe, but Portugal was the most different country by far from the rest of Western Europe. Unlike Spain, which had had a fairly substantial economic growth in the '60s and '70s, Portugal had not, and Portugal was still very much focused on what they called the "Ultramar" the overseas territories. It wasn't totally clear in the first phase of the revolution in April of '74 what was going to happen with the territories. But, by the time Spinola and others were out of the picture in March of '75 there was no question that all of the territories were going to be independent and this was going to be a very different Portugal. The visions of where it would go varied considerably from the Communist vision to the Socialist vision of integrating into the European Union. One of the things that the Europeans could hold out which the Portuguese population wanted was entry into the European Union. They never delivered in the period that I was there, but it was held out and Europeans signed many announcements and commitments, particularly once Mario Soares became prime minister in April/May of 1976, of the EU's concrete intention to move toward making Portugal a member of the European Union. I should add, of course, that Lisbon and Porto were more developed and urbanized places than the rural Portugal that I described above, but they were also poorly integrated into the rest of Europe and much poorer than the rest of Europe.

Q: Where did these million Portuguese-Africans, how did they fit back in when they came back? I wouldn't think it would be easy to digest…

SULLIVAN: It was not easy to digest them but it is surprising how well they were digested. I think there are a couple things to be said about that. One is in some ways the people who went to Angola in particular, because that is where 500 thousand of them went, were the most innovative, least hide-bound. So, for instance, even a wealthy person living in Estoril fifteen miles from Lisbon who had a huge piece of land and had riding stables on it; but had a feudal arrangement of about 500 people living on that property who were doing menial tasks and farming their tiny pieces of property in the back of their little huts. That was the way it was in 1976 and this landowner's son had gone to Angola, where he had to invent a new way of doing things. It was this son who then came back and subdivided this property into housing developments and golf courses and shopping centers and helped ensure that Portugal would never be the same.

So for those who had been feudal estate workers, I don't know just what happened to them. They probably got a job in the construction industry or in the new supermarket, but this influx from Africa was changing Portugal in many ways. The largest single number

of returnees from Africa were drivers, drivers of trucks, drivers of taxis because in Angola, black Angolans could not be taxi drivers. White Portuguese who had emigrated to Angola were the taxi drivers. So they brought back with them, their taxis, their trucks and they did some of that business in Portugal. They moved back in with their families to a certain degree, but they also got small loans from us and helped change Portugal.

Q: Well it sounds whatever it is in a way it was a better thing…

SULLIVAN: A better reintegration than the French.

Q: …than the Algerians and the pied noire. Really, in fact it started a civil war, it just didn't…

SULLIVAN: I don't have a good explanation for it but I don't think it was a real political elite or a political leadership that returned with that group. That said, the returnees were a factor in making Portugal more conservative politically by adding a million people who had been in Africa and felt themselves dispossessed by the revolution, even though there was a fair number of mixed raced people who came back as well. For the first time Portugal began to be a country with a substantial presence of Africans. The returnees or "retornados" were overall a push in a conservative direction politically vis-à-vis the communists, but a force for change socially.

Q: What about some of the other overseas elements, the Americans? Several of the cranberry bogs of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and the Azores.

SULLLIVAN: Portuguese in the U.S. came predominately from the Azores to New England and to the farming valleys of California. A significant number of Portuguese also came from Aveiro in Northern Portugal and settled in New Jersey.

Q: These are pretty important, I mean they are hard working people and they had some clout didn't they?

SULLIVAN: I don't know how much real political influence they had in the U.S. Being from Massachusetts myself, I would say that they could rise at that time to be the mayor of New Bedford or Fall River, but their ability to becoming more important in Massachusetts politics or national politics was limited.

Q: You just said you didn't see any Portuguese names the way you would see Italian names or Irish names.

SULLIVAN: No, no. So, one of the most important Portuguese-American political figures was actually the Cardinal of Boston, Medeiros, who visited Portugal probably in about 1977. He was essentially expressing interest and support both for the church and for the Portuguese people on behalf of the American Church and the Portuguese-Americans in the United States. But in terms of either major investments or major

political influence in the US, I didn't see it; there was undoubtedly some but I would not say it was major.

Q: It's almost struck me from what I gather that the crossover between Spain and Portugal was really rather minimal wasn't it? I mean…

SULLIVAN: Well they are always back-to-back. Every Portuguese hill top town on the border is a walled town to protect historically against the Spanish and their French allies, so there always is a back-to-back element in history in the relationship between the people. That said, the fact that the revolution happened in Portugal first had some effects in Spain. I don't want to pretend to explain the Spanish process but I do think that Franco, the Spanish prime minister and later the King were very alarmed by what was happening in Portugal. Maybe it helped encourage them to move their transition process through more quickly in order to avoid something they would have viewed as catastrophic like what they saw happening across the border, with destruction or socialization of properties.

I should add that Portugal was a great place to live, to meet Portuguese contacts and friends and to raise a family. Portuguese are great family people and they were terrific with my two young boys. Moreover, with a very weak Portuguese escudo, living was inexpensive and we could travel all over the country.

Q: Well then you left there when?

SULLIVAN: The summer of 1979 and I actually spent a year at Yale at that point and had a mid-career academic year.

Q: What were you doing at Yale?

SULLIVAN: I took Latin American studies. We had various area studies programs and I did Latin America. I chose Yale in part because my father at that point was becoming ill with what we did not know, but proved to be Alzheimer's. So I wanted to be close enough to be able to get back and forth to Boston, as my family coped with that process.

Q: In the first place you had just come from probably the most interesting spot in our relations with the most interesting area, which was Europe, the one time when things could have gone bad. Did you come back with a feel of by God we really did something here?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, very much.

Q: And also a feel for the process of diplomacy really.

SULLIVAN: I think on all fronts but I'll just add to that. By the last year there, Portugal had become sufficiently routine-ized and sufficiently stable that it was less interesting, it wasn't as exciting anymore. Yes they might change governments every six months but

who cares, the next government does more or less the same as the previous one and isn't going to change policies very much. It's never going to be as unstable or risky as it once was. That said, part of my inspiration in going back to the academic world was to study whether what had happened in Portugal had lessons for other transitions to democracy..

One of the things I looked at a lot in Yale with Professor Juan Linz, a Spanish professor of political science at Yale, who had written a terrific book on the slippage into fascism and authoritarian rule in Europe before World War II and was also beginning to write on transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule. So I read the literature and also analyzed what I had seen in Portugal and nearby in Spain and Greece and developed some theories about the critical element of early elections to provide a measure of genuine popular support for various political options.

Q: One of the things that I've found over both my years in the Foreign Service and as oral history program is often the gap between the academic world and the practitioner.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: How did this strike you or maybe Yale was different?

SULLIVAN: Well people like Juan Linz impressed me very much. This was a person who was very well rooted in reality. His principal academic work prior to that had been on the breakdown of democratic regimes throughout Europe in the period leading up to Nazism and Fascism. Based on concrete examples and then later when he began to get interested in and write about the transitions in the opposite direction, they were very much focused on real developments.

There was a professor there at the time who was also quite well known and not totally unrealistic, but he showed some tendency to get caught up in the academic theories which strayed far from reality. Al Stepan was the principal Latin Americanist political scientist professor with whom I dealt. I remember he was force-feeding us a book by a Brazilian academic who later became president of Brazil, Fernando Enrique Cardoso. That book propounded that much of the world, especially in Latin America, is explained by "dependencia," dependence; i.e., that Latin America's failure to become a more mature society was explained by its dependence on the United States and Europe. Something about that theory made me feel like this is really too much of an effort to have an overarching academic theory that explains everything. Fernando Enrique Cardoso, once he became president of Brazil, either no longer adhered to his previous academic theories or did not practice them. He was a very effective president who broke Brazil's traditional inflationary polices. But American academics and particularly this is true with respect to Latin America and Africa, often are very intent on explaining underdevelopment as a function of dependence on the West..

Q: Now this is I think there is an awful lot of rather turgid writing on this too. I've tried picking up a long time ago but on political science. I mean you learn they write for each other and kind of wonder what the hell is this all about?

SULLIVAN: That said, Yale was a great experience for me professionally. I got to pick and choose my classes and to audit a class by the famous Robert Dahl and other first-class thinkers. There was an economist there, a Latin American economist Carlos Diaz Alessandro who was very good. That was a good experience and for the most part I managed to avoid the theorists and learned from the realists. I had by then realized that a political officer needed a solid grasp of economics and that year helped me gain that.

Q: It's a peculiar world I must say. I think this is probably a good place to stop.

SULLIVAN: Sure.

Q: …this session but where did you go…this would be '80?

SULLIVAN: I would have finished at Yale in the summer of 1980 and then came back and worked in Western Hemisphere affairs again, ARA at that point, with Luigi Einaudi who was director of the office of policy planning. I was in that office and, of course, that also straddled the period when Reagan took over the presidency so stepped into a very controversial debate.

Q: Oh yeah and very, very I mean just the takeover was hostile…

SULLIVAN: Yeah, and I was involved, in that the area that I focused on was Central America.

Q: Oh boy. Okay so we will pick that up the next time.

Today is the first of November, 2010. This is an interview with Joseph Gerard Sullivan and this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. All right Joe?

SULLIVAN: I think we finished Portugal as I recall from 1975 through 1979; I was there in the Carlucci period.

Q: Oh yes.

SULLIVAN: I was a middle grade political officer and wound up spending four very good years there '75 through '79 in the period where we had a great deal of success and to a certain degree Carlucci gets the main credit for it for resisting the counsel of despair.

Q: Absolutely, I consider this somebody who is doing something else for great moments of American diplomacy. I pointed a lady to the Carlucci period among a few other places.

SULLIVAN: That's right; and I wanted to refer again to a book in Portuguese but by a distinguished individual with a policy and academic background. In those years, he was

an aide to Mario Soares. Bernardino Gomes's book is called Carlucci Verses Kissinger and he's had access to U.S. documentary files as well as Portuguese and U.S. diplomats and politicians of the time and his book describes this period very well.

Q: Okay so in 1979 whither?

SULLIVAN: In 1979, I actually left Portugal and came back for the mid-career year of academic studies, as we discussed a bit earlier. This was an interesting year from a personal development perspective. Having been in the business for nine years, I recognized the importance of a better economic background so I took some credits in economics and also audited some courses in economics so that I understood economics better. As a political officer or a senior officer, it was very important for me to understand what was happening in an economy, as had been the case in Portugal.

Q: Did you sense a distance between yourself and the academic types as far as how you looked at the world?

SULLIVAN: Yeah there is to a certain extent, particularly with respect to Latin America, a tendency to explain all things Latin American as a function of the United States. The academic theory, as I mentioned earlier, was called "Dependencia", Dependency, which explains most thing bad that happened in Latin America as due to their dependence on the West and particularly the United States. But, there were a number of more pragmatic academics out there and I gravitated to those that I thought were more pragmatic.. So it was a good experience over all.

Q: Okay this would put you about 1980.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Where did you go?

SULLIVAN: I returned to the Department of State and worked in the Inter-American bureau in the policy planning office for two years. The then director of the office was Dr. Luigi Einaudi, who was a civil service rather than Foreign Service employee and had a background at the RAND Institute.

Q: Oh yes.

SULLIVAN: Later he actually became for a brief time acting secretary general of the OAS; but in any case, he was a brilliant fellow and I learned a lot from him. It was a very controversial time with respect to Latin America in that in those two years you saw a very polarized view with the Carter administration taking a view that emphasized human rights and reluctance to work with countries that had human rights violations. But then the Sandinistas took over in Nicaragua and this provoked a negative reaction in the U.S. The Carter Administrations was seeking to reach some sort of accommodation with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in which they would not seek to spread their revolution further.

Then you had the Reagan election and then a foreign policy change that was most pronounced with respect to Latin America.

Q: Yes, the Latin American place fell to the full bronco, the Reagan administration…

SULLIVAN: That's right, the assistant secretary, several of the deputy assistant secretaries and even some office directors were virtually given overnight to pack their bags and move out. Even Luigi went off for an academic sojourn at the Wilson Institute because it was reasonably uncomfortable to have this radical change and a view that the previous administration and every Foreign Service and civil service officer who had worked in senior positions on Latin America in the Carter administration should be cleaned out.

Q: Well going back to the time though that you were with policy planning, policy planning always sounds great in the Department of State but it can mean a multitude of things including doing the windows or writing speeches. What was policy planning in the Latin America bureau doing?

SULLIVAN: You are right that there was lots of speech writing, in part because Luigi was a great speech writer and because that is the traditional function of policy planning as the means for defining policy. There was also a certain amount of policy reflection; which tended to be less country specific than regional. Because Luigi had such a long history in Latin America he was consulted as a valuable resource as long as he was there. I wound up principally focusing on Central America which was, indeed, the hottest of issues over that period but less on the most controversial change in policy, the decision to support the Contras in Nicaragua. This decision was basically held very closely and dealt with elsewhere in the Bureau and with the Agency. But our policy planning shop did work on several issues that I found interesting and, in the long run, beneficial, particularly on El Salvador. The U.S. encouraged and pressed for free and fair elections to be held in El Salvador and our policy planning office had the lead in that effort. We arranged for several American election experts, Richard Scammon and Howard Penniman, to provide advice to the El Salvadoran election commission on what needed to be done to ensure free and fair elections and they did much to make the elections credible. My office and I also pressed for international election observers to be invited and then urged other governments to send observer missions, all this at a time before such international election observation was common, particularly in a place that still had an internal armed conflict underway.

The U.S. also put together its own team of election observers and I was the chief Washington staff support for this team. Tom Enders was Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs and properly interested in having the U.S. observer mission be viewed as bi-partisan. Accordingly, the Congressional observers were not only Republican Senator Nancy Kassebaum and Republican Congressman Bob Livingston, but also Democratic Congressman Jack Murtha, a close ally of then Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill. A brilliant non-political member was Father Ted Hesburgh, President of Notre Dame University. Tom Enders probably got out in front of the Reagan Administration by

including the Chancellor of the University of California system Clark Kerr, who had had some legendary confrontations with then Governor Ronald Reagan. As a result, the U.S. observers got no White House meeting prior to their departure for El Salvador. In the end, the election went well, showed tremendous electorate participation, showed Salvadorans willing to brave guerrilla threats against voting and to wait for hours in line in order to vote. The U.S. observer team was duly impressed and testified widely to their favorable impressions. Many of the observer group bonded closely, with former Marine Jack Murtha and Father Hesburgh getting along famously and Senator Kassebaum being one of the few Senators who could overcome the usual suspicions of House members that a Senator would steal all the publicity. In the end, the White House was so pleased that the U.S. observer delegation was invited to the White House to report their observations to President Reagan. The results of that 1982 election were only an initial, but an important building block to a later peace settlement that settled the conflict with the guerrillas and toward building democratic institutions, but they did make clear that the Salvadoran public, as poor and uneducated as many were, wanted to exercise their right to choose their own leaders – a lesson for the non-democrats on the left and the right.

Q: When you got there in 1980 how did you view the El Salvador conflict? Where did you think it was going and what was causing it?

SULLIVAN: Your question is very relevant. El Salvador had a history of repressive Right Wing authoritarian governments closely allied with the military who saw their principal role as reinforcing the role of dominant families that were the major powers source in that country. The U.S. had historically not been very close to the Salvadoran governments, but had also done little or nothing to press these authoritarian governments to open to democracy. From academia, it appeared clear what problem had created conditions for a leftist guerrilla movement, which after 1979, also received major assistance from the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua to the point that it represented a serious threat to the El Salvador Government. But coming to work on the problem practically as opposed to at an academic distance, Luigi Einaudi's focus and my focus was on what could be done practically to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous El Salvador. Napoleon Duarte, a Christian Democrat Centrist, who had been prevented from becoming president by previous authoritarian governments, was serving as the interim president. He and others with democratic credentials were committed to organizing free and fair elections and those individuals seemed like solid bases that we should build upon and support. Now, separately the Reagan Administration was increasing military support for the El Salvadoran armed forces. Even the Carter administration had come to the decision very late in its term, that notwithstanding the negative human rights record of the Salvadorian military, there was no alternative but to provide them support to prevent a revolutionary and undemocratic guerrilla movement from gaining power.

Q: We are talking about the Carter period now. As you were working on the problem there did you find that the European Socialist governments all were sort of a little bit starry eyed about what was happening or not?

SULLIVAN: Yes, to a certain degree, particularly because the Salvadoran Armed Forces and Right Wing elements which had dominated El Salvador until 1980 had, in effect, driven the small Salvadoran Social Democratic party into an alliance with the armed guerrillas. Social Democratic politicians in El Salvador who were not up in arms wound up aligning themselves with the guerrillas and, therefore, the Social Democrats in Europe and Latin America had some inclination to follow that lead, notwithstanding the recent Nicaraguan example of democratic politicians getting swallowed up or ignored by armed Sandinistas. So it resulted in a difficult enterprise for the United States to encourage European socialists to work toward a long-term democratic solution and not expect that something positive was likely to come out of a guerrilla victory. I think that among social democrats in Latin America, the case was made easier by the early 1980's after the Sandinistas had taken power in 1979 and had shown that their own democratic credentials were not very good at all and that Social Democratic and other allies in Nicaragua were essentially being pushed aside while the Sandinistas concentrated power in their own hands.

Q: What about the Cubans; how did we see what they were up to?

SULLIVAN: Well very negatively. There was a good degree of not just intelligence, but publicly documented evidence of Cuban training and arms supply for leftist guerrillas in Central America. And the Reagan administration had no inclination to work with the Cubans whatsoever. You recall Alexander Haig's quote early on as secretary of State that he was going to go to the source of the problem in Central America, which was a not very implicit threat against Cuba. Not that we ever did anything effective in that sense but the inclination was obviously there.

Q: You started there when the Sandinistas had just taken control?

SULLIVAN: Correct. Yeah, I think I arrived about in September 1980 they had taken power in 1979.

Q: Was there at all a feeling, maybe not on your part, but with people in Central America and in the Foreign Service, but particularly on the political left and the Democratic left that maybe the Sandinistas were going to be people that we could work with and that this wasn't particularly a bad thing?

SULLIVAN: Well there certainly was some ambivalence on that subject, and where I had come from in academia, I think there was a lot of hope that the fall of Somoza and the takeover by the Sandinistas would wind up being a good thing. Because in the past I had been backup Nicaragua desk officer, I certainly had lots of antipathy towards Somoza and believed that he had been the root cause of many of the problems that beset Nicaragua. I think we talked about this in our last session.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: But that said, were the Sandinistas a group that we really could work with? The Carter administration sought to negotiate with them fairly ineptly, as I reviewed the literature and talked to people, but there were good solid people like Larry Pezzullo who was the ambassador of the Carter administration during the fall of Somoza and the victory of the Sandinistas who tried to put together some formula that would put pluralist and democratic constraints around a post-Somoza government. Once the Sandinistas had prevailed, Pezzullo and later Reagan Administration negotiators, led by Harry Shlaudeman, had tried to work out some agreements to the effect that the Sandinistas would do nothing to support guerrillas elsewhere in Central America. But at the end of the day, it was not to be; the Sandinistas were not prepared to give up their domination of power, nor their support for like-minded revolutionary forces in the region, such as the Salvadorian guerrillas.

Q: Well during this, we will still stick with the latter days of the Carter period in Central America. Were you feeling the heavy hand of Jesse Helms and sort of the Right Wing of the Republican Party on what you were up to?

SULLIVAN: Well I was probably at to low a level too feel that directly, but there were things coming out such as the Santa Fe Document at the end of the Carter Administration. Retired General Sumner who had been behind that and that was essentially blaming the Carter administration for having lost Nicaragua and calling for a much more assertive U.S. policy in the region. So there were certainly reason to believe that if Reagan won the elections, there were going to be major, major changes with respect to Central American policy.

Q: Were you too far removed? I was wondering if you had any contact with Helms' staff at all.

SULLIVAN: Not at that period; at a later period yes. One of the things about policy planning is that generally the contacts are less direct with Congressional staff than they are at the desk. I think the one time that we had some degree of contact was in preparing for this election observer mission since there was Congressional participation in that.

Q: But the Salvadoran election, as you put it, came off quite well didn't it?

SULLIVAN; Yeah, yeah, I mean in balance now that the critique certainly from the European Left of that election was that the wrong party won or that Right Wing Forces won and Christian Democrats did not. That said, the election reinforced a pragmatic centrist continuity there. So it was a process not only of which side of the political spectrum should prevail, but whether civilians could gradually and over time get greater authority in running their own government. This was an early step in that process and it certainly showed that the Salvadorians wanted to decide on their own governance. I remember doing an interview at that time with a leftist American media interviewer whose premise was that Salvadorans are too uneducated and too unprepared to run their own affairs and decide who should run their own affairs. Of course, I disagreed with that. People determine their own interests and certainly they should be allowed to have that

choice. The Salvadorans did and around the 85 percent of the population actually voted despite guerrilla threats to disrupt the election.

Q: Were there within the specialists dealing with the Central American in the State Department were there any splits about whether Central America, particularly El Salvador, and all or was it pretty much a group that pretty much saw things the same way?

SULLIVAN: Let's see. I guess I would say I think there was within if I were to make a broad characterization and the biggest splits were with respect to Nicaragua rather than with respect to El Salvador. In the Carter administration I would say that the differences were probably ones of State Department with the exception of Human Rights Assistant Secretary Patt Derian looking for pragmatic ways forward and for centrist options to pursue. The White House did not differ philosophically as much as it was very much hands on and not very adept in how they managed that process. Then when we got into the Reagan administration, there was a purge of career people who had previously had responsibilities, including of the Carter Administration's Ambassador to El Salvador, Bob White, all the Deputy Assistant Secretaries and even Office Directors. The people who came in were mostly of one mind with respect to El Salvador, with perhaps some differences to the degree of military support and military emphasis that should be attributed to addressing the El Salvador problem. With respect to Nicaragua there were greater differences revolving whether the Contras could be viewed as the solution to the Nicaragua problem. So even then, for instance, you had Tom Enders, the Reagan administration assistant secretary looking for pragmatic solutions, and holding a number of dialogues with the Sandinistas. Harry Shlaudeman also went down there a number of times, but the Reagan administration was very, very much polarized over Nicaragua with many, many splits among the NSC, the State Department, the Defense Department and the Congress.

Q: I realize you were down below the line of fire between the two administrations...

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: ...but when the Reagan administration came in did you all in your position take a look at this and say, "Oh my God, we have to be pretty careful about what we say and what we report because we might get caught in the political crossfire"?

SULLIVAN: Well in Washington our job was to help craft the policy pronouncements of whatever U.S. government was elected. So the day after the U.S. election, I remember Luigi Einaudi having a meeting in his office and leading a discussion of how we should deal with this. We had to try to do the best we could to make sure that sensible policy emerged, that pragmatic policy emerged, that ideology not trump all. So I would say sure that wound up being the direction and yet because Luigi was relatively high-profile even though I don't think he had a political party identification, he wound up having to take six months or a year off at the Wilson Center to get the spotlight off himself.

Q: How long did you continue with the Reagan group?

SULLIVAN: Well I was there in Latin American policy planning until the summer of 1982 and then I moved up for one year as a special assistant for the then counselor of the department James Buckley, the former senator.

Q: How as that? Again the counselor job can be a handy person type job or not. How was it with Buckley?

SULLIVAN: Well I guess I would say he was largely cut out and he really only stayed about three months after I moved into his office. He left and was succeeded by Ed Derwinski with whom I worked the rest of the year that I spent in that office. Jim Buckley was a real gentleman, a nice person, very conservative, but certainly a reasonable interlocutor. I will tell you one little story about Jim Buckley, originally from Sharon, Connecticut, and then was based in New York where he had been elected to one term in the US Senate. Jim Buckley was a bastion of East Coast Catholicism, he and his brother Bill. Reagan was the first, I believe, to ever name a Catholic to be the Special Envoy to the Vatican. The position didn't have full ambassadorial title; that person was Bill Wilson who was a bastion of West Coast, California Catholicism. So I happened to be present as special assistant to Buckley at his first meeting with Wilson. They were meeting each other for the first time and clearly feeling each other out but very politely. So Buckley asked Wilson how are things, how much time do you spend out there in Rome. About that time the U.S. envoy would only spend about six months a year at the Vatican. Wilson replied, "Oh, about six months and maybe another three months in California and then another three months in New York; but you know overall it's okay because I have residences in all of those places." And Jim Buckley knew exactly how to make the appropriately sympathetic noises and responded, "Well, yeah, yeah I know how it is. You can't find the sweater you are looking for in the house where you are at the moment." So the East and West Coast branches of Catholicism had come together on that issue.

Q: Well the problems of the rich.

SULLIVAN: Yes indeed. I never would have known how to respond appropriately.

Q: How about Derwinski? He was sort of an elemental force wasn't he?

SULLIVAN: Yeah he was certainly he was a character, he was self-appointed, during his 24-year Congressional career, as representative of ethnic groups, particularly from Chicago, his home base and the Chicago suburbs. Then he had been redistricted out of his seat so the Reagan administration took him in and gave him a place at State once Buckley decided to leave. I learned a lot from Ed Derwinski because he knew the Congress very well and he took me along on his meetings with Congress people. In the eight or so months I worked with him, he did not become a major force within the Department and he didn't focus on major issues within the Department. He loved doing his old Congressional stuff and he had always done a lot of international travel, a lot of working

with international organizations, particularly the international parliamentary union. I went on my one trip with him to Vienna for one meeting sand then also to Hungary that had to deal with his contacts with both Hungarian immigrants to the U.S. as well as Romania, since there is a Hungarian ethnic group in Romania that he was active on behalf of. He was also active with Armenian immigrant groups, so I know I met with the Armenian patriarch based in Beirut when he visited the U.S. So I learned a lot about politics within the U.S. and the Congress and the ethnic factors in US politics. Ed Derwinski, as a Polish-American and had a fundamentally anti-Communist approach to all of these things. The Armenian patriarch who was based in Beirut got preference in his eyes over the Armenian patriarch who was based in present day Armenia because the latter would have been, in his view, obviously dominated and perhaps even selected by the Soviet Union. But it was interesting; it was certainly enlightening for me on how to get things done in the Congress.

Ed also got active that in that period on the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy; the funding which later went to the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute is part of that. Mark Palmer who was a key figure in Larry Eagleburger's office, the undersecretary for political affairs, was a major force in the Westminster speech by Reagan expressing support for democracy and the National Endowment for Democracy became the overt U.S. means for democracy support. Ed Derwinski was asked to help persuade some of his Republican Congressional friends that they should go along with this proposal, because many of their instincts were not to do this. They didn't want to go down the path that the Germans had with their political foundations and some didn't want to really get that involved in international affairs and didn't want to help create a new bureaucracy. Even Ed Derwinski had his doubts because of his fiscal conservatism. But at the end of the day, Congress was persuaded that on balance, it was a good thing and Ed provided some support that was useful in helping get the funding for this. The National Endowment for Democracy became an institution with which I worked very closely a decade later on Nicaragua.

Q: Yes it could be quite useful particularly with the Soviet Union falling apart.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You know grabbing little bits of the action but in a positive manner.

SULLIVAN: And it also gave us vehicles to establish better relationships with Social Democratic parties in Europe, particularly the Democrat Party doing that and the Republican Party with the Conservative and Christian Democratic parties; party relationships that had not really been there before. Relationships among the European parties were very well established but we didn't really have a vehicle prior to that to have a continuing relationship that went beyond personal connections.

Q: After you finished with the counselor where did you go?

SULLIVAN: I wound up bidding on and receiving an assignment to Tel Aviv via one year of Hebrew language training so I went to FSI and studied Hebrew for about eight months or so. By about March, I had really pretty much maxed out in terms of what FSI could teach me so I was able to persuade FSI to give me an additional two months in Israel at what they call an ULPAN, a language learning institute. This ULPA was conducted at a little one star hotel on the beach in Netanya and I learned with other people, who were mostly new or not so new immigrants. My roommate was a Bulgarian immigrant who had actually already been in country ten years but was coming back to improved his Hebrew. So Hebrew was the only common language we had and so we spoke in Hebrew. Certainly it was a good experience for my language and by the time I moved down to Tel Aviv permanently in late June or early July of 1984 my language was pretty good. At that point, having Hebrew was fairly important. While there have always have been plenty of English speakers in Israel, particularly at that point, the new immigrants and my political counter parts, people in the Knesset who had been born in the Middle Eastern, Arabic-speaking countries or North Africa typically didn't have English so it was very useful. The Embassy had maybe only about eight or so positions designated as Hebrew language positions. One of them was mine in the political section as the deputy political counselor with a particular focus on internal politics. So I visited the Knesset and government offices frequently, where I used my Hebrew regularly.

Q: I have to say that Israeli politics are a very complicated kettle of fish. You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: The summer of 1984 until the summer of 1988. Sam Lewis was the ambassador my first year there and then Tom Pickering my next three years. My political counselor the first year was Paul Hare who later went on to several ambassadorships and then later Roger Harrison for two years and then actually I moved up and became political counselor my fourth year there with Tom Pickering's support.

Q: When you went out there in 1984 how stood matters in Israel at that time?

SULLIVAN: Yeah well they were just having an election actually that summer and that was the point at which the previous system of Likud or Labor domination of politics was breaking down irreparably in a way that each party was subsequently only getting forty or so of the 120 seats in the Knesset and therefore were ever more dependent on small party alliances. Because in that 1984 election, Labor and Likud finished in a virtual dead-heat, neither one of them was able to form an alliance with the small parties. Instead they decided on a grand coalition and the two parties would alternate in power with Shimon Peres being prime minister the first two years and Yitzhak Shamir the Likud leader being foreign minister. Yitzhak Rabin would be defense minister the whole four years and then at the two year point Shamir and Peres changed positions. Now at the end of the day at least as far as broader issues the peace process, what the unity government amounted to was a formula for deadlock. Likud was always able to stymie Peres' ambitions to promote a peace process whether he was prime minister or foreign minister. Shamir probably didn't have much interest in advancing a peace process in any case and was certainly not going to participate in such a venture even when George Shultz came over

and made a major push late in the Reagan Administration.. Shamir and Peres both distrusted each other so much on those fundamental issues that there was very little movement on peace process issues.

Q: What about the small parties like the religious parties with other parties? Were they able to throw their weight around?

SULLIVAN: Well less so than the more normal government in which either Labor or Likud used to be dependent on them because Labor and Likud had some eighty votes between them the weight of the smaller parties was less. That said, because both of the large parties were looking at the future, the coalition included, as I recall, that at least some of the religious and other small parties within the Grand Coalition continued to direct resources and benefits their way looking at the future and when they might need them again for future coalition building efforts.

Q: What was your impression of the party system? Well let's talk about the smaller parties first since you were dealing with them on a personal basis.

SULLIVAN: Well it was a system which essentially did work in a very advantageous position for small parties to get their benefits, particularly if their benefits were narrow benefits, money to fund Yeshivas, religious teaching programs, money to support their own party building in the guise of social institutions and so on. It was a situation which elsewhere in the world is rare, but small parties in Israel have great leverage. Even bearing in mind that I was in Israel at the relative low point of their leverage, the small parties still had the ability to get their way and the large parties saw it in their interest to throw substantial resources their way in the interest of having a good relationship.

Q: Well did you find that the small parties had much interest in trying to manipulate the United States or were they playing their own game and we were outside their orbit?

SULLIVAN: I think probably the less small parties I would say settler groups were in that period that I was there just beginning to cultivate in a major way U.S. political forces to try to take sides in this issue of whether or not Israel should be discouraged from or encouraged to settle in the West Bank in Gaza. Settler groups had some success in their efforts at that point. I remember Senator Jesse Helms actually came over and visited. I don't recall whether he even took a briefing from the ambassador; we certainly would have offered one. But his trip would have been paid for by a Christian interest group in the United States that had a special relationship with Jewish settler groups in Israel and the West Bank. And Helms's views were further encouraged to be very supportive on behalf of settlers; so this was a relatively new phenomenon. As far as other groups and other parties, Peace Now was beginning to emerge at that point and they had sort of some natural allies within both liberal forces in the U.S. as well as within liberal Jewish organizations but I don't think they were as active or as effective in cultivating U.S. allies.

Q: The Israeli Arab group was it at all effective or not?

SULLIVAN: Let's see, there was to some degree I recall at that point there were about seven Israeli-Arab members of the Knesset, seven or eight, somewhere in there. About four of them were Communist Party which effectively made them really ineffective. They were excluded from all security matters and, as a matter of fact, all Israeli-Arabs were excluded from knowledge of security matters and had virtually no real influence on foreign policy issues. The Labor party had several Israeli-Arabs, who had a little bit more influence. But overall at that point, you were dealing with a group that was so small that their ability to influence matters was quite small.

Q: You were there during the last year or so of Sam Lewis weren't you?

SULLIVAN: I was there his last year, yeah. My principal recollection of that period is that we were still I would say, clinging to the hope that an agreement that had been forged between Israel and Lebanon with US brokerage could somehow be maintained, even as it was breaking apart under our eyes. It had been brokered by the U.S. in about '83 in the aftermath of the '82 mess in Beirut. Israel agreed to mostly depart from Lebanon and yet be able to maintain security in south Lebanon. Sam's last year and my first year witnessed the collapse of any hope that that agreement would have any real importance in the longer run..

Q: During that period what was the status of Ariel Sharon and how did we view him?

SULLLIVAN: Sharon was at least the first part of that period very much on the outs. His stature was much reduced because of the nightmare that the invasion of Lebanon had resulted in was and the internal Israeli investigations which had blamed him for the Sabra and Shatila massacre of Palestinians. He was much diminished in political stature, but in the course of my four years was rehabilitated and eventually incorporated into the collation government in a considered relatively minor role as minister of commerce. So from being somebody who had been a major figure, he became a minor figure. His ego didn't diminish and he still came into receptions with a large retinue of people and certainly whenever I would accompany visiting Congress people to meet with him, he certainly spoke as if he was a major figure. But I think that was probably his low point of political power and it took him some time thereafter to build his status back up.

Q: How did you find various groups, particularly Congressional groups and other ones, coming to Israel? I mean by this time this was a part of the ebb and flow of serving in Israel wasn't it?

SULLIVAN: Sure, I mean I'm not sure I can give a number but I would guess that it would probably have been maybe as many as 100 Congress people a year counting the numbers that came in groups. Others, like Congressman Steve Solarz and Senator Arlen Specter came every single year. Solarz used to ask for about 30 meetings in the course of three days and he wanted every meeting to last exactly 45 minutes, transport fifteen minutes to the next meeting and right on through his agenda. So it was a part of a very intense workload and it often involved our organizing some events for visiting members

of congress in addition to me or another control officer being the embassy notetaker. It was more ambiguous if they came under private sponsorship as did Senator Helms for instance and we typically did not accompany those groups or might only have a briefing for them. Congressman Charlie Wilson also came often in that period and he also knew his way around Israel very well, had lots of very good Israeli connections, was chairman of armed services appropriations subcommittee and he basically did his own thing. Yes, we received him at the airport and asked him if there was anything he wanted. He always came on a military plane and was accompanied by a military assistant but he didn't ask much from the embassy and preferred all of this meetings private. But I or someone from the embassy did accompany if there was a ministerial level meeting and the Ambassador would accompany to a meeting with the Prime Minister.

So everybody would want to see Rabin as defense minister and then the prime minister and the foreign minister Shamir and Peres and those were interesting and good meetings. The American Congress people were there because it was important for them and their constituents and their supporters that they go. Probably only a few of them were critical of Israeli ever in meetings, there were a handful that were, such as David Bonior and Howard Wolpe, but most members tended to be unreservedly supportive, even in the midst of the first "Intifada". Many Israeli politicians sought to use those meetings in order to encourage more Congressional support. I always had great admiration for Rabin because he was very much a straight-shooter even though the first "Intifada" was starting at that time. He used to downplay the threat of that "Intifada" saying that it was a tactical problem that posed no threat to the existence of Israel. His assessment at that time was that the existential threat for Israel was in the East, Syria and Iraq. If they were to combine, this could be an existential threat and that was what Israel should concern itself with most. He would say this to some of the Congress people who were prepared to view every single threat as an existential threat to Israel, but Rabin was not playing to that audience, he was calling it straight.

Q: Great, okay well I've got to go now but I would like to pick this up really with the Pickering time.

SULLIVAN: Okay yeah there are some interesting things there. I was there in the Jonathan Pollard…

Q: So we are talking with Joe Sullivan and we are in 1980…

SULLIVAN: Well say 1985 in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Q: Yeah. So you had an Israeli government which was sort of in…

SULLIVAN: A unity government with both Labor and Likud 50 percent each and alternating the prime minister positions but, in fact, at least on peace process issues it became a formula for stalemate. The U.S. made a number of efforts, I would guess most notably in 1987 and 1988 when Secretary of State Shultz made a major visit out and tried to push the process forward. In fact, by that point, Shamir was the Likud Party's, Yitzhak

Shamir was prime minister and he essentially wasn't interested; so things did not advance.

Q: Well Shultz came out full of, what I gather, full of drive and really going to do it. You had our ambassador in Syria, his name escapes me right now, Bob… I want to say Bob Paganelli but anyway saying Assad wasn't going to do anything, and from what I gather, with Shamir. What caused Shultz to come out into a no win situation?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, well I mean there is a sort of a continuing impulse on the part of the American administrations to do something; to press, to do whatever is possible, because they recognized that it was a corrosive situation to have no peace process underway. If I recall correctly the Palestinian first Intifada had begun in 1986 or '87 so that really was, I think, one of the factors providing some impulse. In addition, by then Labor Party leader Shimon Peres had become foreign minister and he was very anxious for the U.S. to move and so he was encouraging the U.S. to make an effort. Yet, of course, without Likud being in agreement there was no prospect that it would move. Likud and Shamir were usually, let's say, careful enough not to say no, they would just not say yes. So at the end of the day as I recall Shultz only came once. He had pre-missions come out with various members of peace party planning process that had come out and done pre-meetings, but at the end of the day Shamir was not going to agree so the U.S. peace process faded from the scene and I don't think Shultz ever made a second serious trip out, at least not on that subject.

Now Syria was not really involved in the Palestinian process at that stage because they really weren't a player. It would have been the Palestinians and some lingering efforts to involve Jordan in an agreement on the Palestinians. There had been some efforts to have them, in fact, be the spokesperson for the Palestinians but I think Palestinians were increasingly clear that they didn't want the Jordanians as their front person and, therefore, any effort needed to have a Palestinian lead. Shimon Peres, in particular, retained some hopes of having the Jordanians out front. Also, Likud in particular within the Israeli government was not going to take the encouraging facilitative actions that Shultz was presenting as necessary in order to move forward.

Q: Well at the embassy had we written off or were we just going through the motions?

SULLIVAN: Well you know Tom Pickering is a terrific person and certainly the best ambassador I've ever had. But he is a very enthusiastic and positive person who I think never would have discouraged anybody. I've seen him in conversations with Israelis who can be extremely tough and basically say a flat no and Tom would always say, "Well how about this and can't we work it this way, can't we do this." So I believe Tom was encouraging and at least making the effort. Yeah, probably the embassy was being at least positive, we should try and the secretary had a full peace process staff which had some of the usual actors, including Aaron Miller and Dan Kurtzer.

Another interesting time was when Vice President Bush made a major trip out to the region in '87, as I recall. It clearly was a pre-Presidential trip in order to position himself

as a foreign policy expert, which he was to a substantial degree. Yet he had not had previously, I think, terrific relationships with the Israelis so that trip was among other things to burnish his credentials in all the countries of the region and most importantly in the U.S. I don't think he took major out front positions, it was a fact-finding trip, it was a make contact trip and from his point of view went well. I happened to be the control officer for that visit. It's always a bit of adventure dealing with the staff because by that point the White House had begun to use advance parties who had no international experience. In many cases, they were the people who had advanced previous U.S. campaign trips and were rewarded with advancing an international trip. That was, in this case, particularly confusing because one advance group came out and worked with the embassy over several days with the embassy always presenting ideas of things that can be done, how they can be done. This advance group had their own ideas but we tried to make things work in a practical fashion. After we worked through maybe a three or four day visit of advance party number one, lo and behold about a week later comes advance party number two that had clearly never consulted with advance party number one, had a totally different agenda and we had to do it all over again. So I think that's the practice that as far as I know has continued at least did continue for the next ten or dozen years through both political parties in the White House but made things that much more complicated for an embassy that's trying to work a visit.

I recall one meeting with the Vice President's advance party, Embassy representatives and the Israeli Protocol and Knesset officials over arrangements for Bush's principal speech at the Israeli Knesset. All seemed to be going well until the Vice President's advance party proposed removing the Knesset podium's national Menorah seal to be replaced by a Vice Presidential seal. So I told him, "No, I don't think you can do that." He still was very insistent so I said, "If you still want to talk about it, raise it, but you will get a very strong reaction here in the Knesset and they'll want to maintain their symbol of their state. Eventually it got worked out and the Knesset seal stayed on the podium, but it reflects the naivety of some of the people that do the advance work.

Let's see I guess the one other memorable feature was the Jonathan Pollard spy scandal in which he was, of course, arrested in the United States.

Q: Was this during your time he was arrested?

SULLIVAN: Yes, I can't remember in late 1985 and into 1986.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: He was arrested and the Israelis, of course, were intimately involved and at quite high levels. A senior Israeli intelligence figure had orchestrated the espionage and utilized as one of the people who made contacts with Pollard an Israeli air force hero of the bombing of the nuclear reactor in Baghdad. The Israelis clearly seduced Pollard with that and with money; he became an agent and delivered materials to the Israeli Government.

Now the period where the embassy got involved was after Pollard's arrest when the Embassy and the US pressed the Israeli's to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution. The Israelis cooperated to a certain degree in identifying individuals who might have been involved, I think out of embarrassment and fear of its effect on relations with the US. There was a team sent out that included State Department then Legal Adviser Abe Sofaer, Justice Department officials and Joseph diGenova from the U.S. attorney's office prosecuting the case. We had a half a dozen meetings typically starting at about 11:00 p.m. in Jerusalem. We would go through three or four hours in stages, they later brought out some of the individuals who had been involved and those individuals answered questions from our side. So there was some degree of cooperation.

Now in a situation like that about how it had happened, what degree of involvement there was, the prosecution always wants more information and I think at a certain point the Israelis decided they had provided enough and were not interested in cooperating any further. That may have already been after the first set of visits I don't recall precisely but it was a very tense period in the relationship. The Secretary of Defense, at the time I recall, Caspar Weinberger was particularly upset and it cost Israel a certain degree of collaboration from the U.S. for at least a period, until there was a decision made, notwithstanding this case, that it was in our interest to resume most levels of cooperation with Israel.

Q: I'm not overly familiar with this but my understanding on the Pollard case is that Pollard had been tasked by his Israeli masters to supply on an urgent basis naval intelligence concerning the location of our nuclear launching submarines? I read this in an article by Seymour Hirsch of the New York Times.

If that's true the only conclusion one can make is that this was being passed on to the Soviets because the Israelis couldn't give a damn where our launching submarines were but the Soviets did. The Israeli's were going through a lot of negotiations to get people out of the Soviet Union at the time. Was this at all a subject that was considered by or batted around the embassy at all?

SULLIVAN: I don't recall that specific information and I don't recall us getting into the specific details of the information provided and certainly not in the meetings with the Israelis that I was part of.

Q: I have to look on the Internet to see a little more because if the information he was supplying was, as I said, of our nuclear stuff that has horrific connotations.

SULLIVAN: I think the understanding at the time, unless there was other information I wasn't aware of or that became known later, was that most of the information he was seeking was information about capabilities of their potential enemies and potential threats to them. We always had a certain degree of sharing with Israel, but Israel always presumed that we didn't share everything so they were always anxious to get information in other ways to supplement whatever we did provide.

Q: It's an interesting case. I know the American military, particularly in the higher reaches, have been and continue to be absolutely adamant about not releasing Pollard. So there has to be something more than just a garden variety spy, I would think.

SULLIVAN: I don't know the answer to that.

Q: During the Pickering time what was your piece of the action?

SULLIVAN: Well, I continued to be the deputy political counselor for the first two years he was there; my second and third years there, and I was principally focused primarily on internal political issues, which in Israel always involved a lot of foreign policy and a fair bit on relations with the U.S. as well. So I continued to follow internal Israeli politics, trying to interpret it as well as I could, try to establish good relationships with a full range of Israeli actors and seeking to get a little bit of advance information on what was likely to happen in the local scene and how it might affect us. This applied to specific issues we were working on the peace process, what were the effects of the Intifada, as well as coalition politics. Then finally, my fourth year there, I became political counselor so I had a broader sense of responsibilities and less specifically internal as somebody else took over most of that portfolio.

Q: Well as you were looking at internal politics were you sensing a significant change in the demographics of Israeli population and of politics; in other words as more and more people came out of the Soviet Union the less sort of the old European Socialist side of things, the Labor people were losing power in the Likud which is more Orthodox group was gaining. Was that happening?

SULLIVAN: I would agree with most of that happening with the exception of the impact of the Russians immigration. While Russian immigration was just beginning to increase, it really increased much more after the collapse of the Soviet Union.. With that said, the old European Socialist traditions, which were most notable within the Labor Party from Ben-Gurion on, were fading. The Kibbutz movement was less and less relevant, the Histadrut the Labor organization was less relevant and increasingly large percentages of Israeli's were born in Israel, had parents born in Israel and a diminishing percentage traced their origins back to the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe. More Israelis had origins from the Middle East and North Africa; they were Sephardim rather than Ashkenazim and they had tougher impulses toward Arabs and Arab states. So some of the traditions that Labor had led that gave it predominance for Israel's first forty years were becoming increasingly less relevant.

Q: Did we see this as a plus or minus?

SULLIVAN: Well it was a minus to the degree that we were encouraging a peace process. The demographic changes made the environment more difficult for a peace process. Otherwise it was mostly Israel's own business and we had to adjust as well and deal with people who were not like those we knew before. If you think of somebody like the former foreign minister for many years Abba Eban, he was no longer a relevant

figure. Even though he was in the Knesset, we had to focus on these people who were born in Morocco, born in Iraq or sons and daughters of people born there. We adjusted, we made contact and particularly the '80s, fewer of them spoke English so it was important to have Hebrew. Actually, Tom Pickering to his credit learned Hebrew in a year basically in an hour a day in the morning drawing upon some old Arabic that he had learned while he was in Jordan. I don't know anybody who in a year could learn enough Hebrew to function and he did and was giving speeches after a year there. That was his mark of incredible language aptitude.

Q: For the deputy political counselor and the counselor how important or how heavy was the hand of the American Jewish community, AIPAC, the Congressional lobby and all in your dealings or was this just part of the underbrush?

SULLIVAN: No, there are issues that it affects. One that it affected I would argue was the embassy itself, which was in a renovated old hotel right on a main street with a parking garage underneath us. We needed to improve security in that embassy and at the point I was there, we had an option on a property that was probably six or seven miles up the road in the direction of Herzliya that we could have gotten and secured quite a large perimeter without a parking garage underneath. It would have been our option to do with what we wished. Well at the same time the Congress, in the lead up to U.S. elections, was in its regular procedure of trying at least passing some resolution that the American Embassy must move itself to Jerusalem, notwithstanding any potential impact on US ability to promote a peace process. Even though the vast majority of Congress people, in private, would not have thought this was a great idea at that moment but they would pass the resolution to that effect. In any case, that year it was done in the form of an appropriation restriction and the appropriation legislation stated that the U.S. should not extend any funds to build an embassy in Tel Aviv, but should instead spend any embassy construction funds in Jerusalem.

Well, Pickering because he was such a good negotiator and he had contacts and he could be persuasive, wound up being instrumental in having the resolution watered down so that it instead said, "The U.S. government should both direct its efforts towards building an embassy in Jerusalem but could also improve a temporary facility in Tel Aviv." So in effect, we might have been able to go ahead but then the Israelis, of course, had their own interests and the mayor of Tel Aviv did not want us that far out of town and he intervened to block it. Those were realities and we had to deal with them.

It was true on a broader and more political front that Congress people visited all the time and sometimes they came on Congressional funds and sometimes they came sponsored by one of a number of usually American Jewish groups. As I mentioned in one of our previous conversations, even some fundamentalist Christian groups took an interest in settlement on the West Bank based on Jews' biblical links to West Bank land and began to sponsor some conservative Republican visits including those of Jesse Helms. With many of the, if I could call them mainstream American Jewish groups, we had good relations with their representatives in Israel and we would work together on congressional visits that they were sponsoring; the embassy would be involved in congressional

meetings with official Israelis. These groups would take congressmen on other portions of the visit themselves but it was reasonably amicable. There were limitations on that; the embassy would not go into, for instance, the Golan Heights with a Congressional delegation and we wouldn't travel with the Israeli government into the West Bank and we would discourage Congress people from doing it. But Congress members would often follow their own counsel. If there were groups that were very interested in perpetuating Israeli control over the Golan Heights and the West Bank these groups would encourage such visits strongly and try to make sure it became a major feature of the visit. Some elements of the Israeli government would be similarly inclined and push strongly for congressional visitors to make the Golan and the West Bank major component of the visit.

Q: At that time, how did reporting come from Gaza and the West Bank?

SULLIVAN: Historically, as you know, from your earlier interviews, there were often fire fights between the consulate in Jerusalem and the embassy in Tel Aviv. That was not the case in most of my time there; I think Maury Draper was consul general for a while and then later Wat Cluverius. In both those cases, there was an amicable relationship with the embassy so there wasn't the sniping that there sometimes has been, at least not in public. We wouldn't send dueling cables in with diametrically opposed views but we would have natural differences because we had different interlocutors and different perspectives but we would try to talk to each other and at least understand the other perspective before what we put on paper. Fundamentally though in the 1980's reporting on the West Bank was done by ConGen Jerusalem and that on Gaza by Embassy Tel Aviv.

Q: Is there anything particular going on either in Gaza or the West Bank? I mean the Intifada started then, didn't it?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: How did we view it at the time?

SULLIVAN: Well, it was I guess I would say that we viewed it with a lot of concern. We raised questions about whether the response was disproportionate because it was mostly stones against rubber bullets and eventually Washington did take public positions but it usually ended in that famous phrase lamenting the cycle of violence. We encouraged both sides to step back from actions which only inflamed the cycle of violence. So U.S. government positions were inconclusive at the end of the day.

Q: Did you find that in your reporting you had to be careful of circumspect or something? So often the story has been over the decades whatever is reported from the embassy usually ends up on a Congressman's desk before it hits the appropriate desk in the State Department.

SULLIVAN: Yes and I recall specifically with respect to the Intifada in one case, an embassy report referred to repressive Israeli actions. That caused something of a firestorm in certain circles of the Department of State where there was angst that this word was used. So we were, in effect, told to be very careful on how we dealt with the Intifada on paper.

Q: In a way as a political reporting officer was it kind of fun to be playing this somatic game in a so-called friendly state where your controlled interest was really very circumscribed by political forces?

SULLIVAN: I don't know if I would call it fun; you are being facetious; it was a bit frustrating. You see what you see and you know facts as you know them and it was Rabin as defense minister who had control of this Israeli reaction. As I said in my previous day's interview, I think he was basically an honorable man, somebody who was tough and tough minded. His whole life had been shaped by conflict but he wasn't someone who took pleasure in conflict or war. He felt that if people were provoking you you needed to be tough with them or else they would further provoke you. That said there were aspects of that reaction which were oppressive and which were cruel. They did go overboard sometimes and U.S. reaction to these excesses could help moderate the Israeli response. I think from the American point of view to the degree we had universal concerns with human rights and universal principals it was our role to make it clear to the Israelis that excessive response was something that we disapproved of. I don't think we were always clear at sending that message.

Q: Well you left there when?

SULLIVAN: In the summer of 1988.

Q: As you left in your mind whither Israel?

SULLIVAN: In order to be in our business and probably to be in the Middle East, one has to try to retain elements of optimism. There was at that point a fellow with whom Congressman Steve Solarz used to meet named Yehoshafat Harkabi, who had previously been chief of Israeli military intelligence and later an academic. Harkabi used to make an argument, which I think Rabin shared and Rabin probably followed when he signed on a few years later to the Oslo Accords. It was essentially that Israel and Palestinians had to come to an agreement, not because they loved one another, not because it was in keeping with either Israeli dreams or Palestinian dreams of what the future should be, but because the only way that Israel could preserve itself as both a democratic state and a Jewish state was by making an accommodation with the Palestinian inhabitants of the region that involved giving up territory. So I think Rabin essentially accepted that as well and I hoped it would be true as we've seen both before and after the Oslo accords, the devil is in the implementation and even when you have a broad-scale agreement I would say the implementation on both sides subsequently caused all kinds of turmoil and problems that have bedeviled the process subsequently.

So I remained hopeful in an eventual peace agreement, but without taking sufficient account of how difficult it would be; I certainly wasn't hopeful in the short term because I had no belief that Likud or Shamir would make serious compromises. Shamir later went on to become prime minister in his own right and was there at the end of the Gulf War to resist mightily the efforts of Bush and Baker to have an international peace conference. But basically they pushed him very hard, he went along but eventually was defeated and Rabin was more interested in a peace process when he became prime minister.

That said Israel is a tough place and a tough place to do business. I like the place, I like Israel, I like Israelis as tough as they are, but it's a difficult place and I wound up going there ten years later that we will come to later in a period where I was dealing with the Israel-Lebanon monitoring group.

I should add that Israel was a very intense place to live and to work. Israelis are very intense about almost everything and the pace of work was very intense with us working long days almost every day with many official dinners and receptions at night. So while it was a reasonably pleasant environment for my family, I was not at home as much as I would have liked.

Q: '88. Then where did you go?

SULLIVAN: I went back to Washington. It was the point in my career that I should be an office director and it was time to go back to Washington both for family reasons as well as professional reasons. So looking at the options I wound up taking and going back to Latin American issues and because office director for Central American affairs in the summer of '88 and then moving up to become the deputy assistant secretary in 1989.

Q: Well let's talk about Central American affairs. How stood things at that point?

SULLIVAN: Well at that point it was the tail end of the Reagan Administration and for the first several months of my time in Central American Affairs, the usual uncertainty preceding American elections put most policy decisions on hold. By that point, for all but a few diehards including the then Assistant Secretary for Latin America Elliott Abrams, it was pretty much written in stone that there would be no more Congressional military funding for the Contras. So this controversial issue played itself out by trying to continue humanitarian assistance to feed the contras, but not to provide further funding for military activities.

The last few months of that period were slow and not much really happening on Central America. There was, let's see I can't recall now, I believe it was in the fall of 1988 an effort by the Salvadoran guerrillas to mount a major effort offensive did not succeed but had some implications for the future. Things got more interesting with the election of Bush I and the designation of James Baker as Secretary of State. They were both interested in, as Baker and Bush put it in their memoirs, in putting the internal fighting in the U.S. over Central America behind us. So they sought and succeeded with great difficulty in getting a bipartisan accord with the Congress on Central America,

particularly Nicaragua in the spring of 1989. The new Assistant Secretary for Latin America, Bernie Aronson, who as a Democrat in the Mondale administration had been at times supportive of the Contras at least in the mid 1980s, was brought into the Bush-Baker administration. But Bernie had ideas that it was also time to move on from the policy that was so divisive in the U.S. and could not succeed in its ultimate objective; it was not going to topple the Sandinistas per se. That made it an interesting period and gave a lot of possibilities for movement.

As I say, I moved up late 1989 to be the deputy assistant secretary when my predecessor, Cris Arcos, went out as ambassador to Honduras. It was an interesting period, very difficult in some ways because within the Congress there were a lot of radically opposing positions on both the Left and the Right with people like Senator Helms on the Right believing that military support should never be ended for the Contras. Helms and his staff believed that the Republican administration should continue pushing for that military funding and the "Contras should not be betrayed" in their view. On the Left people like Senator Chris Dodd, or at least his staff, believed that the US should accommodate to the Sandinistas and, therefore, resisted the Administration's efforts to sustain the Contras in camps until the Sandinistas agreed to a free and fair election. That policy was the heart of the bipartisan agreement between the Administration and the Democrats in Congress and I was involved in a lot of Congressional consultations, a lot of travel to the region and diplomatic contacts. The resulting election in Nicaragua in 1990 was lost by the Sandinistas, much to their surprise.

Q: From your vantage point how did we feel that the election would come out when they were getting ready…

SULLIVAN: You've probably talked to a lot of other people on the subject but the reality is the lower down the totem pole people were, the closer they were to predicting the actual result in that election. The desk officer to Nicaragua at that time was Craig Kelly, who went on to be an Ambassador and a deputy assistant secretary in Western Hemisphere affairs, had the result almost exactly on target for percentages of the vote that the United Opposition Movement would get and that the Sandinistas would get. The higher up the chain you went the more people were fearful, concerned, believing some of the polls that had come out that the Sandinistas would win, not withstanding the fairer process that our efforts had helped guarantee.

Q: Did you get much of a chance to go down and talk to the Sandinistas?

SULLIVAN: I did one trip to Nicaragua soon after I returned to Washington and then it became increasingly difficult, since they had expelled our Ambassador and a number of embassy staff. We would see them in Washington more, and our embassy was in contact with the Sandinistas. But yes, I had one trip down there early on and then of course a number after the elections. We talked to the Sandinistas and I don't think that the problem was really a lack of talking so much as it was well there was a lot of bad history and fundamental lack of trust on both sides. During my one, pre-election trip, the Sandinistas' efforts were focused on getting the US to accommodate to their rule and my

efforts were to urge them to open up democratically and cease support for Salvadoran guerrillas. Neither of us was likely to persuade the other.

Q: Looking back on it was the overthrow by peaceful means of the Sandinistas because of what they did or because of what we did supporting the Contras and all that?

SULLIVAN: I think the Sandinistas had alienated large portions of their public in various ways, including through their autocratic rule and disastrous economic policies. But it also true that the contra war had its negative economic consequences and led the Sandinistas to institute a very unpopular military draft to fight in that war. The Nicaraguan economic situation was declining for several reasons, economic mismanagement as well as the fact that they were in a war. So there were a lot of factors there, and certainly there is an argument to be made that had the Contras not been supported, the Sandinistas might have been able to maintain control, notwithstanding the negative economic and political developments in their country.

Once the elections in Nicaragua had taken place in February of 1990 and the transition to the opposition government lead by President Chamorro took place that spring, there were still many problems ahead in Nicaragua, including the reluctance of Ortega and the Sandinistas to yield total power to her and their willingness to use violence to hold on to shares of their power.

Q: How about El Salvador? How did you view things there?

SULLIVAN: El Salvador, I think we covered some of that the history the last time we talked but there had been a substantial change by the time I came back to Inter-American Affairs in 1988-'89. The guerrillas were stronger, but there was also a stronger government with Freddie Cristiani, who was the Georgetown University grad and a conservative politician. He was practical and anxious to revive the country's economy and adopted good policies to revive the economy, notwithstanding the war that was continuing. As the leader of the conservative ARENA Party, he also had more political space to negotiate than had Christian Democratic President Napoleon Duarte. The new US administration sent some important signals. The FMLN guerrillas were also conscious of the fact that there might be opportunities for negotiation, even with a Republican administration. The FMLN did try their "final offensive" in November, 1989. When the offensive failed the FMLN sent signals that they were open to a negotiation process. I think they were also conscious, of course, particularly as we went through 1989 of the changes within the Soviet Union and the fact that their future support was less certain than it had been. In the course of that same offensive, a Salvadoran military unit assassinated a number of prominent Jesuit priests of Spanish origin. This unleashed a strong reaction in the US and particularly the US Congress jeopardizing the future of US military assistance to El Salvador. President Cristiani cooperated in the investigation of the Jesuit assassinations and also made increasingly clear his openness to peace negotiations led by the United Nations.

In the Bush I Administration, both Secretary Baker and Bernie Aronson made clear in several public statements and many private meetings that we were supportive of a negotiation process which lead to a democratic outcome and inclusion of people who may have been engaged in conflict in the past. This contrasted with some hard-line views that the guerrillas must be defeated militarily. Baker and Aronson were pragmatists, however, and recognized that congressional approval of military assistance to El Salvador would not last forever and thus it was important to support the peace process. So it was an uninteresting period particularly after the Sandinistas lost the presidential election in February, 1990. That also helped, I think, convince the Salvadorian guerrillas that they had no sure base of military support or place for training on the Central American isthmus and therefore must show more flexibility in peace negotiations. So our role on the military side was to continue military support and it was the Department of Defense and the Southern command in particularly that improved the Salvadorian army forces. On the political side the Department of State and I were talking a lot to President Cristiani and his team, encouraging them in the direction of negotiations. When the Salvadoran government asked the UN and to head a negotiation effort; the Administration also began engaging intensively with the United Nations and their negotiators over the peace process. I covered my perspective on this in an "Orbis" article published in about 1993. We had a good team in El Salvador, Bill Walker was ambassador and he actually began his own discussions and visits to communities in the field where the FLN was dominant to demonstrate that we were open to all sides.

In the course of the long negotiating process, we had our disagreements with the UN negotiators because we felt they were not pressing enough for a rapid end to the military conflict. But we began monitoring those negotiations in the field and in New York and eventually met with FMLN negotiators, as agreement neared in 1991. My perspective at the time and now, however, was that our most important influence was on the Salvadoran government and armed forces and that we maximized that ability to encourage productive negotiations by providing solid, but conditioned support.

We actually began a process of going down and meeting with the Salvadoran negotiating team which had both civilian and military members to it and meeting with them on almost a monthly basis. It was I think for them some degree of confidence building that they should continue through with this process, that the U.S. was not pushing them off a cliff. On the other hand at the same time encouraging them to find a way of being flexible that would advance that negotiating process. We did not have meetings with the other side, the guerrilla side, the FMLN in that process until a good deal later in that process; probably the summer of 1991 or the fall of 1991.

Q: Was this because of prohibitions on our part or we couldn't get a hold of them or what?

SULLIVAN: Well I think it was mostly inhibitions on our own part that we were reluctant, I think, to engage directly with them for fear that the Salvadorian government would distrust our motives, be less willing to proceed on the negotiating path and that it might negatively impact some Congressional attitudes. There was for instance, one

incident in about 1991 in which a US helicopter crashed and several of the US crew were killed by FLMN guerrillas. Congress reacted strongly, the administration reacted strongly; frankly we used that in part as leverage on the FMLN to move more quickly in the negotiating process but it also made it more difficult for us to have direct contacts in the light of that incident. Though finally, as I said, in probably about the summer of 1991 maybe even the spring of 1991, we began to have such contacts initially at a fairly low level and gradually moving up the chain. I had my first contacts with them in perhaps December of 1991; it was in the midst of a long negotiating process that took place in the UN. Tom Pickering, then the US representative to the UN, was extremely helpful in urging Secretary General Perez de Cuellar and others to move the process forward. The Salvadorians happened to have an excellent representative in the UN; he was working closely with Tom who had been the ambassador to El Salvador in the 1980's. That negotiating process concluded sometime after midnight on December 31, 1991 just as Perez de Cuellar was finishing his term of office so he actually delayed his departure and prolonged his stay in New York for several more hours until the negotiating process could conclude. There was then a big ceremony recognizing the conclusion of at least the framework of that negotiation in Mexico City in January 1992. A number of details still remained to be worked out over the next six-eight months; but the agreement did mark the effective end of combat and the turning of a page in El Salvador. Overall I would say our role was a constructive role. I think in retrospect it would have been advantageous for us to have contact with the FMLN at a somewhat earlier state, not preempting the Salvadorian government but keeping them informed. We might have understood the FMLN position better and perhaps been able to play a more helpful role in nudging the two sides to an agreement.

Q: How much was Jesse Helms and company a factor?

SULLIVAN: To a certain degree, but less so than on Nicaragua. Nicaragua had been such a traumatic and divisive issue for so long, notwithstanding an official bipartisan accord between the administration and Congress. In fact, on Nicaragua and even after the Sandinista election defeat, dealing with Congress was a very, very difficult process with views continuing to be polarized. As a matter of fact, I was nominated to be ambassador to Nicaragua in I guess about April or May of 1992; I never got a hearing. In my view, it was due to the political polarization in the Congress on Nicaragua. This was one issue on which Dodd and Helms staff could agree that I, as an individual responsible for the Administration's Nicaragua policy, and a number of other people nominated at that time should not be given hearings. Helms and Dodd staff had an argument that the Administration and I had not briefed them properly and Senators Hems and Dodd had the ability to prevent a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.. So in the end, I did not get confirmed, nor did other nominees to Latin America..

Q: Well we will come to that but by the time you got to Central America was pretty well the threat to Brownsville, Texas, gone?

SULLIVAN: Yes, that rhetoric had ended and it was only the politicians and policy people who had been in the heart of the political fight who were still talking about the

1980s issues. It was hard to have the same fear of leftists in Central America at a time when the Soviet Union was coming to the end to the Soviet subsidy to Cuba was having its effects upon Cuba's ability to project itself in the region. When the Sandinistas lost the 1990 election, their reluctance to hand over total power and their utilization of public demonstrations and occasional violence to hang on to a share of power and to property were things that should guide American policy with respect to Nicaragua. That was really where the Jesse Helms shaped American policy, and in my view, not in a positive direction. We wound up taking the position in legislation that if property had been seized not just from an American citizen but from any Nicaraguan who later became a U.S. citizen, then the US would suspend assistance to Nicaragua in like amount. So the result was that the Chamorro government, a coalition of democratic forces, were held responsible for what they could not deliver, getting all land back that had been taken by Sandinistas and returned not only to American citizens but to people who had been Nicaraguan citizens at the time of the taking. That was done by Helms and other likeminded individuals in the Congress; that sort of tied our hands and made that process a lot more complicated for a number of years in Nicaragua.

Q: I might say the Helms crew I'm sure there were others too, but I mean that Right-Wing hard-line group, from your perspective, could they be dealt with or were they interested in reaching a good solution?

SULLIVAN: We did deal with them, but as far as convincing them and having them be cooperative it was very difficult and their perspective was shaped by history and the absence of total victory over the Sandinistas. They suspected that the Sandinistas were running things behind the scenes or that the opposition government elected was being too soft on the Sandinistas or was not in full control. Their view was that this centrist policy of the Bush administration had failed and this was the dilemma that we were in certainly through 1992 while I was there and for a number of years thereafter.

Q: You talk about the Right, what about the Left, sort of the Sandalistas? Did they just fade away or what?

SULLIVAN: I think Sandalistas mostly faded away in terms of the Americans who had gone down there and identified closely with the Sandinistas. With respect to the Congress, there was some suspicion on the left of the Bush administration, even though it was in my view pursuing a centrist policy of trying to push toward election. There were some concerns that we were pressing too hard on those issues. but once the election happened, Congressional Democrats were largely supportive of providing the funding to the democratically elected government of Nicaragua. The resistance and the limitations imposed on US assistance came principally from conservative in Congress.

Q: Well then you say from that you were nominated to go to Nicaragua as ambassador?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Did you realize that this was almost a non-starter?

SULLIVAN: No, I don't think I would have said yes and I don't think my bosses would have nominated me, had we known this. You know it really was a strange alliance with Dodd and Helms staff in particular, combined to block my nomination and that of Mike Kozak as ambassador to El Salvador.

Q: Was this just sort of a last gasp of the extreme Right in our political thing vis-à-vis Central America?

SULLIVAN: Again, from my perspective, it was that they had one specific case that both sides seized upon for their argument for not confirming me; that there had been a particular program and whether it was properly notified to the correct committees of Congress and whether it was in accord or not with the bipartisan accord. Of course, it was not me specifically, it was rather the administration as a whole but because Mike Kozak and I had been in deputy assistant secretary positions at the time we were held responsible for what these congressional staff argued had been insufficient notification of the Congress. The office of the inspector general did a review at Secretary Baker's request to see whether there was anything improperly done. They found that there was not anything improper, but as things work in the nomination process, Senators in position to block a process can do such. Helms at that stage would have been chairman of the subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and Dodd the ranking minority so that was sufficient for them to block a hearing from ever being held and so that wound up not only frustrating toward nominations but actually all nominations made to the Western Hemisphere from May of 1992 through the end of the Bush I administration.

Q: Did you feel that we always use the term Helms and company but often the staff of committee is important?

SULLIVAN: Yes it is. I think on both sides the staff had decided that this was what they wanted to do and convinced the senators to go along with it. The senators rarely took action directly and I don't believe that they ever issued a statement in their own name as to what was going on; they said it was staff speaking for them.

Q: How long were you left dangling?

SULLIVAN: About six months.

Q: What do you do?

SULLIVAN: That is a good question because I had agreed to give up my seat as deputy assistant secretary at a time that I still expected to be confirmed and I gave it up I believe, in June of '92, and John Maisto succeeded me. Then I went down and sat in a little cubicle. Some portion of what I did was work periodically on one or another initiative to try to revive the nominations. I was able to meet with just about all other key Republican and Democratic Senators and they indicated some support and interest in having the confirmation hearing. But because the two senators, one Republican and one Democrat in

the key position, were in a position to block it I sat in a little cubicle. I did choose to write sort of my history of the Salvador peace process which was coming to a culmination in that period and was able to later get that published in several places including in "Orbis" and in a Georgetown University publication.

Then finally about December 1992 I was asked one if I would like to go to Havana the following year. I accepted and that position did not require Senate confirmation. It was a chief of mission position but because it didn't have an ambassadorial title it didn't have a Senate confirmation requirement. I was also asked if I wanted to become a diplomat-in-residence at Georgetown for the January through June period. I think Brandon Grove had been there and then he went out and did something related to Somalia so he was out of Georgetown. I went there and worked the usual diplomat-in-residence role presenting some papers and speaking in classes and doing some writing, where I actually put together a book for Georgetown on embassies in crisis that semester. The frustrating period was the five-six months that I was sitting in a closet.

Q: God.

SULLIVAN: I was not somebody who could continue dwelling on the negative, always looking for something more positive and certainly Georgetown was more positive. I enjoyed that experience. I also had more time to myself than I had in a long time and began preparing for a triathlon and actually completed several triathlons in the spring of 1993 before leaving for Havana.

To go back and pick out one piece that occurred in 1990 while I was DAS for Central America. There was an episode in Trinidad in the Caribbean that had a very brief life, but was a big deal at the time. In late July of 1990 a radical local group, Jamaat al Muslimeen, which had been trained in Libya, seized the parliament building in Port of Spain, Trinidad and killed several people including an MP and wounded other MPs and held the prime minister and several other people captive. Well we had an arrangement within the State Department regional bureaus at the time, where when a major crisis like this happened, the US would be able to dispatch a multi-agency team under the leadership of the State Department to help in whatever way we could. Well in ARA, we had decided that the DAS who had responsibility for the region Sally Cowal should stay in Washington with the task force and another DAS from ARA should go down as leader of the team and that's what I did. I wound up going down with a fairly large team from a number of different agencies. We wound up arriving late at night with scores of people and lots of equipment and it was complicated for several reasons. One, of course, was that the prime minister was being held and there was no clear authority within the government. It was also complicated because the U.S. ambassador at the time, a political appointee, was off island without authorization. So I remember being in Larry Eagleburger's, then deputy secretary of State's, office on a Saturday morning and him trying to be reached by this wandering ambassador. Eagleburger said I don't want to talk to him; I don't want him to go back I just want him to go away. This fellow, of course, being wealthy and connected presumably at the White House found his way back in eventually after we and our team had arrived. He showed up and was, I would say, very

meek and asked me: "You know, if you have a moment some time I would really appreciate a briefing on what's going on." We did that and this Ambassador survived in the position, which shows you that political appointees can survive big mistakes much easier than career appointees.

This fellow eventually became ambassador to Italy in the Bush II administration so it didn't hurt him.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: But in any case, our team down there we did our duty. The most important part of what we did was help the Trinidadian government overcome their own internal disorganization and cut off the communication that the radical group in the parliament had with the outside world. We also advised the Trinidad government on how to pressure them more effectively to negotiate. An agreement was eventually reached and all were released with no further harm. The group members were promised that they would not be prosecuted, but they were indeed prosecuted, since that commitment had been made under duress. But then within the Privy Council System there was an eventual appeal and they were released some years later.

On our last day in Trinidad, there was concern that word of the US mission to Trinidad was beginning to surface in wire service stories. But then on our flight home, we got word that Saddam Hussein had just invaded Kuwait, thereby ending any interest in our little adventure.

Overall, we had played a useful role and adapted our role to what could be most helpful in the circumstances. One of the lessons the U.S. learned from that experience was that any such team in the future should be much smaller and adapted to the needs. So there was a practical lesson learned as well.

Q: What did the team do?

SULLIVAN: What we did was provide advice for them, encourage them to cut off the communications of the kidnapers to the outside which they were using to put pressure on the families of the parliamentarians to surrender to their every demand. We also helped the government get better information because the police branch that had the information reported directly to the prime minister and, therefore, was keeping the information to themselves. Then we just counseled them in negotiations in ways that wound up being useful to them so that the government made better decisions and was able to end the standoff without further bloodshed.

Q: What was the reaction of the authorities there? We didn't have the greatest relations with them did we?

SULLIVAN: By then relations had begun to improve, because Eric Williams whose name you probably remember and was a long-term and perplexing leader with whom the

U.S. did have a complicated relationship, had departed the scene several years earlier. So our relationship was better. The island is fairly evenly divided between the mostly Black supported party and another Indian supported party, but the US had decent relations with the two and we have very good economic relationships because of shared petroleum interests. But I would guess at the end of the day, it wasn't my watch so once I got home I didn't follow it closely. It appears that probably played a positive role that we could be trusted to act prudently, advise quietly and not take public credit and so on in ways that I have to imagine were useful and, I think, our good relationship continues today

Q: Well we will pick this up the next time. We are talking about what '93? You went to Havana…

SULLIVAN: Right in '93, the summer of '93.

Q: Okay why don't we stop here and pick it up in '93 when you are off to Havana.

Today is the 16th of November 2010 with Joe Sullivan. We are going to move to when you were off to Cuba. You were in Cuba from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From July 1993 until, I believe, July 1996.

Q: Well now, how political was this appointment, particularly the Miami Cubans and all this. Are you familiar or were you involved in sort of the maneuverings before you went out there?

SULLIVAN: Well I had not had direct responsibility for Cuba. My then boss, the Assistant Secretary Bernie Aronson, had been dealing with the Cuban-American community on a number of issues and had basically a good relationship with them so I imagine he would have told them that I was a good guy, I trust him and so on. But, I never felt any resistance from the Cuban-American community prior to my departure. As I said, that was an appointment that, even though I had the title of chief of mission, because it didn't have the title of ambassador, it did not require Senate confirmation. So I didn't have to jump through the hoops that might have been more complicated with some members of Congress extremely close to the Cuban-American community. That said remind me of this point a couple of times as we go through on Cuba in case I've forgotten anything on the impact of the Cuban-American community. I, for instance, chose deliberately on my way into Havana to stop in Miami; that was almost obligatory in order to catch the charter flights to Havana at that point in any case. I visited with several different elements of the Cuban-American community. I chose to do that at the beginning so that I could be in a listening mode, I could hear them and yet I would not need to respond to them. I eventually decided that I wasn't going to make such meetings a regular occurrence on my trips back and forth. I wasn't going to be reporting to them, I was going to be hearing their views early on but then leaving the subsequent interaction to Washington and there was certainly plenty of that particularly, between the Cuba desk in the State Department and the Cuban-American community.

I guess one of those early encounters that was memorable in that the Cuban-American National Foundation, CANF, as it was called was run at that time by Jorge Mas Canosa, since deceased. But he was very hard-line and very assertive. He himself was not present, he was reportedly traveling but I was left with several members of the board. I would say that they basically sought to give me my marching orders, whom I should meet with, whom I should not meet with, which members of the opposition community they trusted and, therefore, that I should meet with, which ones they did not trust and, therefore, I should not meet with. Indeed, as it turned out several of the people that were on their trusted list proved to be double agents in effect reporting to Cuban state security. That said it was a listening exercise and sort of confirmed my view that I simply didn't want to be in regular contact with that community otherwise I would be in a position of being asked how I had obeyed their instructions.

In Cuba at the time I arrived it was a very interesting time.

Q: Before I leave that subject did you get the equivalent to informants within the Miami Cuban population? Were there various schools, factions or was the Mas pretty much the dominant?

SULLIVAN: Well there were others. There was one group of I guess you would call them supporters of the Democratic Party, the Clinton administration was in office at the time, there were Cuban-Americans that had been working with the Clinton campaign. And the Clinton Administration was very focused on the electoral importance of Florida and the hope of eroding some of the traditional 85% Cuban-American support for Republican Party candidates. I met with the Cuban-American Democrats as well; they were more moderate obviously, more cognizant of the fact that the administration was looking for ways to not necessarily be confrontational in every instance but to advance US interests on Cuba. Not at that time but I guess later my conclusion was that even most of that community when it really came down to it, at least through the nineties, wound up being out shouted by the hard-line community. When push came to shove, moderate Cuban-Americans were not willing to stand-up and argue for moderate positions, so the dominant voice clearly was that of CANF and other hard-line elements within the community. This affected Radio Marti and other instruments of US policy at the time.

Q: Okay, so what did you arrive to?

SULLIVAN: Well I think probably to the low point in terms of the Cuban economic situation and to some elements of political crisis as well. The Soviet Union had obviously collapsed, the subsidy of about $5 billion a year had essentially come to an end. There was an enormous and a drastic economic crisis that affected every Cuban. There was a tremendous shortage of gasoline, of petroleum. The public transport that there used to be was virtually non-existent. Instead the people were to the degree they had to make long distance trips were riding in the backs of trucks, hundreds at a time, because there was no other means of transportation. The state was coping very poorly with all of this. At the beginning of that period I recall that summer of '93 there were large scale blackouts throughout the city due to lack of fuel to run power plants. Water was also a problem.

The Cuban government had allowed the water supply system to deteriorate mightily over the years and had compensated by delivering water by tanker trucks through the poor neighborhoods. Now they had a fuel crisis which made water delivery trucks increasingly problematic to keep going. There were also some small indications of unrest bubbling up, crowds assembling in front of neighborhood Communist Party offices and throwing rocks through windows under cover of the blackout's darkness, things that were very unusual in Cuba, since the bulk of the population had long since been intimidated; this was not usual.

That economic crisis continued and I did travel throughout the country even fairly early on. I think within two or three months of my arrival I made a trip out to the northeastern province of Holguin and had to deal with that shortage of gasoline, for instance. We had to go to the local provincial party office in order to get them to open the gas tank so that we could buy some gasoline in order to proceed with our trip. I saw many manifestations of this crisis and outside Havana, it was even worse. There were not just frequent blackouts, but virtually permanent blackouts in many of the regional cities. So there was great unrest, there was a lot of uncertainty and I think the government and the Communist Party at the time, including Fidel himself, appeared to be off balance and not really certain of which way to go. There had been some small steps taken earlier to no longer penalize people for having foreign currency and this was helpful over time because it encouraged Cuban-Americans to send more remittances to their family members. Previously, some remittances had been delivered furtively to family members, but those family members had been required under law to convert them into virtually worthless Cuban pesos. But once holding dollars was legalized and the U.S. also took steps to permit the legal transfer of limited remittances to family members, remittances increased greatly. The Cuban government also began setting up dollar stores in order to absorb these dollars and importing the coca cola, shampoo and other goods from Panama and Mexico and then selling them to the public at a profit so that the Cuban government got some indirect foreign exchange benefit from remittances sent to relatives in Cuba. But it did take a while and that whole year, I would say, was a year of crisis.

There was a great shortage of food; there were a lot of Cubans who were eating nothing but rice, not even beans were available. Others were eating very little, there were some indications of malnutrition. We actually began approving assistance of medical supplies to Caritas, which is the Catholic Relief Organization in Cuba. We used to have pretty good relations with both that organization and the Catholic Church as a whole and they worked out a means of verifying that the medical donations from the US were used properly and not diverted by the Cuban government. The Cuban government dominated the health system and all hospitals, but through a network of Catholic doctors, Caritas was able to monitor that these were not being siphoned off into the system but rather used appropriately for people who needed the medical supplies.

When I arrived, the Cuban government showed more than usual interest in engaging with me. The Interests Section had traditionally been confined to mid-level contacts in the Foreign Ministry, but soon after I arrived, I was received by the Foreign Minister. But the sticking point became, and I certainly had enough meetings in Washington to have a clear

picture of Clinton Administration policy on Cuba. In the past, at various points the U.S. had signaled that Cuba abstaining from promotion of international guerrilla movements and ending military cooperation with the Soviet Union would be good enough to establish a much better relationship with the United States. Our position by 1993 was that we also would require changes within Cuba itself. That was a condition the Cuban government was absolutely and totally unwilling to yield on so the degree of our contacts diminished.

The US Interests Section benefited from diminished state controls, which were declining for lots of reasons, including fewer funds to enforce them. In addition, the famous Committees for the Defense of the Revolution in many cases became virtually inactive; the neighborhood watch committees became inactive. The heads of the neighborhood watch committees were involved in the same small scale corruption as the rest of their neighbors in order to be able to feed their families and were thus not in position to "snitch" on their neighbors. So many of the regime's traditional controls were breaking down and we were able to take advantage of these openings to be in touch with more people. There were more opposition elements beginning to take chances to move around and we met with them. We did a number of things to try to provide them with materials; mostly open materials, press articles and this sort of thing. The Cuban government didn't much like that. I recall being called into the foreign ministry and told that our activity was noted and was not welcome. We had even met with some of these elements and that was not welcome. So there were significant tensions and the tension grew. I would say the Cuban government was uneasy about its own what they saw as slippage in its own control.

The Cuban government paralysis I would say for the most part continued right up through the summer of '94 when tens of thousands of Cubans escaped the island on rafts and small craft. We could travel to beaches just outside Havana and watch people saying goodbye to their families as they climbed on board a raft; international media coverage made this a public spectacle and an embarrassment for the regime. The Cuban government did not encourage the phenomenon, at first, but did not devote the same resources that they had in the past to preventing unauthorized departure from Cuba. The U.S role in this phenomenon was ambiguous. The US government did not wish to see mass migration from Cuba of the sort that occurred at the time of Mariel in 1980, but much of the Cuban-American community was cheering on the exodus and USG-funded Radio Marti was covering the exodus enthusiastically. Both the Cuban-American community and the U.S. government hoped that the growing crisis might lead to some change in Cuba. One Cuban-American group, Brothers to the Rescue, flew small planes to find rafters at sea and the US Coast Guard stood some six miles offshore to pick up these people on rafts and bring them to the safety of the US Naval Base at Guantanamo.

At this point, in the summer of 1994, the most spectacular event of public protest took place, commonly referred to as the "Maleconazo", the Malecon being the waterfront in front of Havana. In the midst of this wave of rafters, one day for unknown reasons, a rumor had spread throughout Havana that there were going to be ships or a fleet of small vessels similar to the Mariel boat lift that would evacuate anybody who wished to leave.

Based on that unfounded rumor, probably as many as 10 thousand Cubans gathered in the Havana waterfront waiting for their opportunity to get out. Well no such boatlift occurred and the police were unable to control the crowd. As late afternoon settled in and it appeared that no fleet was coming, the crowd turned to rock throwing, throwing rocks through the dollar store and helping themselves to things out of the dollar stores that many would not have had the dollars to purchase otherwise. There was a famous incident in which Fidel came down in a jeep and confronted the protesters and the Cuban version of that is, of course, that his heroic action turned back the crowd and everybody agreed to go back to being a revolutionary once again. Other versions are that there were numerous layers of protection behind him and readiness to assert force as necessary in order to deal with the crowd; I believe the latter.

From that moment on, Fidel and the Cuban Communist Party and government decided to reassert themselves to retake control of the streets. They had for the past year basically left the streets empty and those streets had gradually found space for opposition and even mobs as had occurred in the "Maleconazo". That very weekend, the Cuban government called one of its massive demonstrations with everybody from their work place told that they must attend and sought to retake the streets and reassert its security presence. While this increased assertiveness did not end the reasons for Cuba's economic and political crisis, they did once again mobilize Cuba's instruments of state security, which are the critical means of maintaining state control.

There was another decision that plays into the current Cuban developments with Raul now in charge. I don't have total documentation of this but I think it's highly probable. There was, as I said, a growing food shortage. I met several Cuban economists who favored increasing incentives for production. These economists appeared to be being encouraged by Defense Minister Raul Castro and the Armed Forces. Cuba had experimented once before with agricultural markets in the early 1980's as a way to address food shortages. But at that point, the only ones who had been allowed to participate in these agricultural markets were the tiny percentage of private farmers in Cuba. The official perception of that 1980 experience was that these markets helped address the food shortages, but also made that small group of private farmers wealthy and so the experiment was ended after several years. The process that was eventually approved in 1994 was to allow even the agricultural collectives and the cooperatives to participate in the farmers' markets. Once they had satisfied the quota that they owed to the state, they were allowed to sell off any excess food production in these agricultural markets. And the sales were to be in dollars or a newly created convertible peso, which many Cubans did not have, but those receiving remittances from relatives abroad or with access to tourist dollars did. The collectives or cooperatives could use these more valuable proceeds to meet other needs of the collective farm. So this was an effective policy in the sense that it encouraged collectives and cooperatives to meet their quota to the state, which many of them previously not done. Because products were only sold initially dollars and then later in a newly introduced convertible Cuban peso set at one dollar to a convertible peso, these markets helped soak up the dollar remittances that were coming into the country. The part that I believe took place, but I don't have confirmation from anybody who was a participant is that Raul and a number of generals met with Fidel

and they basically told him, "Commandante in Jefe, we support you and will always support you, etc., but it would be easier if we gave the people some food to eat. So let us try this experiment and see if it works." Fidel did allow that to happen and I would say it was a largely successful experiment that continues to this day. It gave greater incentives for food production and gave those Cubans who had access to foreign exchange a way to obtain food. Some of them undoubtedly shared with their relatives who didn't have such access. It helped to diminish the shortages and probably encouraged some additional production. So that policy reform as well as the reassertion of political control helped the regime began to regain its footing and recover from the acute crisis which had marked the early 1990's.

Q: Right here.

SULLIVAN: Okay, I guess the only other thing I would add to that is in that period as well there was some liberalization toward very small private enterprise activities, small half steps by allowing people to open small restaurants or "paladares" in their homes, to rent out rooms in their houses, to work independently in small occupations like "button sewer" or driving bicycle pedicabs to take tourists around. I recall actually being quite wrong on this issue as I thought, "Wow this is an interesting opening and once people get a little bit more economic independence, they won't be as dependent on the state and it will be increasingly difficult for the state to maintain control of the population. Our political officer Bob Witajewski was more cynical and more correct. He said, "Watch, they'll start cutting this back over time and regaining control of it," and indeed the regime did. They both began taxing the relatively small private income quite heavily and imposing increasingly bureaucratic restrictions, diminishing greatly both the effect of those small changes as well as any sense of independence by the people who were beginning to earn some money of their own. Whenever the Cuban regime has had to choose between maintaining its political control and improving the economy through liberalization, the regime has come down in favor of maintaining its political control.

Okay, you tell me how you would like me to proceed. Would you like me to just keep on talking on this or…

Q: Yeah, let's talk a little about the embassy, the staff there. How did you find the Mission?

SULLIVAN: Right, right. I think everybody who went to Cuba in that period had the hope that they would be there at the time when Cuba would begin to change dramatically. We were in the old embassy building right on the Malecon. We were only occupying, I believe, three out of the six stories as we had a fairly small operation. That changed dramatically in 1994 and I will come to that, but initially we were pretty small. It was in the initial period that we got permission from the Cuban government to renovate that embassy building and that actually took a lot of effort and planning and logistical preparation in the isolated environment that was Cuba. Even though the Cuban government had initially promised us that they would not interfere in the project, they inevitably did interfere and caused all kinds of complications in completing the

renovation. We used to say that whenever bilateral relations went into a crisis, Fidel would assume the role of desk officer for the US and even small decisions on bringing in building supplies or shipping out empty freight containers would get subsumed into the political crisis.

But our staff was good and enthusiastic, even though with the exception of the ambassador's residence, we were totally dependent on the Cuban government as to which other properties we could use as our residences. Over time, we gradually improved the quality of the residences for our staff, although they were still less than what we have in the US or in other countries. There was undoubtedly a lot of monitoring of our activities, somewhat constrained by the economic crisis early on, but increasing as time went on. Morale was pretty good, it's a beautiful country, it's a beautiful city. Cubans themselves are interesting people and were much more open to talking to Americans than they had been in the past. They didn't fear the state as much as they used to. They, themselves, in many cases had resumed relations with their relatives who had gone to the U.S.; some of those relationships had been virtually broken off with what the state called "worms" who had left Cuba. But now the Cuban people were very anxious to resume relations with Americans, both because they hoped for some degree of economic support but also because they saw the world changing and the world that they had been told would be a Socialist international conquest was not going to take place. And for our own staff, their ability to have friendly relations with Cubans increased greatly. I personally and a number of our staff used to bike all over the area and have contact with many Cubans in the process. These were not political contacts, but did give me a good feel for how Cubans lived. In addition, as Cuba sought to make itself more attractive to tourism, this increased the recreational opportunities for our staff. There were downsides, of course. Housing was mostly mediocre; food shopping in dollars was initially limited to the state's "diplomercado;" and communication outside the island was difficult. So it was an interesting period. Over time, there were some openings, but some closing in as well.

In 1994, as a result of that rafter crisis, Fidel, almost simultaneous with his getting his feet back under him on the economy, also decided to call the U.S. on the contradictions of its own policy. U.S. policy on the one hand was we didn't want another Mariel mass migration that would cause problems for the U.S. internally. On the other hand, the US Coast Guard was going to rescue every rafter who made it out to the six-mile limit, often pointed to the rafters by Cuban-American pilots from the "Brothers to the Rescue" organization. In addition, US-sponsored Radio Marti broadcasts became increasingly provocative in encouraging Cubans to take to the seas. So Fidel gave one of his patented three or four hour interviews on television in which he said that Cubans were no longer going to take any efforts to prevent people from leaving.

The Friday night the Cubans decided to force the issue by ceasing to enforce control of their borders, I was personally faced with this ambivalence in Cuban policy. We had heard of the Cuban intention to stop enforcing their border controls and the State Department desk, reflecting US concern at the prospect of Cuban mass migration, asked that I express concern to the Cuban Government. I called our designated Foreign Ministry interlocutor and expressed concern that the Cuban Government measure could encourage

people to put their lives at risk. Later that night, in his three-hour interview on state television, Fidel referred to the call from SULLIVAN, said with the full Spanish pronunciation and claimed incorrectly that I had threatened Cuba. That was only one of dozens of arguments Fidel made to justify the change in Cuban policy. It is never comfortable to be called out on national television and I did decide to call off my planned bike ride in the morning, but I never did feel any public reaction to me or the US during my time in Cuba. Even the previously common ritualistic marches of protest at the US Interests Section had been put on hold. And on Saturday evening, I attended, as planned, the national day reception at the Bolivian Embassy. My diplomatic colleagues were friendly, as usual. But I remember best a well-known Foreign Ministry official approaching me and saying, "Nothing personal, just business." My "Godfather" moment.

Once Cuba stopped efforts to prevent illegal migration, the numbers opened up and there were many thousands of additional Cubans who took to the sea on rafts. The U.S. picked them up until we wound up with 30 thousand of them. We adopted an interim policy of taking them to Guantanamo and housing them in Guantanamo. But as the number grew over 30 thousand this was an increasingly untenable policy as well. The U.S. negotiated privately with the Cuban government, Peter Tarnoff, the undersecretary for political affairs, was the US negotiator and Ricardo Alarcon the Cuban negotiator and they agreed on a new migration accord with the Cuban government under which the Cuban government would once again begin to control its borders and the U.S. would be entitled to return Cubans to Cuba that we had interviewed and decided were fleeing for economic reasons rather than having a well founded fear of persecution. As well, we would grant 20 thousand Cubans per year entry into the U.S. above and beyond any number that were admitted as refugees. There had been a mutual misunderstanding of an earlier 1970's migration agreement with Cuba in which the U.S. had agreed to take up to 20 thousand a year. We interpreted the agreement to read that we would take up to 20 thousand, if that number qualified, whereas the Cubans interpreted that as a US obligation to take the full 20 thousand each year. So, in effect, we adopted the Cuban interpretation of that agreement in order to discourage continued mass migration.

The new bilateral migration agreement resulted in the need for us increasing our consular staff greatly, tripling approximately the size of our consular section and adding as well I think six INS officers in order to both give expedited refugee hearings for refugee applicants, but also eventually to grant additional numbers of people entry through humanitarian parole procedures so that we could meet the 20,000 entry quota compared to the 3,000 or so Cubans being admitted annually in immediately previous years. So the Interests Section became a much larger operation and processed over 25,000 Cuban entries per year. One new and important part of our duties became receiving the Cuban migrants who were returned by the Coast Guard to the port of Mariel and then taking their contacts in order to go visit them across the island to make sure they were not being persecuted for reasons of their having departed the island, as was specified in our new migration accord. That opened a whole new set of activities for us and allowed us a window on much of Cuba that we had not previously had, including into what Cuban life was like even in the most remote villages and most remote provinces. I remember back then in 1995, we actually began using GPS in order to find the location of these remote

places where people came from and be able to go back there several months later and visit them again. Those returnees did not find it easy to get employment, but then that had already been difficult before their flight.

Q: I guess jungle grows so fast that it obscures everything.

SULLIVAN: While the US had made no commitments on what to do with the 30,000 Cubans housed at Guantanamo, the US came under a lot of pressure particularly from the Cuban-American community in Miami and wound up taking almost all of those 30 thousand directly into the U.S. In order to issue 20 thousand entry visas at the Interests Section, we actually began having a lottery in order to reach the quota, because there weren't enough family qualified members or political refugees to come close to the agreed number of 20 thousand. So we began having a lottery with over 100,000 entrants dropping their applications in a lottery box at the Interests Section. The individuals who won that lottery had to demonstrate that they wouldn't become a public charge and weren't otherwise disqualified in order to get an immigrant visas to go to the United States. Most of them could find a relative somewhere in the US who would promise to support them so they would not become a public charge. This huge and publicly visible popularity of emigrating from Cuba was embarrassing to the Cuban regime, but they tolerated it for the most part. We began taking in about 25 thousand Cubans every year so it really changed the dynamics substantially and probably from the Cuban government perspective it helped. They had always regarded migration and even the refugee process as escape valves to take some of the most discontented off their hands.

Q: Did you and your staff have any sort of campaign of tweaking the Cuban authorities or would this have been counter productive?

SULLIVAN: Well, tweaking them mostly took place out of Washington, and note there were plenty of strong statements out of Washington. It also took place in the form of our maintaining contact with those the Cuban government regarded as dissidents and we regarded as human rights activists or opposition. We reached out in various ways through public diplomacy and information, cultivating contacts with a wide range of groups. There were very few non-state institutions, but to the degree we could find them we went looking for them and we cultivated contacts for instance with associations of scientists, even the old Masons who were mostly in their eighties; establishing contacts like that. We also did promote a certain degree of contact with let's say encouraging for instance as I recall a cultural contact between the city of New Orleans and the city authorities of Havana because there had been a shared history. There were common interests in that history, those documents and, therefore, we facilitated that contact. Now we thought this was positive both because it opened channels of communication between non-official Cubans and Americans and allowed people to talk to one another. I'd say the Cuban government was probably ambivalent about such contacts, and those with their principal responsibility for security were downright suspicious of contacts they did not control. Frequently as we would set up those activities we would get mixed signals and sometimes would even have the activity blocked by the Cuban government.

One other thing on public diplomacy, immediately after the bilateral migration accord, reflected interesting light on perspectives from the two sides. The Cuban government after the migration accord had some hope, that this would open new avenues of contact and new prospects for improved relations with the Clinton administration. My public affairs officer, a very good officer named Gene Bigler, was in touch with their television authorities. They agreed to a television interview of me that would be broadcast on Cuban television. Now I don't think I or any of my staff had ever appeared on Cuban television or radio but Gene negotiated well that they would agree to broadcast the interview in its entirety, no splicing and dicing and so on. I don't claim credit for a great interview, but one careful and precise statement that I made in that interview, when asked the predictable question about would this migration accord lead to other improvements in relations between the United States and Cuba. My response was that the United States was indeed interested in improving relations with the Cuban people and we would seek every way to have a better relationship between the American and Cuban people. That interview was broadcast and apparently it provoked the ire of Fidel or others in high places and some people in Cuban television got in trouble. Fidel was in the enviable position of not having to take any responsibility for decisions, but if in the end, he did not like the outcome, someone else would suffer the consequences. Needless, to say, we were not given any other opportunities for on-air interviews. On the other hand, the BBC correspondent in Cuba reported that I had said that the U.S. government was seeking improved relations with the Cuban government and would be anxious to have increased agreements and contacts with the Cuban government. The BBC report is what made it back to the US through the wire services. At the State Department Nick Burns, the Department spokesman and a good friend, was going to have to answer the question about what is it that the chief of the interests section said in Havana about improving relations with the Cuban government. Nick called me; I told him precisely what I had said and Nick had no problem in answering that question from the podium. But this does show the two different sides and the political sensitivities on the two sides of the Florida straits.

I should also relate an effort by the Clinton Administration in the fall of 1995 to create an opening with Cuba. The initiative unfortunately reflected the policy ambiguities of Clinton Administration Cuba policy. In the U.S. and especially in Miami, the initiative was presented as a means to open up Cuba and loosen Castro regime authority. While in Havana, I was instructed to explain to my interlocutor Ricardo Alarcon that this new initiative could result in gradually improving relations between the US and Cuban governments, provided that Cuba liberalized internally. Well the Cuban government had, by then concluded that it had no interest in liberalizing its control and was more likely to believe that our intentions were what we said in Miami; i.e. to undermine the regime. I remember vividly Alarcon's reaction, which was to say that they were not fools and recognized that the US was seeking to create vulnerabilities in the regime and that Cuba saw no benefit in the offered opening and thus was not interested. The lesson I drew from that is that we should not make something we determine to be in the US interest dependent on Cuban government action, since their interests are rarely the same.

Q: How much at this time did you feel that Castro was calling all the shots?

SULLIVAN: I would say particularly once he reasserted himself he was calling most of the shots and with respect to the United States whenever things reached a crisis stage or anything that was a major issue he rapidly became the desk officer for the United States. That exemplified itself in certainly the migration crisis, the rafter crisis, his deciding to take, in effect, to provoke the United States on this and call us on the contradictions on our policy. It also, I think, you could see it even in little things like the refurbishment of our embassy whereas previously it had been handled at relatively low levels and they probably did get high level sign offs on it when they gave us assurances that there wouldn't be any interference. But whenever there would be a crisis you could see that this had now reached high levels and Fidel would become the desk officer and whether or not we got the next set of supplies to do the next stage of the refurbishment or whether we got permission to ship out the containers from the previous shipment depended on very high level approval and it just didn't budget because he was using it as an instrument of leverage against us. He was in overall charge and with respect to the United States sometimes that got down to the very minute levels of detail when he became the "de facto" desk officer.

Q: Well did we have any leverage on the Cubans?

SULLIVAN: Well we had the ultimate leverage, if we were willing to improve the broader relationship. The Cubans wanted that very much but they wanted to do it in a way that did not diminish the Communist Party's and Fidel's control of the island and its people. The Clinton Administration wasn't prepared to enter those negotiations. On more discrete issues, there were things, such as narcotics, on which we could have cooperated more. But there I would say that the Administration's concerns about the Miami community trumped in most cases any willingness to expand official contacts much beyond regular meetings on migration which had begun with the migration accord. So it really was a little dance that never got very far and at the end of the day the Cubans, I think, concluded that this was not going to work in their advantage and they became increasingly more interested in doing everything they could to assert their domestic control and not prepared to do anything in the interest of having an improved relationship with the United States that would diminish their internal control.

Q: Well speaking of our control and people I've interviewed who dealt with Cuban affairs in an earlier period talked about Fidel's almost systematically eliminating in one way or another of any possible rivals. Did you feel, I mean was there at all another group?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I wouldn't call it a group but there were individuals whom he might have perceived as potential rivals. Probably the number one example in my time there was a young Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina who had been a Communist youth leader which in Cuba typically means right up until the age of about 35 or 36, so youth is defined loosely. Robaina had been a university student leader and then later a youth leader and shortly after that, probably only in his mid to late 30s became foreign minister. He was flashy; he dressed a little bit like a rock star. I remember he took a number of

diplomats, including myself, on a trip to the Isle of Youth. We did the usual things visiting the island. Then at one point he walked down the main street in the capital and as he walked down the street with a number of us accompanying him, a crowd of some dozens gathered along the side of the street. They recognized him and would wave to him or come up and greet him and shake his hand. In my own mind I said this is not going to last, this is not going to be welcomed by Fidel. I'm not saying that one incident was it but his readiness to cultivate a public image was not welcome. The only one who really was able to maintain a public image was Fidel himself; he didn't want anyone else…

Q: What happened to the gentleman?

SULLIVAN: He lost his job maybe a year later with no public explanation and a few rumors of corruption. Typically what happens to people these days is they aren't executed, they aren't put up against the wall, they are put into, as the Cubans call it, into "pajamas" so that they are no longer seen and when you ask a Cuban official where such an individual is, they'd say well can't see him he is in pajamas. That was it, you know, he was invisible. That happened more recently with Carlos Lage, who for some years was the economic minister and later vice prime minister up until about a year ago. He was, I would say, much more careful than Robaina. He was low profile, he drove his own Lada around; he didn't have a big public escort. He was not looking for public glory. But even then, about a year ago, he was deposed. He had probably become too prominent and with all the agitation at that point about whether Cuba was finally going to reform with Raul, a more pragmatic figure in charge rather than Fidel, and people knowing that Lage had originally been promoted by Raul, speculation increased about whether Lage might be a potential successor to the Castro's. But certainly the word successor is not a word that you want to have to describe you if you expect to stay in a permanent position in Cuba.

Q: Was Raul seen, at the time you were doing this, as certainly I don't want to say the great white hope but as maybe a possible opening of something happened or…?

SULLIVAN: I think the little story I told earlier about he and army generals going to Fidel, I think, reflected the image that he had. He tended to promote relatively pragmatic economists, give then a little bit of space; he was more pragmatic, less theological than Fidel, even though he had been a Communist well before Fidel became a Communist. He also took a pretty low profile role for somebody who was minister of defense and already then the designated public successor to Fidel. He gave his ritual speeches, he wasn't very charismatic. He had little contact with foreigners, or at least with Westerners and deliberately stayed in the shadow of his brother. I think the assessment of him probably was correct that he is somewhat more pragmatic than Fidel. He is no more willing than Fidel to cede Communist Party and Castro control over the island but he is more willing to adopt pragmatic and economic policies and do things that make more economic sense and more interested in giving Cubans a better life so long as it doesn't endanger the political control.

Q: One of the things that happened in Eastern Europe and even in the Soviet Union towards the end was the almost complete disappearance of faith in Marxism as it was taught.

SULLIVAN: Right.

Q: Was any of that happening in Cuba?

SULLIVAN: Well I would say among the great public, it was happening almost universally. The analogy I used to use in my time there that say if you date this to the mid-'90s I think it was broadly accurate. Almost everybody over 35 who had remained in Cuba (because many had the opportunity to leave and had not taken it), had at one point viewed Fidel as their father. He was their father figure and maybe their grandfather figure now. In any case, that generation of now 50 plus had a special feeling towards him, even if they wished their father would retire and let them be normal people in a normal country. I think that still continues for the most part among that generation, but that generation's faith in Marxism had largely disappeared except for the very small coterie, the thousands of people in the higher levels of the bureaucracy, Marxism and socialist internationalism had largely disappeared from their vocabulary; it didn't work for them. I met many, many Cubans some of them had volunteered to fight in Angola on behalf of what was then the Cuban ministry of interior which was running that show. One fellow said to me, "I wasted my life, I put my life on the line for something that was an illusion." In the under 35 generation, they had not really made an active choice for Fidel or for the revolution or Marxism, but had grown up in the system without ever really having an alternative. I would say the vast majority in that group either wanted to leave the island or they wanted a job where they could earn dollars being a busboy or chamber maid in a tourist hotel where they could make some dollars and earn some money. Even the sons and daughters of the Cuban security elite were anxious to get jobs in tourism where they could secure a bit of foreign exchange. So, there was wide spread disillusionment with ideology per se, with the exception of the fairly narrow circles of power.

Q: What about the Cuban equivalent of the secret police or the KGB types? Were they harassing you all much or not?

SULLIVAN: I would say in the beginning, constrained by the economic problems that affected the whole island, they didn't have as many resources to follow us. But as time went on, and probably again marked fairly accurately in the summer of '94 when Fidel decided that he needed to reoccupy the streets, priority resources began to be devoted to the security services and they had more resources to follow us, to interfere with us. They were not as nasty as they had been sometimes in the past. In some past years there had been incidents of defecating in people's apartments just to send a message that they had been there and making sure you knew they had been there and gone through your stuff. It wasn't as much flagrant nastiness but it was there and to the degree that we were active with the opposition and with the human rights activists they were particularly on us about those activities. We had a human rights officer who at one stage I remember she was regularly used to being followed in her car going down Fifth Avenue. On one occasion,

she had just made it through a traffic light. The security services' car behind her went through the red light and got hit from the side and flipped over. Robin Meyer stopped her car and went back and found the security officer following her extremely embarrassed, but not seriously injured. Certainly she was very used to being followed and by 1996, they became increasingly aggressive. When we get to '96 I'll tell you just how aggressive.

Q: Today is December 2, 2010.

SULLIVAN: I thought I should elaborate on the people-to-people exchanges that I mentioned earlier and which were part of Clinton Administration policy toward Cuba, as they are part of Obama Administration policy today. I believed in these exchanges strongly, not because I thought they would change the Cuban regime, but because the Cuban and American people are destined to live 90 miles apart and it was and is important to have our two people know each other and each other's cultures. This is an enduring reality long after the Castro regime is a footnote in history. The other part of my belief in the value of people-to-people exchanges is my skepticism of the argument that the relatively small proceeds which the Cuban government gains from such exchanges will somehow be the difference in preventing the Castro regime from falling.

One area in which we were more open was in allowing Cuban and American musicians to travel more freely. Chucho Valdes, a famous Cuban jazz pianist, who had not been able to travel to the US since the 1970's, received a visa to visit the US, and I remember him saying that he did not sleep in New York because he did not want to miss one minute of opportunity to listen to and absorb American jazz. I'll give some detail on how obstacles on both sides complicated even cultural exchanges. Upon his return, Chucho came to my house and asked if we could bring American jazz pianist Billy Taylor, a Kennedy Center institution, to give jazz instruction and participate in the Havana Jazz Festival. Because of the resistance from Cuban-Americans in Congress to spending any US government funds on such an exchange, the US had to secure private funding to sponsor the cultural exchange, but we did so and Billy Taylor agreed to come and participate. In the meantime, Chucho Valdes, while he was in the U.S. had recruited two very good musicians Roy Hargrove and Steve Coleman to come with their groups and play and they did come. Billy Taylor's wife had a fall and he was not able to come but the cultural exchange went well, notwithstanding, and Roy Hargrove wound up recording a Cuban-themed album together with Chucho Valdes. The other side of complications with cultural exchanges was demonstrated by the Cuban government, probably because Valdez had gotten out in front of them in coming to my house asking for our assistance in bringing Billy Taylor to the Havana Jazz Festival. The Cuban government punished Chucho by removing him as the director of the Havana Jazz Festival, even though he continued to be the leading Cuban musician at the festival. Valdez was sort of banished for awhile. When he was invited to our July 4 reception, my last in country, Chucho waited until all the Cuban government watchers had left and came by about 10:30 at night just to say goodbye. It was difficult for both sides, with constraints and hardliners who resisted even cultural exchanges.

Q: Did you sometimes feel you were a shuttle cock caught between literally both sides on this?

SULLIVAN: Sure, absolutely. The most troubling incident of my whole tour in Cuba is even a better example of that. I remember the date of February 24, 1996. The group called itself Brothers to the Rescue, small aircraft pilots, typically using Cessna's. They had initially founded themselves to find Cuban rafters out in the sea who could then be picked by the Coast Guard and brought to the United States. Well after the migration agreement of 1994, that mission had largely evaporated and yet this group wished to continue being active. It became public later that the organization had been infiltrated by one Cuban who had come to the U.S. as a refugee but was still working for the Cuban government. In any case, one day in late January or early February, rather than just patrolling the island around the seas to see if there were any Cubans possibly out there that needed to be rescued, since there were very few these days, as the Cuban government was enforcing its borders again, one or two Cessna pilots flew over Havana and dropped leaflets on Havana. This was considered a terrific act and a great act of heroism on the part of these people by some circles in Miami.

Well, in the following weeks the Cuban government got itself increasingly exercised about this. They went to the State Department to indicate how irate and concerned they were about it and they called me in to tell me the same thing. Now I think there were talks held with this organization and with Miami activists to try to persuade these people not to take chances and not to provoke. We also urged the Cuban government in Havana and in Washington not to overreact. That withstanding I think the U.S. message was probably tempered on both sides because the US was in the middle and seeking to not alienate the Miami community. When Brothers to the Rescue flew again February 24 the Cuban air force was prepared with information from their infiltrator and they followed the Cessna's and shot down two of those Cessna planes, killing several of the individuals involved. This caused great uproar in the US and internationally and led to the then US representative to the UN Madeline Albright quoting from the Cuban pilot who had been monitored by us to have yelled out "cojones", balls, that he was going to shoot this guy down. She used that tape, in effect, to dismiss the Cuban claim at the United Nations that they either had no responsibility or that the act had occurred inside Cuba, but we had documentation that they had deliberately shot down unarmed small planes.

Q: Well in a way somebody would try that over Washington today they sure as hell would get shot down.

SULLIVAN: True, true. These were Cessna's but they were still provocations and yet because the United States was sort of being equally careful about Miami in ways that we were anxious that no clash occur, but were not willing to act in strong ways to prevent these people from flying. Simultaneously with that and on the same day, the Cuban government conducted a major sweep on human rights activists and dissidents on the island rounding up many of them and putting them in jail. There were many such arrests over the years, but this was the first large-scale crackdown in a number of years. So I

think it coincided with a Cuban decision to crack down in general on internal and external threats as they saw them.

I guess one of the interesting side lights of this was a conversation on that Saturday with the individual in the Foreign Ministry charged with U.S. affairs. There was an interesting dialogue, at first, as the Cubans were trying to measure how we were going to deal with this. Were we going to deal with it as an unfortunate incident, but not seek to hold the Cuban government totally responsible? I, of course, acting on instructions from Washington, made it clear that we knew they were totally responsible and we would make it clear to everybody that the Cuban government had made a deliberate decision to use its air force jets to shoot down unarmed small aircraft. At a certain point, the Cuban tone changed radically and I could feel basically Fidel Castro assuming full control again of the U.S. desk, as he did whenever a crisis arose and the Cuban message sharpened greatly. Basically it was saying the hell with you, you are not getting any apologies, we are not going to be expressing regrets, they had it coming, you should have known better and that was it.

At that point relations took a nose dive and the Clinton administration was looking at means to retaliate. It wound up dropping its opposition to the Helms-Burton legislation, suspending all charter flights into Cuba for at least a number of months, and then, disastrously, in my view, limiting the travel of Cuban diplomats in Washington, notwithstanding our advice that this will just give the Cuban government a great excuse to do the same things to the US Interests Section. And that indeed was what happened. I would say from that point on, this led to a progressive spiral downward in relations.

Q: Were you getting good reports on what is almost a foreign power and that is the Miami Cubans. One, they were clearly violating international law by what they were doing. Were they trying to provoke this? It doesn't sound like they were coming out ahead on it.

SULLIVAN: I don't think that they planned their own deaths. That is certainly more than they wished, but certainly to be provocative and aggressive in the face of the Cuban authorities, was certainly an attractive position in Miami. As I mentioned before, Cuban intelligence had, in fact, infiltrated a pilot within that group who I'm sure was able to tell them precisely when they would be traveling and that infiltrator departed Miami on that Saturday for the Bahamas and subsequently for Cuba. He abandoned the "temporary" wife that he had taken in Florida, came back to Cuba and reintegrated with the regime. So the Cubans knew what was coming, perhaps even more than American authorities..

As far as the Miami-Cubans, I think Washington, the Department did have direct contact with them. Washington was in very frequent contact with several elements within the community, and I believe there was a prior contact with his Brothers to the Rescue operation to seek to dissuade them, but I don't think the message was as strong as it might have been.

Q: What happened now? Was the Coast Guard still at this point intercepting people and bringing them back?

SULLIVAN: Yes and they continued to. I think there may have been a stall for some weeks or even a month but eventually those returns continued. We continued to be able to travel out to visit the people who were returned. The travel of our own interest section staff throughout the island was constrained, made more difficult; we had to provide advance notification although at that point it was only to provide advance notification and didn't require us to wait for approval. Subsequently, I think some years after I left, the Cubans imposed the requirement that people wait until that approval came through, and as used to happen in Moscow, that approval never came through. So typically Interests Section staff could not travel any longer around the island. Eventually that restriction became to confine American staff to the city limits of Havana, which was extremely restrictive.

Q: What did this do to the morale of your group there?

SULLIVAN: Well it made it more difficult. The period that I was there because I left in the summer of '96, people were still able to travel but with the uncertainty of whether the authorities might stop them from traveling. The hostility of the Cuban government was greater and particularly our human rights officer had to deal with the incident I described earlier when she was being followed so closely that she made it through a red light but her Cuban follow car didn't and wound up getting broadsided and flipped over. The agent who was following her was very upset when she came back to check on him. But still there were other instances of unpleasantness too, but it was not as bad as in the '80s. Certainly it was more difficult for everybody and there was pretty significant tension. The ability to have relationships with private Cubans was also inhibited, as the regime began putting pressure on Cubans to shun us. We were also increasingly focused on those human rights activists who had been arrested or harassed, which attention the Cuban government detested.

Q: In our going out and checking on people and all what about the area near Guantanamo? Was that pretty much off limits for everyone?

SULLIVAN: No, we could go there. I mean there were very few instances of people penetrating the base in order to seek asylum and most of the people I would say the majority of the people who fled the island were from either Havana or from the provinces along the northern seafront where they would seek to cross the Florida straits to the US or the Bahamas. But I visited the province of Guantanamo one time myself and my observation certainly was that while the central government showed its great hostility with respect to our presence in Guantanamo Bay, the local residents in many cases, particularly the older ones, remembered when relations were pretty amicable with the base on the other side. Some Cubans continued to work at the American base for many years, although those numbers were diminishing; they were being replaced by Jamaicans over time because the Cubans had begun to put up barriers to our hiring new Cubans to work there.

The only way I was able to get to the US base at Guantanamo was flying on one occasion from Miami basically around the island without any overflight of Cuban territory on a Navy plane and then visiting I believe for two days, talking to American officials there and then flying back out the same way. So the Guantanamo Base was totally separated from Cuba and from us in Havana. One interesting thing that occurred in that time was that the U.S. military and our Coast Guard and narcotics authorities all had some interest in having an improved relationship with the Cuban government to pursue their particular interests. In the military side it was first and foremost that relations along the base be amicable and that there be no incidents of the sort that occurred in that famous Jack Nicholson movie …

Q: A Few Good Men, I think?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Yes, so the U.S. changed base commanders about every six months. And each time that they changed the command there would be a high-level visit typically from CINCLANT, which was the responsible regional command to be present and have a few words with the Cuban regional military authorities. So the Cubans certainly welcomed this and liked the idea that somehow they might be able to have an improved military-to military relationship. The U.S. military, at least for that narrow purpose and probably in some instances even hoping for a little bit more, was also interested in that. One CINCLANT commander who had great aspirations, Jack Sheehan, got a little bit too close and his video-taped encounter with the Cuban general, calling him "Mi General", My General, was used against him in the Cuban community in Miami and perhaps damaged his prospects to rise to even greater heights within the US military.

Q: Well did life within Havana for you change at all as time went on?

SULLIVAN: Well it changed in the sense that certainly after February '96 the Cuban government began to be more aggressive with its own population and be more aggressive and less flexible with us in the interest section. People would get harassed, mostly in minor ways but would be harassed. I think the Cuban people, for the most part, were still interested in having contact with us. They increasingly had found their lost relatives in the U.S. and many of them had the ambition to get there themselves. Others saw the U.S. as their protector in their pursuit of human rights or greater political openness so we still had, I think, pretty good access to the Cuban people. Our contacts with the government were increasingly stiff and formal with no real aspiration on either side that that relationship would improve in any near term.

Q: Where were they getting their oil?

SULLIVAN: At that point on the open market largely. There was plenty of oil out there on the open market, but they were paying top dollar price for it as opposed to the Soviet subsidy, which had subsidized an enormous portion of the cost for them, to the degree

that they were notorious wasters of petroleum because it basically came free. But the high cost of petroleum was an enormous constraint on Cuba and that is why they had set up this system of trying to get more dollars by means of remittances, through dollar stores, through more tourists coming into the island but it was certainly a far tougher existence than it had been in the years of reportedly calculated up to $5 billion a year Soviet subsidy.

It was in that period that Fidel received with some ceremony Venezuelan Colonel Hugo Chavez, who had just been released from prison where he had served time for an attempted military coup. Fidel and the Cubans were certainly placing their bets on a future sugar daddy. It certainly seemed a long shot at the time, but has resulted in a new source of subsidized petroleum for Cuba.

Q: I can't remember if there'd been any progress in getting medicine and stuff like that in?

SULLIVAN: Yeas we did and I think I may have covered that we did almost from the beginning of my time there in '93-'94 had agreed to license shipments into Cuba by, in effect, the Catholic Church of the United States. These were shipments of medicine that they would go to CARITAS, the Cuban Catholic organization which would in turn distribute it to Cuban hospitals and also monitor it to make sure the state didn't abuse or sell it. CARITAS had Catholic doctors or nurses assure them and so the US would allow medical supply donations to continue. We had not yet opened up as yet to sales of medicines and of food to the Cuban government in that period. In my farewell cable, I recommended that we relax the embargo to permit sales of medicine and food. This was one element of the embargo that had very little justification, since the Cubans would still have to come up with the cash in order to purchase from the US. Eventually the Clinton administration did, I believe in about 1999, end the embargo on medicine and food.

Q: I got the impression, this is just from reading the papers, that the Helms-Burton Act was mainly aimed at Canadian outfits or was this effective or was it hitting anybody particularly hard?

SULLIVAN: You are right that one of the main provisions in it called for any individual or corporation utilizing expropriated American property to be blacklisted and face certain potential risks in doing business in the United States. There was at least one large Canadian company, Sherritt, that was running the old American nickel mining operation in Moa in the northeast that became one of the most publicized cases. The broad provision of extraterritorial punishment though was so unusual that it produced great anxiety particularly in the European Union and led to every US Administration, including the Bush II Administration, waiving the penalties as applied to third country individuals and corporations. But where this came from was the mistaken belief that the Castro regime was about to fall and all that was necessary was one last twist and cutting off one last source of foreign exchange in order for that regime to fall. I actually had a conversation just as I left Cuba with the responsible individuals in Congress, including Congressman Dan Burton, the House sponsor of this legislation. I remember him looking

intently at me and asking me, "Now that this legislation has passed, is this going to topple the regime?" I said, "With all due respect, Congressman, no it is not." He replied, "Well you just tell me what else we need to do and we'll do that and we'll bring them down." It was almost an ideological view that US action could produce the desired results.

Q: You left there in '96, is that it?

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Did you feel because you hadn't brought down the Castro regime that you were some how tainted or not?

SULLIVAN: I don't think so. Everybody who goes in there has the hope that they will be there when change comes. In some people's cases their parents or their grandparents had honeymooned in Cuba and they could come back or this could be a much more open place. But I think I gradually became aware that that wasn't going to happen, but I don't think I was held personally responsible by many except perhaps by Congressman Dan Burton.. I had also maintained contact with was the Cuban-American members of Congress, maybe once a year or so. I'd go call on them to hear them out and give them my honest views of what was going on. I had some familiarity with them and tried to get them to understand as well that they should not have excessive expectations. Underneath their public pronouncements in many cases, I think they recognized that this was not likely to happen in the near term and the administration had had every reason to have similarly modest expectations.

I would give some credit to the Clinton administration for opening increased people-to-people exchanges, and then even after the aircraft shoot down, for maintaining the increased exchanges, the people-to-people contacts, etc., which really was a long-term policy rather than a short-term policy. No one should expect that anything you can do in the short-term is going to change Cuba. But people who are 90 miles away will be our neighbors forever and we should do what we can to improve that people-to-people contacts and relationships.

Q: I can't think of the whole situation over the boy refugee; that was after your time?

SULLIVAN: The boy refugee, Elian Gonzalez? Oh the young boy, that was actually in 2000, four years after I left and it probably did affect Gore's vote in the 2000 election.

Q: We may have covered these earlier on but what about foreign leaders? I've been interviewing Jim Cason who's said, "Foreign leaders would come and fall under the spell of Castro, the mystique of Castro." Did you see much of that particularly as time went on when you were there?

SULLIVAN: Well, I guess probably the most interesting case were the Spaniards because certainly Fidel is and was very charismatic. Congressmen or other prominent Americans, who came and got the six hour treatment beginning at 1 a.m., usually left under some sort

of a spell that this guy was at least charming and a great raconteur. The Spaniards, of course, had a special case; Cuba was their last and favorite colony until 1898 and they had a certain degree of resentment against the United States for intervening on behalf of Cuban independence. So the Spaniards made a major effort to improve the relationship and to convince the European Union to open up to Cuba. In fact, their foreign minister came to Cuba and made a major public effort. That, as well as a number of other initiatives, were crushed in part by the February 24 shoot down of the aircraft. Even people who would have thought the pilots were foolhardy and the U.S. government should have done more to prevent it could not forgive the Cubans sending out their air force MIG's to shoot down unarmed Cessna's and many of those initiatives for openings went under.

Fidel is always very clever so at the same time some relationships were taking a hit he was always cultivating others. I recall that in the period after Hugo Chavez had attempted a coup and spent some time in jail, he was received in Havana airport with Fidel going out to receive him at the airport like a head of state, clearly building a relationship that paid off a few years later.

Q: So where did you go when you left in '96?

SULLIVAN: I came back to Washington and I did a year in something called the Special Coordinator for Haiti in late August, 1996. I had some hope that my time in Cuba would have purified me to have an ambassadorial nomination but the administration was not ready to push me forward as yet. Strobe Talbot, the deputy secretary, had been taking a very strong interest in Haiti, particularly after the U.S. had sent in troops to restore Aristide. This had become quite a controversial issue, and Strobe, because he was close to President Clinton and had once been his roommate, was a particular focus of the Congressional criticism as a proxy for criticizing the President. It was an interesting period and the deputy secretary had a lot of interest in the issue, as did some people in the White House, including NSC Adviser Sandy Berger. At the beginning of my year there, the issue was very hot politically in a presidential election year. Republicans had warned against inserting U.S. troops both because some predicted many would return in body bags, which did not happen, but also because they thought that Aristide was not worthy of restoration. So in 1996, many Republicans were going to be very hard on the administration certainly up until the election and perhaps after. Strobe Talbot, who had faced heavy congressional pressure while testifying earlier, clearly preferred not to testify at future hearings. So in hearings in the fall of 1996, our Ambassador to Haiti Bill Swing and I were sent up to testify.

Q: So you were sort of designated fall guy?

SULLIVAN: It certainly was a no win situation. I remember Florida Congressman Porter Goss, who had been very reasonable in private meetings with me, asking me questions at public testimony that would have required revealing classified information in open session to respond well. And Republican members of Congress certainly were harshly critical of the Administration during that hearing.

Q: Yeah. What was your personal opinion of Aristide that you developed as you got into this?

SULLIVAN: By then he had given up the presidency. He had been persuaded by the US not to change the constitution to allow him to run for another term. Yet his successor, President Rene Preval, who served again as president of Haiti until recently, was at that point very much beholden to Aristide and reluctant to do very much without Aristide's blessing. I only met Aristide on one occasion and thought he was very intelligent and capable, but we knew he had utilized violence for his own political ends an had been personally corrupt. But Aristide was very charismatic and extremely popular with the poorest sector of the Haitian population. Aristide also had his following in the United States as well as internationally, so it was a complicated situation and one that we were working principally with the current elected president of Haiti Preval, while conscious of Aristide's influence behind the scenes.

Q: Where was Aristide at the time? Was he still in Haiti?

SULLIVAN: Yes, he was living in Port-au-Prince. I remember that my one meeting with him was while accompanying former NSC Adviser Tony Lake, who had a longstanding relationship with Aristide. We met with Preval and then later went over to meet Aristide. I don't remember the substance of the conversation, but the purpose was to seek Aristide's cooperation in allowing Preval to do those things we felt necessary to address political and economic crises.

Q: Was the Black Caucus involved in this whole business?

SULLIVAN: Yes they were and I once accompanied a fairly large delegation from the black caucus, which included Judge Conyers of Michigan, William Jefferson of Louisiana, Robert Scott of Virginia, accompanied by Congressman Bill Delahunt of Massachusetts. Judge Conyers from Detroit was probably the most prominent and most adamant of greatly increased US assistance to Haiti; he talked of a Marshall Plan for Haiti. Many of his colleagues recognized that that was not going to happen and were looking for more realistic solutions. In my position, I used to go see the Black Caucus in Washington fairly frequently, as well. They had been strong advocates of the US intervention to restore Aristide to power and were in 1996-97 supporters of the Administration on Haiti. There were a few Republicans, including Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio, who were advocating compromise between the Congress and the Administration on Haiti. But many Republicans were interested, at least until after the November presidential elections, in using Haiti as a bludgeon against the administration.

Indeed in one of the Presidential or Vice Presidential debates, the Republican candidate raised a criticism of Administration policy in Haiti. The issue never took off, as, in my view, most Americans had no interest in Haiti at that stage, except perhaps for African-Americans who had overwhelmingly supported US intervention.

Q: You were pretty much put into the furnace.

SULLIVAN: That's right. Haiti I would be the first one to say that Haiti is a very messy environment with very little going for it and it frustrates you every day. You come into a Haiti job with aspirations that things can go better but in Haiti, they usually don't. I recall in my first month on the job, there were several killings perpetrated by the presidential guard and so that became a major issue and needed to be addressed. Things are always complicated in Haiti.

On Haiti as I mentioned the worst part of the job was that period prior to the presidential elections of November 1996 when the Republican Party was bound and determined to make the case that President Clinton's decision to send American troops into Haiti was a wrong one, that Aristide should not have been restored and what was left was a mess. I had gone through a number of Congressional testimonies and other difficult meetings. But, once that election, of course, was over I would say most interest was lost; there was no remaining US political issue there, but there were a few Congressmen and, most notably staff, who retained interest.

Some Congress people, notably Senator Mike DeWine of Ohio had a very positive interest in helping to resolve what is almost a perpetual impasse in Haiti and in finding ways for the United States to provide effective help. Some of the staffers, I would say not so much. But there was one staffer who later emerged again as a foreign policy adviser in the McCain presidential campaign, Randy Scheunemann. At that point I think Scheunemann was working for Senate Republican leader Dole. So basically his pitch to the Congressional affairs office of the State Department and to me was that most Republican's wanted to get this issue off our plate and come to some sort of agreement. So I was consulting with Strobe Talbot, the deputy secretary of State and we agreed that we also wanted to get it done and yes we could make some agreements with the Congress to reach a bipartisan compromise.

So I was the designated sacrificial lamb and sent up to the Congress with a delegation of people from AID and State in December, 1996 for a meeting with a large group of Congressional staff, mostly Republicans but also Democratic staff. We spent, I recall, four hours that first day with me handling many questions and other people handling some but many of the questions were the impossible to answer questions of the "when did you stop beating your wife" variety. But we did the best we could and were being told that this would eventually bring good results. So, we did that for four hours and afterwards Scheunemann, the intermediary in this process told us that some of these people still want more so can you come back tomorrow. So as I recall, I went back the next day and met with the only staffers who showed up, Republicans, for a two-hour replay. Then Scheunemann called that afternoon to say, "Well there was one Senate appropriations staffer who couldn't make so he wants to see you tomorrow." So again up there and I would say 45 minutes of getting beaten around and then eventually we got the deal done. I recall it was just before Christmas and I recall as I am flying up to Boston a day or so later saying to myself, "Gee, that wasn't so bad, I only got beaten up for an hour today."

Q: Oh God.

SULLIVAN: Then while in Boston over Christmas I said, these are my words, "I need a new life, this is not a good day when you feel good about only getting beaten up for an hour." So just after the New Year, when David Welch, the DAS in NEA approached me to ask if I would I be interested in taking on the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, I took about five seconds to think and said, "Sure, getting beaten up by Israeli, Lebanese and Syrians sounds a lot more fun than being beaten up by Congressmen and Congressional staffers for hours on end."

Q: Well in this getting beaten up did you feel that the Congress…that you were getting beaten up on both sides?

SULLIVAN: No, no at that point the Democrats were basically supportive of the Clinton administration, anxious to have assistance resumed, the Black Caucus in particular was a strong supporter of assistance to Haiti so the critique was overwhelmingly by Republicans. Democrats spoke up only occasionally at that first meeting, but they really didn't have an interest in going to six hours of meetings on Haiti. I'll concede that some staffers probably were sincere in their opposition to the U.S. continuing in what they thought a feckless effort to resolve Haitian problems. But looking at Haiti for in the longer term, it was not in our interest to let Haiti wallow. Did the US wish to neglect Haiti in such a way the result would be an almost inevitable mass migration to the U.S.? I think most members of Congress probably would have said they want this resolved. And at the end of the day that's probably why they were willing to make a bipartisan accord to continue assistance dependent on certain conditions. Some of the conditions could be delivered on and others not, so this made the congressional engagement continuous and made for a tough job.

So I was ready to leave when David Welch asked if I would be interested in Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group and I became co-chair of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group in about July of 1997 for about a year until I was selected as Ambassador to Angola.

Q: Well Joe it looks like you went from success to success. You settled Cuba, settled Haiti and now we will be talking how you made peace in the Middle East.

SULLIVAN: Yes, it is unbelievable.

Q: Well the nice thing about it is as career opportunities these things don't get solved.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: Then you are off to the peace and tranquility of the Middle East.

SULLIVAN: Right, exactly.

Q: I can't remember had you served there before?

SULLIVAN: I served four years in Israel in the mid-eighties and so this return to the Middle East was as co-chairman of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group it was called.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: From approximately July of 1997 until approximately May of 1998. There had been one prior American co-chair, David Greenlee, who had had it for the first year and technically we ended up swapping jobs. He came back to Haiti to be the Haiti special coordinator, while I went out there and did the co-chairman of this monitoring group.

Q: Was he Bolivia?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, he's done…

Q: I think about four tours in Bolivia.

SULLIVAN: Yes, most recently as Ambassador to Bolivia.

Q: Okay, what was the status of the Middle East Arab-Israeli situation when you got there in May or June of '97?

SULLIVAN: Okay, when I got there, Netanyahu was prime minister. There were peace American process efforts underway with Dennis Ross, the special negotiator, and we used to meet periodically. When I would be back in Washington I would consult with Dennis and give him a briefing on what we had been doing on our part. His focus, of course, was overwhelmingly the core countries and only occasionally focused on Lebanon but was anxious that the situation not flare up again. The agreement on the monitoring group had actually been reached prior to Netanyahu becoming Prime Minister. The agreement in April of 1996 in the course of what had been called the Grapes of Wrath Operation by the Israeli government into South Lebanon was in retribution for missiles fired into Northern Israel. In the course of the operation, the Israelis had launched shells which wound hitting Palestinian refugees taking shelter in the shadow of a UN camp in Q-A-N-A and resulted in the death of I believe a hundred people. The Palestinians were from refugee camps nearby and had clustered around the U.N. compound in hopes of avoiding getting hit in what was an ongoing series of battles between Israeli and Lebanese forces, Hezbollah really. The incident created an international furor.

Secretary Christopher had gone out and negotiated an agreement with all sides and that resulted in a ceasefire agreement/understanding in April of '96. The understanding provided for establishing the monitoring group with the participation of the Syrians, the Lebanese and the Israeli's. This Israeli's and the Lebanese were the signatory parties to the agreement but the Syrians were also going to be present in the monitoring group. The

French had sort of pushed their way into being co-chair and actually I must say that the French were very careful in choosing their representatives as people who got along with Americans. The French representatives were reasonable diplomats but the French always had a certain interest in protecting the Lebanese government. That said, the French and the US found ways to work together.

Q: Did you deal with both the Arab side and the Israeli side?

SULLIVAN: Yes, and how the process was set up, I think my first trip out I accompanied David Greenlee in his last session. It was virtually weekly but there was always a complaint by one side or the other that the other side had violated the understanding. Most often the Lebanese side would complain that the Israelis had violated the understanding by shelling near a civilian village and the Israelis would occasionally complain as well that there had been a firing that had gone into northern Israel. The actual attacks on the Lebanese side were carried out by Hezbollah. So we would meet virtually every week to deal with the one or several complaints. Often, if there was one complaint, the other side would file its complaint in effect in response. We would have to reach an understanding among all the sides in the course of however long it took. Sometimes it would take as short as ten or twelve hours and sometimes it would take four or five days. It was not predictable and it didn't always correlate to the seriousness of the incident. In some ways, I think the Lebanese were interested in using the mechanism to demonstrate that the Lebanese government and the Lebanese army, that was the lead representative in the room, was taking care of the civilian population in the area and they would sometimes hold on to a point a very long time, even though it was a relatively minor incident that didn't result in any casualties. Some portion of this also reflected Lebanese politics vis-à-vis Hezbollah.

The Israelis, of course, had an overall view that if they fired at a target, it was because they had received fire from that target and that in most cases the villages that were being complained about had long been abandoned and the houses therein were being used as shields by the people firing at them. It was a weekly enterprise, sometimes relatively easily resolved and other times not very easily. Sometimes, we would think that there never would be the required agreement among the parties. In at least one case, the conflict escalated to the degree that there was indeed firing into Israel with several katyushas launched into Israel and had some very substantial action by Israel inside south Lebanon.

At the end of the day, I would conclude that both sides had at that point an interest in maintaining the accord; both of them got something out of it. The Lebanese had at that point been able to avoid major Israeli operations within south Lebanon for several years, although the Israelis continued to support the south Lebanese army which was their proxy Lebanese force in the region, comprised mostly of Christians. The Israelis could conclude that they had largely avoided katyusha firing into northern Israel. So although both sides complained mightily that the other side was being provocative and not respecting the accord, at the end of the day they wanted to reach some understanding. Our final phrase at the end of every meeting would be that both sides would commit to full respect for the

understanding in the future, at least until the next time. Because the agreement of both sides was required in the final statement, only rarely was there clear identification of one side or the other for having violated the understanding in those communiqué's. One might find shading in one or another direction that would indicate that, but not direct sharp language because then both sides would not be able to agree to on a communiqué.

I think it did set the tone when relatively shortly after that when Ehud Barak came to power as the Israeli prime minister, he decided to withdraw all troops withdraw support for the south Lebanese army and end the Israeli effort to maintain a security zone inside South Lebanon. It was perhaps in one sense a conclusion after the experience with the understandings that it wasn't necessary to have proxy forces in the region and that they could accomplish their objectives in other ways. But, the major clash with Hezbollah several years ago demonstrated the risks of not having a proxy South Lebanese army there to protect their interests. The small U.S. and French delegations were based in Cyprus, a neutral location. We would travel to a UNIFIL Headquarters in south Lebanon in a UN facility to have the meetings. But I did travel on two occasions to Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to have discussions with the governments. Of course, predictable things were said, but the most memorable discussion to me was the statement by the Lebanese army Commander that the Lebanese Army was anxious to resume control of all parts of Lebanon and would deploy to the border if the Israelis were to withdraw their support for the south Lebanese army. Despite his words, this remained a question and when Israel withdrew its support for the South Lebanese army, Hezbollah filled behind those positions and the Lebanese National army did not challenge Hezbollah. So this created the conditions for periodic clashes and on one occasion quite a significant conflict in the following years.

So that's about it on that other than to say you know it was an amicable relationship on most of our parts, although the Lebanese and the Syrian representatives virtually never spoke to the Israeli representatives outside the formal meeting room. We all had pretty Spartan quarters with one outer room and one back bedroom for each delegation. So on those sessions that lasted multiple days, our delegation would have to trade off taking naps. The Syrian representative who was a military officer enjoyed his role of most times not into being actively in the acrimony between the Israeli and Lebanese sides, but eventually being the final arbiter on the Lebanese position. He would encourage us to come to him to help resolve any major issues and would take some pride behind the scenes in telling the Lebanese representative to accept the compromise positions that the French and American co-chairmen had put forward.

I'll note another interesting piece of history in view of current developments in Syria. This same Syrian General used to speak to us, the French and American delegations, of Syria's effective suppression of what he described as Muslim fundamentalists in Hama in 1982, a government action reported to have killed some 20,000 residents of Hama. The Syrian General stated that the Syrian Government's action had helped assure that Syria did not have "the fundamentalist problem" that other Arab governments had.

I should add one other incident during my time in this position. During one of my two trips to Beirut for meetings with the Lebanese government, we traveled to Mount Lebanon to meet with the Prime Minister, the late Rafiq Hariri. His was one of the few Muslim houses on Mount Lebanon and looked down on most of the Christian houses on the mountain. Well in the course of our conversation, one of my team members asked a question that would have required a delicate response regarding Syria. Hariri looked at the phone by his side and said that he would answer the question, but not there. So he walked to the far side of the room with us following and answered the question. Several years later, Hariri was assassinated in a car bombing.

The next thing I would leave to next time would be perhaps going on to Angola.

Q: Okay, from one fun spot to another fun spot.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, lots of fun, right.

Q: Well you know we like sun and beaches.

SULLIVAN: That's right, that's right.

Q: And wines.

SULLIVAN: Yeah Angola, I'll get into that, but it was interesting.

Q: Okay Joe.

Today is the second of February, Groundhog Day, 2011. When did you go to Angola and how long were you there?

SULLIVAN: Okay, I went in November of 1998 and let's see left in the summer of 2001. Let me ask if you recall whether I covered sort of the confirmation process which was…

Q: No you didn't.

SULLIVAN: Okay, so I should start there and then move on to getting there.

Q: Yes.

SULLIVAN: I had been doing the job based in Cyprus on Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group. I got called back from that because I had been nominated and needed to prepare for the confirmation process.

Q: Were you concerned about the Cuban connection?

SULLIVAN: Well ironically it wound up being the Haiti connection. The Cuban connection wasn't a problem but the Haiti connection proved to be. The hearings, which I

recall, were held in July of 1998. There were about 11-12 nominees up for African posts, three of us had a Haiti connection. Ambassador Bill Swing, who had been ambassador to Haiti; Bob Felder who had been the DCM and myself who had been a year previously the Haiti special coordinator. Then Senator John Ashcroft was the chairman of the Africa subcommittee and had shown no particular interest in Africa but that is where he wound up as committee chair. We had no real notion that it would be heavy going other than we knew there were staff members in that committee, particularly Republican staff members, who were very hot on the issue of Haiti even though by then, of course, the fervor that I had described earlier prior to the '96 presidential election passed. Still there were staff members who still had Haiti on their mind.

Q: Why we're doing these things I think people who read this should understand that staff members particularly when they get a handle on ambassadorial confirmations and all often can throw their weight around. It happens again and again and again.

SULLIVAN: Sure and that is their opportunity to both make a policy point against the Administration, pose a problem for the Administration, probably in most cases even more than the nominee. In any case, the three of us were singled out, as all the other Senators and nominees went through rather quickly. We got questioned by committee members, no problem, but then Ashcroft, the committee chair, asked to have us testify as a group separately. I would say we had about an hour and twenty minutes of questions, as I recall, directed at the three of us. Probably Bill Swing took the heaviest load but I took my share as well. I think the factual questions we could all handle well enough, but the questions of why didn't you prevent Aristide from exercising influence? Why did political killings continue? These were complicated questions and there was no answer that would satisfy. So we finished that hearing and then Ashcroft, in effect, declined to move the process forward and declined to send it to the full committee. In any case, none of the Africa nominees were confirmed in the set of Senate confirmations processed before the August recess and so we were left hanging.

Bill Swing had been nominated as ambassador to Congo Kinshasa and just about that point Congo Kinshasa erupted into pretty much a full scale civil war with Rwandan and other forces entering into the country as well. The administration chose to send him out on a recess appointment; so he went out. Separate from the hearing process, I had to go up and meet with the staff of Senator Dodd on the old Nicaragua questions that I had mentioned earlier but that meeting went reasonably well. Senator Dodd did not pose an objection. I know the administration was in constant contact with Ashcroft's staff and I think eventually they didn't pose an objection and we went through, as I recall, probably in October of 1998; so I could only really make concrete plans to leave in late October, early November.

Q: How did you handle this personally?

SULLIVAN: Well it's never easy and I was good friends with Bill Swing and I just felt bad for him that he had after a 35-year diplomatic career, about 20 years of it as Ambassador, this very distinguished and able gentleman had been subject to public

ridicule. He was asked questions for which there was no answer deliberately. It wasn't pleasant but what I had come to expect on Haiti after having done that job a year before.

Q: I don't want to over dwell on this but I'm trying to capture the political set at the time. Was Aristide somebody's darling or somebody's villain? Was he a…

SULLIVAN: He was a many Republicans' villain because he was populist, was viewed as a Marxist, and because he clearly did engage in political chicanery and in violence to serve his political ends and probably corruption as well. The Clinton administration had exerted itself to assure that he did not change the constitution to be able to run for reelection even though he was toying with the idea of changing the constitution since he had been forced out of the country for several years in a military coup. But he did not. That notwithstanding, the candidate who eventually became president, Preval who later served again as president of Haiti at that point was very much in Aristide's shadow. I think it is too far to say that he took orders from Aristide but he certainly was reluctant to act decisively if Aristide opposed a particular move. It is the traditional battle of Congress against an administration, the Congress wants decisive action particularly the opposition political party, which had at that point held the majority in the Senate and the House, wants the administration to bring the villains to account and put all other concerns aside. The administration is always playing a balance and in the case of Haiti it was a balance that involves trying to nurture some sort of democratic institutions, it was a balance of trying to avoid mass migration from Haiti to the United States, if chaos prevails. So it was all of those things, and particularly left over from the past, was the Republican disagreement with the Clinton administration decision to invade Haiti and topple the military coup leaders and restore Aristide to power back in about 1994.

Q: Was Aristide still popular with the Black Caucus or other elements within the Democratic Party?

SULLIVAN: Sure he was. He was close to many members within the Black Caucus and they were generally quite supportive of him. He also had friends who were, at that point, no longer in the administration but close to the administration. Tony Lake, the former NSC advisor had a good personal relationship with Aristide and in the days when I had responsibility for Haiti, I had made one trip with Tony Lake who met to counsel prudence from Aristide to which he said the right thing and he nodded it in the right places, but at the end of the day did his own thing.

Q: All right then we are talking about October of what '98?

SULLIVAN: Correct.

Q: You got your approval.

SULLIVAN: I got my approval but we never really dealt with the key question on Angola, in the hearing process or anywhere else in the process frankly.

Q: But at the time you went out there what was the situation there?

SULLIVAN: The situation was that there had been a peace agreement negotiated and agreed to by the two principal parties, the government and UNITA, the armed opposition, from 1994. The guarantors of that peace agreement were the United Nations, the United States, Russia and Portugal. That agreement was proving increasingly fragile and problematic. It was widely suspected, although not documented, that UNITA, which had agreed to confine itself to limited areas of the country and not to arm itself, was rearming and retraining for another round of war. The UN peacekeeping forces could not document it, but there was significant suspicion that UNITA was rearming.

Q: Where would they get their arms?

SULLIVAN: Well there was the recently arrested and extradited merchant of death, Victor Boot, the former Russian businessman, who was shipping the arms and obtaining from many places, particularly the former Soviet Union, the Ukraine, Bulgaria and other countries that had lots of tanks and other heavy artillery to spare. So arms had been coming in and this was later documented quite fully that UNITA was very prepared and had trained extensively. So the peace process was breaking down.

Q: What were you getting from the CIA for example?

SULLIVAN: They had some information, but not a lot. I think the policy, at that point, of the United States was to just hope against hope that nobody would take the initial action of returning to the terrible war situation, which had been prevailing in the country for at least 30 years.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: But I would say that the problem of denying unpleasant reality became increasingly problematic at the time I went out there. I recall my first meeting with the Angolan President in mid-November to present my credentials. As always in those sessions you listen a lot, but then sought to convey our message that the Angolan Government should not initiate military action. While he was a restrained man, President dos Santos was angry at the United Nations, angry at the guarantors of the peace agreement, including the US. In his view, based on evidence that he thought he had, UNITA had already rearmed and was preparing to go back to war and the guarantors had not provided effective prevention to prevent UNITA from doing this. Now I should say that the United States and others did support an increasing range of UN sanctions on UNITA over the previous year because of well-founded suspicion that UNITA was not complying with the peace agreement. But these sanctions were not effective because the arms dealers UNITA was dealing with were prepared to act outside international law and deliver arms behind the lines, and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was very careful and clever about how he rearmed.

Q: Now who was the president and what type of government and what was your evaluation of its control and effectiveness?

SULLIVAN: Well the government has been since independence a government of the MPLA, a once Marxist Party, initially supported by the Soviet Union. As I recall, that was the origin of the conflict at the time when the United States supported the opposition to the MPLA after the Portuguese walked away from Angola in 1974. There were several phases of the war, including several in which we actually supported UNITA several years, covertly. So it was a complex situation and one in which our own historical baggage was considerable. I'm sure that within the Angolan government there were many who, if anything went bad, suspected that the United States was returning to prior policies of seeking their overthrow by supporting Savimbi again, even though the US had renounced that option way back in the Bush I administration in '90 or '91. But the Angolan government was ineffective and corruption was rampant. That notwithstanding, the government had a reasonably effective armed force; kept the coastal areas largely free of conflict and kept the considerable oil production flowing, of which Chevron had a very large share and other American oil companies, particularly EXXON also had a piece as well as French and British oil companies. So Angola was a large and growing oil producer at that point. The Angolan government as well had shown on several occasions that, notwithstanding military challenges, it was always able to arm and train its forces and defeat the periodic challenges that the UNITA rebel forces posed.

Q: Well now did UNITA and other rebel forces was there any other sort of lurking power behind them or was this a self-generated opposition?

SULLIVAN: Well certainly in the past there had been others forces, initially including China under Mao and later the United States and also apartheid South Africa behind UNITA. By the late '90s, the Angolans suspected that now post-apartheid South Africa was taking a benevolent, if not supportive, posture toward UNITA. Post-apartheid South Africa had a not very positive relationship with the Angolan government particularly once Mbeki assumed the South African presidency in 1999. So there was at least some complicity on the part of other African governments. I think most of the East European involvement was at that point for reasons of profit rather than choosing sides. Whether it was the government that actually made the money or the armed forces that controlled the weapons that made the money probably varied. There did not appear to be any particular preference for UNITA in Europe, but individuals and governments certainly benefited financially from arms sold to UNITA, and in the case of several countries later to the Angolan government as well.

Q: The president of Angola is who now?

SULLIVAN: Jose Eduardo dos Santos and he actually has been president since 1979. He did have one election in 1992 as the outcome of a peace agreement reached. In that election, in a reasonably fair, internationally monitored election, he beat Savimbi in the presidential contest. At that point Savimbi rejected the results and basically went back to

a war that took another two years to reach another peace agreement, the last peace agreement, the Lusaka Peace Agreement, of 1994 that was breaking down, as I arrived.

Q: What were you after? Did you feel that you, being the United States representative, weren't going to be a passive by-stander were you?

SULLIVAN: Well the initial hope going in, and certainly one which I had been encouraged to pursue, was to try to hang on to the Lusaka peace agreement. We had a new assistant secretary for Africa at the time, Susan Rice and Tom Pickering was the undersecretary for political affairs. I think we were late in abandoning a no longer viable U.S. policy. We tried to maintain the peace accord, but that was not possible as UNITA had already rearmed and the Angolan government was not going to listen to us anymore. The Angolan Government was going to seek to preempt UNITA's ability to prevail in a military conflict. That's what they did. They, in effect, initiated conflict preemptively, but UNITA was indeed prepared for war and reacted massively. So there were very heavy artillery exchanges, even in some provincial capitals, tremendous destruction and tremendous human suffering, with the population from most of the inland provinces having to flee to the provincial capitals or to capital city of Luanda to live in tent camps to get out of the way of the conflict. So the Government had demonstrated that UNITA had rearmed and was prepared to go to war. UNITA at one stage captured one provincial capital, and that only for a couple of weeks, but they certainly dominated many outlying areas in a number of the inland provinces. So the conflict was very heavy, and most Angolans view that last period as the bloodiest stage of the long civil war. From the point where the conflict restarted, arms were mostly not as available to UNITA, since the monitoring of what came into Angola stepped up and the potential consequences for the suppliers of those weapons became more problematic. But the Angolan government built up very substantially and used lots of their petroleum proceeds to buy weapons to ensure that they could outgun UNITA.

So within a month from when I arrived in Angola, the war had restarted. Our communications with the Angolan government were very bad at that point; they really were not interested in hearing from us or from the UN or anybody who would urge restraint. At one point in late December 1998, two UN planes evacuating UN materiel from the conflict zones were shot down; one of them having an American pilot. I remember getting involved in that issue and at one point managing to reach the Angolan chief of staff of the armed forces but the Angolans were not going to be cooperative with the UN or the US to permit searches for the downed planes in a combat zone.. At the same time, the US had its last communication with UNITA Commander Jonas Savimbi over that incident. My predecessor had been going for most of the previous three years to periodic UN meetings with Savimbi out in the interior provinces. Savimbi's usual refrain was how his commanders were pushing him to be more and more aggressive, but that he was being patient. From about August '98, neither the UN nor the U.S. had direct communication with Savimbi. Then in December of '1998, Pickering did reach Savimbi on a satellite phone to urge his cooperation in searching for the plane and the lost Americans. Well Savimbi was someone who had charmed both Mao Zedong and Ronald Reagan and he would always say the right things, but generally not do them.

That was when I began to provide my own analyses as I had been on the ground longer, as I talked to people, heard my own staff directly, some of them very good and persuasive, notably our political officer Alex Laskaris. I reached the conclusion that this was no longer a peace that could be reestablished, it was really not possible to restore the Lusaka Peace Agreement. Savimbi had broken virtually every piece agreement that he had ever entered. We could not expect the government of Angola to listen to us and follow our counsel of restraint because they would always fear, based on their history, that Savimbi would enter a temporary agreement to build his forces back up only to make war again. So I reached the conclusion that we really needed to change our approach. We ought not to be looking to, nor expect to restore the Lusaka Peace Agreement, but instead decide what we needed to do to bring the civil war to a definitive conclusion.

My conclusion was that Savimbi was an unreliable partner, that he was not interested in peace, but in power. We had no reason to try to restore a place for him in a peace agreement that he had broken. On the other hand, the Angolan government was not a bargain, nothing great, nothing we would think was the greatest in the world but certainly the better of the two alternatives. In addition, that is frankly where our economic interests lay as well, since the Angolan government controlled the area that at that point was producing as much as seven percent of U.S. petroleum imports, much of that extracted by US petroleum companies. I began to put that advice into telegrams and conveying it whenever I met with US policymakers. I must say that for quite a while, that advice was not welcomed and, for the most part, the U.S. essentially took a hands-off posture in the hope that the peace agreement could be restored.

There was no question of our providing either military assistance or military sales to the Angolan government. Nobody expected that was either possible or desirable, and the Angolan government had enough cash to find others who would sell them weapons in any case. I concluded that we should stop seeking to play a neutral role between the two sides and that this would also have benefits in greater ability to influence the Angolan government. About a year and a half later, by the beginning of the year 2000, we had begun to move in a direction where we clearly regarded UNITA as the greater transgressor and stopped seeking to take an even-handed stand between the two parties. At one point Susan Rice, who had visited Angola shortly before I got to post in the fall of ’98 and had not been given a meeting with President dos Santos, reflecting his exasperation with the United States at that point, by the summer of 2000, visited again and got a very nice reception. By then, the Angolan government was confident that they would eventually prevail in the civil war. They also had an interest in a good relationship with us and the two governments began to have a more meaningful exchange on a whole range of issues.

Q: Was there any point when you went to dos Santos and said we are with you or what we were doing or was this all sort of done indirectly?

SULLIVAN: Well certainly at the early stage of my tour, all contact was indirect because after presenting my credentials, it was probably a good six months before I got to see the

President again. Even our relationships with regular contacts with trusted individuals suffered, it was probably a good six months or so before we began to be able to see those people regularly again. The Angolan armed forces, for instance, had been instructed not to have contact with the Americans even though previously they had a very good working relationship with us. They had been instructed not to have contact with us because they were going to do what they had always done and rely on their own resources, their own people, their own army to eventually prevail. So it was only as they began to regain confidence that they were more open to working with us and others on non-strategic issues. On strategic issues, they found support in various places including Israel, France and Russia to achieve their objectives. The other issues that we had interest in were the humanitarian aspects of the conflict, providing humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced, and our economic/commercial interests in petroleum. Eventually with the conflict deepening in the Congo, Angola came to the assistance of then President Laurent Kabila and so became a party to that conflict. As a result, we had a new set of issues to discuss with respect to the Congo. By then, the US-Angolan relationship had improved sufficiently that we were able to have quite a good and regular communication with a key actor on that issue, the armed forces chief of staff.

Q: What about say the French, the British, Portuguese, the German, the Russians they all have embassies there I assume?

SULLIVAN: Yes.

Q: What were they doing and what were you doing with them?

SULLIVAN: Well we diplomats always meet and talk with each other and the Russians, the Portuguese and us, as guarantors of the Lusaka peace agreement, together with the UN had a regular set of meetings and periodic meetings with the Angolan government. Essentially, the Angolan government didn't want anything serious to do with the Lusaka Peace Process remnants, this troika of three plus the UN. They really just wanted any constraints from that process out of the way. To the degree that they agreed to hold any meetings, they weren't listening; they just wanted UN forces out of the way and the UN not to intervene. Their view was that the conflict would proceed and the Angolan government would eventually prevail and then we could talk again. Everybody had their own means of entrée. The Russians had a greater, longstanding, military-to-military relationship historically. (President dos Santos had actually studied in the Soviet Union.) The French had a certain relationship with the Angolan intelligence service and helped in certain Angolan arms purchases. The Israelis also provided some important equipment and technical advice. But in terms of strategic influence, the Angolans were doing their own thing and were not going to take counsel from anybody. The more relevant question for them that would occasionally be debated openly by senior Angolans with foreigners was what they should do with Savimbi, if they should capture him.

Q: Were there any sort of loose Cubans wandering around at that point or…?

SULLIVAN: No, not really. No they were pretty much out of it by then. It was a historic relationship and at earlier phases of that war in the '70's and '80s, the Cubans had played a decisive role against South African forces. But by the 2000's, the Cubans were not involved in any important way.

Q: What about Israel what were they up to?

SULLIVAN: Israel was providing important assistance. I don't know if it's ever become public but it was sort of talked about at the time that they were helping them fight more effectively. Israel always has lots of former military and former Mossad and former military officials, who are retired into the military sales business and they were very much around. But, they could not have operated as extensively as they did without the agreement of the Israeli government. I was quite close friends with the Israeli ambassador at the time, who was a former journalist with a lot of African experience, but also with a lot of connections in key military and intelligence positions in Israel. She believed that Israel should assist the Angolan government to prevail as quickly as possible in the internal conflict. So I think that Israel provided some decisive assistance during 2000 and 2001 that helped them prevail.

By the time I left Angola in the summer of 2001, I had been told that the Angolan government had isolated Savimbi to two areas in the deep, deep countryside and at one point had a Special Forces unit that had to choose between two targets to go after him. They did not choose the right target on that occasion and he escaped, but that only lasted another six months and eventually in February 2002, six months after I left Angola, Savimbi was killed in combat in that same remote area of the Angolan countryside.

Q: To get an idea because this obviously was a very complicated area and the role of the Americans was sort of problematic for a good bit of time. How did your embassy operate? I mean political officers, economic officers? How were they getting around?

SULLIVAN: Well we had lots of constraints upon us. We were still working out of an embassy made out of prefab buildings that had been put there in 1992 to last just five years. So we worked in pretty cramped and precarious circumstances. Our housing was also quite poor with problematic electricity and water supply. We were right in the heart of the city so we didn't feel under direct threat there but once you left the city of Luanda it became more complicated, and as a result, most of our staff were confined to the city.

Our ability to travel was quite limited. I did travel a fair bit and our AID personnel in particular traveled quite a bit as we monitored humanitarian assistance, usually coordinated by the World Food Program going out to provincial capitals around the country, where the internally displaced civilian population had fled and were living in tent camps. To do that, the U.S. actually paid for the World Food Program to have a small fleet of Beechcraft ten-seaters to take their staff as well as our people out to the field. These planes would have to perform corkscrew landings in and out of the provincial capital to stay within the small perimeter of the city that was secure from surface-to-surface missiles. In late 2000 or early 2001, a UN cargo plane flew too low

and took a missile, but somehow managed to survive the hit and land. But after that, the UN reinforced the message to the pilots that they needed to adhere rigorously to the corkscrew landing and takeoff policies. One of those planes with a couple of AID personnel on board, as well as the deputy minister of health, did follow the corkscrew landing policy, but the pilot wasn't used to it, got vertigo and barely managed to land short of the runway, while losing his landing gear and sliding across the runway on the plane's belly. Everybody was shaken up, but nobody was badly injured.

There were risks as well as problems in our getting out there, getting around and getting personal information for ourselves. For the most part we were reliant on what we heard either through intelligence channels, which was helpful, but not terrific. We were able to eventually establish a fairly good working relationship once again with the Angolan government and the Angolan armed forces. We had a terrific defense attaché who basically kept seeing his old buddies even though they were told not to talk to him, but they did find a way to talk to him. But most of our information was second hand. We didn't get out to the field very much, so we knew what other people told us. We knew what the intelligence channels provided, which was only occasionally good.

Q: In a way you were blessed by the fact that the world media just wasn't paying any attention to this.

SULLIVAN: Yes, there were only occasional bursts of attention and more of them probably in Europe than in the United States. The one other big issue that emerged in that time or one of the big issues that emerged was blood diamonds.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: The focus on blood diamonds originated because of the conflicts fueled by these diamonds in Sierra Leone and in Angola. The NGO and media focus on the issue coincided with an interest in the Clinton administration of cracking down on this trade. Savimbi had financed many of his arms purchases through diamond mines that he ran himself in territory which the Angolan armed forces didn't control. The major effort to shut down these and other dirty diamonds throughout Africa, eventually, produced some success through the Kimberley process. There is never going to be total success but it was reasonable success, particularly when one thinks that "De Beers" and Maurice Tempelsman judged at the beginning that there is no way an effort to shut off blood diamond can succeed. De Beers always had taken the position that it needed to buy up any loose diamonds from anywhere and hold them off the market in order to keep diamond prices up. Well the result of that De Beers practice, of course, was that anybody like Savimbi who had the diamonds could get a substantial price for them and then use those proceeds for arms. De Beers actually ended its policy of buying up loose diamonds of unknown provenance which helped the campaign against blood diamonds..

The US was also engaged deeply in and continued to be engaged throughout the war in the effort to remove land mines which endangered the civilian population. Because there

were always areas that were more secure than others we were able to continue some landmine removal in selected areas throughout the last phase of the war.

Q: Did the South African government now under, this would have been…

SULLIVAN: President Mbeki most of that period.

Q: Did they play any role or were they out of it?

SULLIVAN: Their role was limited because neither the Angolan government nor the South African government trusted each other. Mbeki had a brother who died in Angola during the period of apartheid government in which he was affiliated with the external fighters of the South African current ruling party. That is assumed to be one of the reasons for Mbeki's suspicions of the Angolan government for having permitted this to happen. In any case, the Angolans have ample paranoia of their own and many Angolans feared that South Africa was seeking to insure that Angola, relatively rich and large country, would stay divided and never challenge South Africa for supremacy in southern Africa. Looking at the relative GDP's of the two countries makes that thesis appear ludicrous, but Angolan government ministers would voice it to me. That probably limited South Africa's potential role, as well as their belief, likely correct, that Mbeki was maintaining contact with Savimbi.

Q. What about the Congo? It was falling apart wasn't it?

SULLIVAN: Sure, that was when the phrase the first African World War was coined. There were something like eleven different countries in Africa involved in that war. The Angolan government was one and the principal instigators from outside were Rwanda and Uganda, which had helped install Congolese President Laurent Kabila in 1997, turned against him in 1998 and sent troops and elements in to try to topple Laurent Desire Kabila, the father of the current president. At that point a number of countries in the region chose sides and the Angolans chose the side of Kabila. Why? I guess even though they had been involved originally with Rwanda in the original overthrow of Mobutu and the installation of Laurent Kabila, they decided that this latest effort could jeopardize their interests. Most importantly, the Angolans had a reasonable relationship with Kabila and feared that Savimbi might be able to establish a relationship with whomever succeed him of the sort he had had with Mobutu. So the Angolans sent in forces to defend the Kabila government and to provide security for him together with Zimbabwean forces. I engaged most closely with the Angolans on Congo from January, 2001, after the assassination of Congolese President Laurent Kabila by his bodyguard and the assumption of the presidency by his son Joseph Kabila. The Angolans were advising Joseph Kabila in restoring stability to some effect, although they always felt the Congolese armed forces were very ineffective compared to their own and basically incapable of being trained well.

One other thing that was interesting in the light of Ambassador Holbrook's recent passing is that Holbrook as the US permanent representative to the United Nations began to take

a great interest in Africa. He decided that while the United States was the president of the Security Council, if I recall correctly, it would have been about February 2000, the United States would organize a UN conference to deal with the conflict in the Congo and invite all the key presidents from Africa to come. I must say that initially this sounded to me and many others like an idea that couldn't succeed, particularly because the Angolan president hated to travel and found excuses not to travel all the time. Yet, Holbrook was determined and he pursued his objectively relentlessly and eventually succeeded in pulling it off. He got dos Santos to travel to New York as well as Laurent Kabila and about four other presidents most involved in the Congolese conflict. The purpose, even if it was not articulated as such, was to give Laurent Kabila an opportunity to recover his image, reestablish his authority and utilize the standing of the United Nations to resist those forces seeking his overthrow. Laurent Kabila frankly was incapable of taking advantage of the opportunity presented. He was very erratic, a very poor leader, and missed his opportunity and was eventually assassinated and succeeded by his son Joseph who has done a somewhat better job than his father.

Q: Well, because in earlier years there were all these attempts to separate Katanga. Was there anything the Shaba invasions, was there anything going on there or did that movement sort of die out?

SULLIVAN: I think the Katanga thing was over but what the Rwandans did was take advantage to exploit mineral resources in the eastern Congo. This would have been areas near Goma, much closer to Rwanda than to the Congolese capital of Kinshasa.

Q: Oh yeah.

SULLIVAN: So Rwanda was clearly exploiting those resources during the period where they had troops in Congo and the Rwandans also were pursuing their security interests due to the presence of Hutu forces, which had fled to the Congo after the 1994 Rwandan conflict. Now sixteen years, later the Hutu forces in eastern Congo are more likely to be the children of the original fighters than they are the 1994 fighters themselves.

Q: What about the other former Portugal territory Mozambique? At that point was there any connection or play any role?

SULLIVAN: Not really other than that Mozambique from Angola's point of view could always be counted on as a solid ally within the SADC, the South African Development Community, because the ruling party of Mozambique, FRELIMO, and the MPLA had been sister parties within the Socialist camp during the liberation struggle and the Cold War and had both resisted both South African and other Western interference in their takeover from the Portuguese. Mozambique was more democratic and more peaceful than Angola. But the historical connection made Mozambique a reliable ally for Angola.

Q: Speaking of relations how would you describe your relations with Washington? I mean you had Susan Rice was a person who had rather, from what I gather, strong

opinions about this. How did you find working with her and with the rest of the State Department?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, well with Susan, as you say, had very strong opinions and she had strong reservations towards the Angolan government. I don't think she had any particular nostalgia for UNITA, as some people with a CIA background had. But she did not have good feelings towards the Angolan government, which had plenty of negatives in its tolerance of corruption and failure to improve the lot of its own people. So when I began to formulate my independent views and send them in, my views and recommendations were not very welcome. Susan and I didn't argue and we dealt with each other respectfully, but my recommendations went into a void and didn't succeed in affecting U.S. policy other than at the margins. It was possible to get a few things going but most of what I was able to do was done on our own hook. The embassy gradually cultivated improved relations with the Angolan government so we began to have some influence on some matters of interest to us and also to gain some insight into what the Angolans were doing. I think Susan only became more open to working toward improving relations with the Angolan government a year or more later. In late 2000 or early 2001, Susan led an interagency team that was ready to establish the relationship on a much more cooperative basis on a whole range of fronts, on humanitarian assistance, on economic and trade issues. This led to various working groups and we worked well together during that visit. Susan is somebody who has an inner circle and I was never part of Susan's inner circle, but we found ways to work together.

Q: From what I gather dos Santos was again every individual. I mean here he was a leader but he had pretty much a tight group around him and he didn't really accept outside influences say from an embassy in Washington and all would have very little sway with him anyway.

SULLIVAN: I guess so, yes, particularly when it came to strategic issues where he was going to decided what needed to be done and do it. From his point of view he had probably allowed himself to be overly influenced by international concerns during the four years of the Lusaka Peace Process to the extent that he didn't "take care of the problem himself" by going in there and disarming UNITA. He listened to the outside counsel that he should be restrained and then wound up with a situation that was quite precarious. The Angolan forces captured a famous tape of Savimbi telling his UNITA sub commanders in 1998 to leave their women and children behind because the women in Luanda are bathing in preparation for your arrival. So there was no question that in the period before the war began again in late 1998 that Savimbi intended to capture the capital of power.

Q: Yeah. I just finished a couple months ago an interview with Chester Crocker.

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q: He was describing his essentially having to have covert operations to find out what the CIA was up to because you had the head of the CIA at the time…Reagan's man.

SULLIVAN: Oh way back then.

Q: Yeah. But it was sort of surreal.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I didn't have that degree of problem but I must say we had a minimal presence and almost no relationships and I would have been interested in encouraging a better bilateral relationship on that side. It was bad historically because we had been supporters of their enemy, and particularly the agency was perceived as the great supporters of their enemy. It was very tough sledding and I got along mostly with the agency, but I think there were occasional reappearances of nostalgia for the past in which the agency had a more important role in Angola. So to the degree that I engaged with the agency in a conflictive way, it was mostly to make sure that nostalgia for the past not prevail.

Q: How Marxist was the Angolan government by the time you got there?

SULLIVAN: Barely, mostly in name only, and only to the degree that there were certain economic policies of state interventionism that were remnants of the past. I think the government at that point was more interested in controlling large economic sectors, such as petroleum and mining, not for ideological reasons, but because that was where the money and control of power rested. President dos Santos had over the years gathered more power into his own inner circle at the expense of the traditional Marxist party, the MPLA. To a certain degree, this was to make sure that he controlled the resources, but also because control of economic resources means control of power.

Q: Were there any sort of roving Americans who were coming over to either look for roots or trying to see a real Marxist country? Did you run across oddballs like this I'm speaking as a former consular officer?

SULLIVAN: I don't mean to be totally facetious but I think that a side benefits of a civil war is that it tends to keep out that brand of traveler. It was a dangerous place and you could get shot out there pretty easily. One of the major functions that we had was both consulting with the oil companies over their own security; particularly the American companies but also with the humanitarian groups. Our security people worked with the oil companies and the UN and the NGO's all the time and exchanged information on where the greatest threats might be. There were a lot of risks out there, so people with their own agenda, were probably limited to the humanitarian organizations, the World Vision, the Doctors Without Borders and the other NGOs whose laudable humanitarian agendas would occasionally drift over into a more political area where they would push for new negotiations or for humanitarian corridors to deliver assistance.

Q: What about the oil companies because in some places I think it is in Nigeria where you have the local people who are trying to get a piece of the action. What was happening with the oil companies?

SULLIVAN: Ironically, Angola was never and is not today anything as tumultuous as Nigeria is. I had a friend who was with Halliburton at the time who had gone up and taken a posting in Nigeria and after a year they was asked, "Would you like to come back to Angola?" He said, "Please, please, please. Let me come." By contrast for one thing the overwhelmingly large percentage of Angolan production was offshore and some of it was in ultra-deep waters way offshore. So I think only way back in the 1992 phase of the conflict did someone on those platforms have shells going by them and have to evacuate by boat. But for the most part UNITA never got close to the ocean; local people were not organized enough to cause problems and government security was good enough. You may recall that at an earlier phase of that war in the 1970's, the Cubans had actually helped provide security for what was then Gulf Oil production offshore. Now, without the Cubans the Angolans were able to provide protection themselves and the fact that the conflict was overwhelmingly inland was also a great help. So no, they didn't have those security problems.

That said there were a lot of interesting issues with the oil companies. Chevron, at that stage had Condoleezza Rice on its board of directors, back before she came back into government. Certainly Chevron was anxious to influence the U.S. government as well as influence the Angolan government. Chevron was very interested in renewing their lease on the petroleum exploration blocs off the coast of Cabinda as well as their operating base on land in Cabinda. The Angolans never threatened Chevron with not renewing, but moved slowly to formalize the renewal, probably to get as much out of the renewal as possible and probably as well, to make sure that Chevron got nervous and worked to improve US-Angolan government relations. Exxon also got into the bidding while I was there; bid on and won several promising blocs of ultra-deep offshore production so that Exxon-Mobil became a significant player alongside Chevron-Texaco, BP and Total.

Q: African governments have the reputation of taking the money from natural resources Nigeria certainly has that and it disappears into Swiss banks. How about Angola, what was happening there?

SULLIVAN: I think there has always been a good deal of corruption in Angola. But I am convinced that the most destructive effects are caused by civil wars and Angola's civil war had lasted for at least 27 years with a few interruptions with a tremendously destructive effect on the civilian population, on national production and everything else. In the years since the war ended in 2002, Angola has been growing at the 10-14 percent rate. I'm sure a fair bit of that money has gone missing, but growth of 10-14 percent means that many people are benefiting a great deal. So Angola is in a lot better shape and while I haven't been back since 2001, everybody tells me that it is much better. The questions I have are if the government is investing the money in the poorest people? Are they improving what was always a terrible, abominable education system, one that was bequeathed to them by their Portuguese colonialists who didn't educate the Portuguese who were there well, much less the Africans. So Angola had never developed a decent education system. The health system was always chaotic and then had been through thirty years of war. So Angola has a tremendous way to go in education and health and in

providing basic benefits of their population. I hope but don't know that they have used a substantial portion of that 10-14 percent of growth to do that.

Q: This might be a good place to stop do you think? Where did you go after that Joe in 2001 was it?

SULLIVAN: 2001 I went to Zimbabwe.

Q: Okay so shall we pick it up then?

SULLIVAN: Great.

Q: All right, well I'll make my announcement here. Today is the 7th of February 2011 with Joe Sullivan. Joe, we are off to Zimbabwe.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, as often happens on these things I did a little bit of reflection and thought I would start off with perhaps five minutes of things that I should cover on Angola before we move on.

Q: Oh good, oh sure.

SULLIVAN: Okay, with respect to Angola, one thing you asked that I didn't adequately answer was how was the situation for our people in the embassy? I did note that there were only a few explicit security risks that we faced but the precautions we took were great and, in effect, inhibited us from in most instances leaving the capital city. Beyond that because of our late start in Angola, only establishing an embassy in 1992, the tremendous cost of property there because of the presence of oil companies meant that we were living in a very poor set of houses and apartments throughout the city. So as I mentioned before, the embassy was operating out of a set of temporary buildings that had been put in in '92 and had long outlived their five-year expected shelf life and provided minimal standards for what had grown to an embassy presence of around 30 people. Our staff had a bad office to work in and bad homes to live in. Even the Ambassador's residence, while I don't really have a personal complaint, was about the smallest of ambassador's houses one could ever see. I had basically one bedroom and a maid's room that was it. So when Tom Pickering came and stayed, I wound up staying in the living room and Tom stayed in my bedroom; that was it.

We had a situation that was for our people difficult at best. Most people soldiered on. There were a few people who were unhappy people and were very vocal about it so morale was a constant concern. I tried to be very sensitive to the fact that people were living and working in bad conditions. There wasn't much to do in Angola and even in Luanda because things were highly priced; it was difficult to get around; there weren't very many good restaurants to go to, you could go to the beach on the weekends but that was really about it. I felt that Washington, at times, was not very sensitive to us on this subject. We did seek to upgrade our temporary office building, while we waited on decisions on construction of a new embassy chancery. In addition to the main embassy

structure, which was a pre-fabricated temporary building, we had a small set of rented offices with the consular and USIS functions down the hill closer to the water and those were also very inadequate. When we sought to move our consular functions into a newly built office building downtown, we faced the usual dilemma that if you change from one currently unsecure structure to another that is more secure, the decision from diplomatic security is no, you can't move to this new structure because it's not as secure as we insist any newly occupied structure to be.

Q: So you stayed in the one that is less secure.

SULLIVAN: That's right.

Q: God.

SULLIVAN: Then, we had special problems in Luanda recruiting staff. Over the course of a career, one builds up a set of contacts; people we think are very good, who would fit in very well, but then you go give them a call and you say, "You know why don't you consider coming out here, we have a nice challenging job for you." At the end of the day, the people one contacts would have heard enough bad things about Angola and they have good reasons, school-age kids or a spouse not interested in coming. We had a restriction on school-age children at post and that was one of the factors that posed great difficulties in recruiting staff. Those things only began to improved after the war ended. I should add as well that in the Clinton administration, there was an undersecretary for management, who believed that maybe we should just shut down in Angola because it faced security problems and rather than building a new chancery, which was being discussed at the time, maybe we should just pull the plug and close the mission. I think that was not a very considered judgment, because the US had and continues to have major interests there, notably petroleum and other natural resources. I could not imagine that we really would decide to close the US mission, but I do think that the Under Secretary's own doubts about the wisdom of maintaining a presence contributed to slowing down US decision-making on new embassy construction for several years. It was only after General Williams became Office of Overseas Building Director in 2001 that decisions were made, funding found and construction of a new embassy building completed in about 2004.

Q: How about the local employees, the Angolans who work for the embassy?

SULLIVAN: Well you know they faced their own challenges daily. For the most part they felt like they had a good job working for the embassy. They were more content there than they would be elsewhere. They tended to come from better educated elements in the population. We did struggle at times to make sure we paid them adequately given the chaotic nature of the war economy. In fact, we were authorized to pay them in dollars and we used to have to fly them into the country. We also had several key third-country national employees, mostly Portuguese, whom I knew from my time in Lisbon 20 years before.

I was going to move to a slightly different theme also on Angola and that refers to your earlier question regarding the quality of the information we had on Angola. I said, "We managed to get some decent information from the government and from the armed forces, notwithstanding the obstacles put in our way." But one of the inevitable effects of the fact that we could gather information on the Angolan government, but had little good information on UNITA was that we received information about Angolan military and government inefficiencies and corruption in purchasing, about phantom military units in which senior officers collected the pay of some of the supposed members of that unit, dysfunctionalities in getting people out to the field and other problems. All of those things were true, but the fact is we had very little information on the other side meant that we did not learn of the problems that UNITA was facing. Most of the information we got on UNITA was what UNITA was telling their allies or their potential supporters on the outside and they never talked about their problems. They talked about how well they were doing, how good the unit cohesion was, etc. It was a distorted picture, I think, and sometimes resulted in distorted analysis. I recall in particular INR having a view that UNITA's victory would be inevitable due to their advantages, a strong leader in Savimbi, and lots of problems on the government side. I think there was mixed into that was some degree of positive past experience with Savimbi and UNITA which colored judgments and the Embassy wound up having a cable dispute with the INR analysis to try and correct the record and make sure that consumers in Washington were not affected by this faulty analysis. So these were some of the issues we faced that I neglected to cover last time.

Q: What about your relationship with the oil companies? Were they welcoming you or were they…?

SULLIVAN: Yes, they were good and particularly the American ones looked to us for help. Chevron in the case had had a long-term lease on their principal holdings off-shore in Cabinda and were looking to extend it so they consulted us regularly on that and asked us to weigh in which we did both at the embassy and when there would be visits in Washington. We would encourage the Angolan government as well to look favorably on that application. Exxon as well sought our assistance for periodic bids for offshore oil blocks. Now on those I think our ability to actually influence these bids was very limited. The blocs were offered in return for very high cash bonuses and the high bidder tended to get it and American companies really did pretty well. Exxon got a couple of major blocs in the period that I was there; but there were other issues. Exxon had issues of extraction and how it should be done and so on that would come up and we would be asked to weigh in on those issues. For the others, BP because it was BP- Amoco, having absorbed a former American company and as they used to say, with an American majority of share holders, consulted us fairly frequently; less so the French companies ELF and later TOTAL; but we had what information we needed from them. I'm sure they looked more closely to the French embassy for support. And we shared our security perspectives with all the oil companies.

Q: Could you and your embassy go down to the oil bar or club or anything like that?

SULLIVAN: Sure and occasionally we did. Our economic officer had had prior training before coming to post as petroleum officer and she kept particularly close contact with the "Oilies," as they called themselves, in order to get a pulse on what they were up to and the problems they faced. So I think we were in pretty good touch. I want to reflect as well on the marked change between the Clinton and the Bush administrations with respect to petroleum policy. The Clinton administration had apparently concluded that because oil prices were at the time relatively low, the U.S. should not concern itself overly about opening new sources for oil imports to the U.S. At least, that was the policy direction we felt in the embassy. The Bush administration, on the other hand, with its Texas oil connections transmitted sharply different conclusions. That said, I think the embassy took a fairly consistent line throughout.

I'll give you one example of how this played out in the Clinton administration. One of the things that was important for me and some other people in the embassy to do was to visit Cabinda, which was an enclave actually surrounded by the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo and separated from the Angolan mainland. That was where Chevron had its main onshore operating base so it was important for us to go up periodically, show the flag, talk to the people up there as well as to local officials in Cabinda province. Yet the only way to get there was by taking a Chevron plane. We had to obtain approval to take a private commercial plane and this would require a message back to the legal adviser's office and approval was often very, very slow in coming. At times I even had to delay the trip in order to get that approval. I guess there was fear of criticism that we were accepting benefits from a private company, but there was no other way to go. It wasn't a luxury trip or anything. I may have spent one or two overnights up there in the total of three years and those were essentially lodging in company barracks on the Chevron base. It was just doing our job but it was difficult sometimes doing our job because it wasn't given a high priority in the Clinton State Department.

Q: Well then you are off to Zimbabwe.

SULLIVAN: Exactly, yep.

Q: You were there from when to when?

SULLIVAN: I think October of 2001 until about August of 2004.

Q: Well now whom did you know that was handing out these choice assignments? I mean obviously you were living in sort of luxury on fun places, nice people, Mugabe and all.

SULLIVAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well Zimbabwe used to be considered a luxury post...

Q: Oh yeah.

SULLIVAN: For one of the first times in its history, Zimbabwe actually had a political appointee as ambassador by the Clinton administration prior to me. Now he was somebody, who when the Bush administration came in, who resigned his position. Yet

the post was considered sufficiently delicate and important at the time that the department sent out several senior former ambassadors out there to hold the fort until a permanent ambassador could get there; that always takes time. So I was nominated probably about April or May and got through the nomination process, I think, in maybe August, but that was par for the course; it wasn't a particularly problematic thing. I welcomed it; it was going to be an interesting assignment. I'm not sure frankly if the Democratic Party had won the 2000 election whether I would have gotten that assignment. I think there was some inclination to send another political appointee and yet when Gore lost the election, it was a relatively amicable transition at least on the Africa side and probably as well in the undersecretary's office side. So at that point I was told how about you going there and I said, "Fine." Yeah, I guess it would be considered to be a booby prize by some but I would rather be busy and in this case Zimbabwe remained a beautiful country and it was just a very problematic period to be there.

Q: What was the situation when you went there?

SULLIVAN: When I went, they were gearing up to presidential elections which had been scheduled for March of 2002. For the first time in his life, certainly in his presidency, Mugabe faced a serious political challenge to his continued rule. Mugabe had already begun a couple years before that this policy of deliberate land invasions particularly land owned by Whites as a political tactic to seek to gather support from the population. The Opposition had gradually built up itself and there was a lot of, I think, popular wish to get Mugabe out.

The economy had been in decline since the early '90s and people were anxious for change. Civil society had grown significantly and the U.S. had been supportive of that. We had a number of AID programs that were supportive of civil society, so, to a certain degree, the U.S. was considered the enemy by Mugabe and his ruling ZANU- PF government. That said, we had a moderate degree of ability to do our job and one of the challenges we faced was that we had something of a multi-headed operation without very much coordination. So one of my challenges there was to make sure we were all working together and communicating with each other, particularly in the build up to the election. I worked very hard on that and even though nobody likes meetings; in that crisis situation, we were holding meetings virtually every day to make sure we were all coordinated among the major agencies and players at the mission including the USAID component; which as I said, was very heavily involved in democracy building efforts.

Prior to my arrival at post, bipartisan legislation, called the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act had been passed by the Congress in coordination with the Bush Administration and with the support of the black caucus. The legislation contained incentives to the government of Zimbabwe to hold free and fair elections, but also a number of sticks that would be used if there was interference in that process. The bipartisan US position toward Zimbabwe was a principal focus of the confirmation hearings that I had going out to post, which were very amicable compared to the previous hearings I had had for the Angola appointment.

So going out to post, U.S. policy was fairly clear and the policy instruments were clearer than they had been in the past. What was not as clear was our ability to achieve our policy objectives and how the Mugabe government would react to the conditions explicit in US legislation and policy. The Mugabe government apparently assessed that if they did hold fair and open elections, Mugabe stood a very good chance of losing those elections. In the typical call one makes on President Mugabe after presenting credentials, there was quite a bit of talking past each other. I was encouraging him to hold those elections openly to allow international observers freely, to allow domestic observers to be independent to do their job. Mugabe was going back and recounting his version of history; the history of coming to power in 1980 and his recollection of the British role in which he always believes conservative British governments were better from his perspective notwithstanding his own Socialist past. In any case, he really wasn't listening very much and I got no confidence that we would have much of a positive collaboration with the government. Sure enough, he effectively prevented observers from the Republican and Democratic Institutes from sending election observers. As the election approached, the government and election authorities began to put obstacles began to be put in the way of the opposition and in the way of election observer missions. The European Union eventually withdrew its observer mission due to obstacles placed in the way of its activities. There was significant violence against opposition organizers and a good degree of obfuscation in the cities where ZANU PF felt itself particularly vulnerable. The government deliberately slowed down the voting process in the cities so that many people, mostly opposition supporters, were not able to vote. In rural areas, where ZANU-PF could control the process, ballot boxes were clearly stuffed and we were able to document this.

We, as an embassy, built up our own major observation effort and my deputy Bob Whitehead, who deserves the credit for this, organized and came up with the plan whereby we dispatched around 40 people from all around the mission and filled behind them at the embassy by securing volunteers, mostly from elsewhere in Africa. We did this so that our observers in the field would have the proper diplomatic carnet, should they be harassed, while out doing the observer mission. We succeeded in gathering pretty good information from our observers which enabled us to reach quite solid conclusions about the conduct of the elections. One of our observer groups did get detained by local police for three or four hours until we could raise enough Cain to get them released. No embassy employees came to harm, although a number of Zimbabweans linked to the opposition were beaten badly and those trying to carry out independent observation efforts were also mightily harassed. We concluded that the opposition would have won a free and fair election, but that the election had not been held freely and fairly resulting in Mugabe's election. In addition to our observation, we had other information that the Zimbabwean government had deliberately manipulated the election and stuffed or altered sufficient election results to assure that Mugabe would win the electoral commission's official count. That, notwithstanding, the South Africans had their own election observer mission and they concluded, I think, with not a lot of credibility the election was fair enough to merit recognition and Mugabe took office.

We began even before the election to implement some of the penalties called for in the Zimbabwe Democracy Act. Most of those penalties were targeted at individuals, removing and canceling their visas, their ability to travel to the United States. We coordinated with the European Union and later with Australia and other countries and they began to implement similar polices. Zimbabwean authorities were certainly upset at these and then some financial restrictions as well as their ability to hold accounts in our countries, but at the end of the day, these measures did not affect the behavior of Mugabe, who was above all, and remains today determined to hold onto power at all costs.

Q: As you went out there were you getting psychological profiles or had you been in Africa long enough to get a feel for this. I mean this is a very common trait, look at Mubarak today people don't give up power and privilege easily.

SULLIVAN: Right. I remember actually coming back and meeting with Colin Powell one time and he was quite convinced and correctly so that people like Mugabe "don't get off the back of the tiger; the tiger will eat them." I only had three or so years in Africa, but many of my staff had been there much longer and they saw these traits and the outcome might be predictable, but the question was "can we influence it in anyway"; we certainly sought to, as did other international players. I think probably the most effective international players, and we recognize this, would have been other Africans but the majority of other African players, and certainly the key other African player from Zimbabwe's point of view, South Africa, declined to stand up. Some of it was Mbeki himself and South Africa's feeling that its own coming to majority rule was assisted substantially by Zimbabwe and Mugabe himself once he became president in 1980. Some part of it also was that Mugabe was considered a father figure, a senior independence revolutionary leader, by many Africans and, therefore, one who should be allowed to continue on and not challenged frontally. I think that was a major obstacle that we ever succeeded in overcoming.

I actually recall a visit to South Africa in 2003 by President George W. Bush, accompanied by Secretary Condoleezza Rice and they having after a meeting with South African President Thabo Mbeki announcing that they would look to him to provide the solution for Zimbabwe. Well, okay, except he was not going to really provide the solution for Zimbabwe because he was never going to ever challenge Mugabe. In addition to the other reasons I mentioned, Mbeki harbored some degree of anti-Western sentiments that led him to believe that if the opposition figure Tsvangirai and his party were supported by the West, then that made them illegitimate.

The other feature perhaps I should talk about is the economy. The economy, of course, continued to decline sharply and had major effects on the population leading by the time I left Zimbabwe to the emigration of about 25 percent of the population.

Q: Good God.

SULLIVAN: The majority to South Africa, others to Australia and others to England in order then to earn money to be able to send back to feed their families. So it's not a mystery, but it's a terrible tragedy and in some ways the greatest failure that a leader can be to their own people, that they force people to emigrate in order to survive; that's what wound up happening. To Mugabe, this was almost irrelevant; the important thing to him was holding power himself and there could be no Zimbabwe without him in his view.

Q: How stood things from the bleachers? I read in the papers about the White farmers being forced out and all. How stood the situation by the time you got there?

SULLIVAN: Well by the time I got there the majority of white farmers had been forced out. There were still individual cases in the process of being forced out and by now it must be 99 percent of them that have been forced out. I think there is an argument to be made that many of these white farmers had ignored the potential for problems in the future, particularly if they had bought the land since 1980. Since Mugabe came to power, it was necessary to obtain a certificate of no interest by the state in order to purchase the land and in almost all cases they got that. But that certificate did not protect them against Mugabe changing his mind and changing the courts as much as he needed in order to have his decision to take white farmers' lands upheld. But it is also true that a situation in which something like 20 percent of the most productive land being held by Whites in a country in which Whites were perhaps less than one percent of the population this was a future problem. The white farmers probably didn't anticipate the potential problem very well. At least some of them had supported Mugabe with contributions to his favored causes, even political contributions to him. He also wanted them to stay out of politics, which for the most part they did. But at the end of the day, they were there when he needed a political cause, when he had already suffered one electoral defeat in a constitutional referendum and he made his political cause seizing the land of the White farmers, which won him some support among black Zimbabweans and other black Africans. By 2002, I am convinced that the majority of the population no longer supported him, but the land issue had become his political banner.

Fortunately, I think, none of the white farmers had American citizenship so the US had no direct espousal responsibility, as did many of my colleagues from the British embassy and many other Europeans. These embassies espoused the cases of their citizens and it occupied a great deal of their time with almost no effect really. The diplomatic advocacy might have been able to slow down the process, but was almost never able to prevent the government from not only seizing their property but in many cases the farm equipment on their property as well.

Q: Were these farms taken over by essentially dispossessed people who just sat there or were they taken over by natives of the country who were getting something out of it?

SULLIVAN: I'll go back a little bit to say that the Zimbabwean government had had a program of nationalization of property for benefit of black Zimbabweans and the British government to a small degree contributed to that and the international community also assisted. One of the reasons the international community didn't play a larger role in that

program was that previously expropriated land had wound up going in many cases to cronies of Mugabe. Some land did go to blacks in communally owned lands, but these lands were typically not given sufficient resources or agricultural extension support to do much effective raising of crops and the additional land was devoted largely subsistence agriculture. Then what happened in the late '90s but certainly continued throughout my time there, was that the land that was taken was overwhelmingly given to cronies of Mugabe, army officers, later even army enlisted people, senior police and others to buy their loyalty. The majority of these people weren't farmers themselves, they had come from a different background. Many of them were urban people looking to have a stake hold out in the countryside but they didn't have the background and in most cases the resources that they were willing and able to put into the land to make it successful. The white farmers were universally recognized as highly efficient farmers of both wheat, maize, tobacco and other products and they had wound up being replaced by people who by and large farmed the land very unproductively. Consequently, the ability of Zimbabwe to feed its own people declined dramatically. Their ability to produce crops like tobacco for export to raise foreign exchange declined dramatically and you wound up with people who held the land not making efficient farm use of the land.

Q: Were they sort of letting it out to other people and sitting back and reaping whatever profits came out of it?

SULLIVAN: Not for the most part. For the most part they'd go out and visit their farm on the weekend so it was a tragedy in many senses. For the most part the white farmers had been apolitical and in most cases the land holdings were not huge; we are talking a hundred or a couple of hundred acres. But they were very efficient in what they did. Instead those couple of hundred acres began to be almost totally unproductive. Zimbabwe used to be a bread basket of southern Africa and it no longer raised enough grain to feed its own people.

Q: How did it feed its own people?

SULLIVAN: Well a lot of it with international assistance. The World Food Program set up a major program to assist people and the US contributed, as did most western governments, to those feeding programs and they helped many millions of Zimbabweans survive, which caused ambivalent feelings on the government's part. Nonetheless, the government mostly cooperated.

Q: Well in a way they were coming out ahead they were sitting back and relaxing and letting the White folk take care of them.

SULLIVAN: Sure, yeah to a certain degree. I mean they didn't like it in the sense that at the World Food Program food distributions, the local party leaders were not allowed to organize the ZANU- PF Party songs since it was supposed to be a non-partisan distribution. So things like that would irritate the government and cause conflict, but eventually, as you say, they needed the food, so for the most part they allowed it to happen. However, on the eve of the March 2002 election, the government shut down the

food distribution for several weeks because they feared that somehow it could be used politically in a way that was not under their control.

Q: What sort of I won't say instructions but you must have had very mixed reaction in Washington of people saying well screw them let's not do this or you've got to bear down on it or you have to feed the people. It must have been a very difficult position for you to be in.

SULLIVAN: Well I think in that case actually there wasn't much disagreement, there wasn't a strong argument that we should not help feed hungry people most of whom were, as they usually are, women and children, many of whom would otherwise have starved or been malnourished; so that wasn't a real argument within the US Government. As I reflect back on what was the greatest disagreement between Washington and the field, it was the belief in Washington that U.S. actions and U.S. punitive actions, in particular, can achieve a political objective. We did not argue against US sanctions against Zimbabwean leaders, but we argued for facing the likely reality that suspension of US visas or financial accounts in the US of individuals in the Zimbabwean regime was not going to be sufficient to force Mugabe to give up power. Mugabe's interests were so strong that he would not hesitate in removing anyone who disagreed with him from their position. He just steamrolled all opposition and that was the way it was.

Q: The obvious thing would be and I mean I don't know if you can even comment on it was the sitting around waiting for somebody to kill Mugabe.

SULLIVAN: As is often the case in regimes like that, the most efficient operation that the State runs is its own security operations. Within ZANU-PF, loyalty to Mugabe was ambivalent loyalty at a certain point; there were a few people who broke with him but not many. So it was that inner circle that controlled the security forces, that inner circle that controlled access to Mugabe and there is a long debate about Mugabe and how much he'd changed and how much he was always this way, because in the independence struggle and afterwards, he was ruthless at a number of times; effectively ruthless. It can be argued that's the way a guerrilla leader has to be if he is going to succeed, but Mugabe conducted reprisals against black civilian populations that didn't support him and forced them to support him. After coming to power, Mugabe also conducted a major military campaign in Joshua Nkomo's stronghold of Matabeleland and reduced Nkomo from being a figure with his own following to being a powerless, nominal vice president to Mugabe. So Mugabe had a long history of ruthlessness but because he had been what relatively amicable to the West, because he had allowed white farmers to stay on the land and talked about reconciliation I think there was some hope in the West that prevailed in the end that this was somebody you could work with. He used to win his elections with typically 95 percent support and that probably was relatively authentic because there was no significant opposition once he had eliminated Nkomo's political base. But then once he faced a significant political challenge in the late 1990s he became ruthless again with that opposition, including with some of the civil society people that he used to have good relations with.

I can recall one very good illustrative story of Mugabe who prides himself on having, I think, seven doctoral degrees; some of them are probably not much better than those off a cereal box, but some of them authentic and some of them achieved while he was in jail. In Zimbabwe and, I think, Zambia and a couple other countries the president of the country is often times the chancellor of virtually all the universities of the country and certainly all the state universities; Mugabe took that role with some pride. I became good friends with somebody who had been the vice chancellor of the University of Harare in the mid-90s. This individual was a close, long time friend of Mugabe and he recalled the times when he was vice chancellor Mugabe, would invite him to drop by the president's residence and chat on a Friday afternoon. They would talk for two or three hours on problems at the university. He would call him Robert and Robert would call him Walter and they would discuss the problems in a very open way. Then in the late '90s, when Mugabe began expropriating farms, Walter who had diabetes and lost his legs and was no longer vice chancellor, asked to see Mugabe based on old time connections. Walter told him that he thought he was wrong in what he was doing and that he was going to bring the country to ruin and that it wasn't too late to correct this and so on. Mugabe listened to him, didn't comment, said goodbye and never spoke to him again.

Q: Yeah.

SULLIVAN: So that's…

Q: Well did you have any significant contact with Mugabe?

SULLIVAN: No, no I mean I had periodic contact usually in a pretty formal setting with a visitor but I would even regard my initial contact with him as two of us talking by each other without him really looking for common ground and not at all open to discussions about how we might be able to improve the relationship. So I had pretty good access to virtually everybody else in government and many of them remained close to Mugabe and I'm sure messages would get through with things that particularly bothered us and others that were perhaps areas of being able to work together but effectively we got no serious response. They were embarked on a course and were not to be deterred from it.

Q: Well did we have or do we have now sort of a plan when Mugabe goes what we can do?

SULLIVAN: Well I probably can't speak for what we'd do now, but we did then have some serious ideas about what we could do. We did work very closely with the opposition and had excellent relations with them and currently there is a coalition government of sorts in which the opposition leader Tsvangirai is prime minister while Mugabe is president. Mugabe does not adhere very well to the coalition agreement; he declines to name some of the people that Tsvangirai has nominated to the ministerial positions, has kept the president of the central bank notwithstanding the provision that that he was to be changed, but notwithstanding this, the opposition has succeeded in reviving the economy a little bit. Basically they've dollarized the economy and thrown out worthless Zimbabwean dollars, pay teachers in dollars at relatively reduced rates; I

think it is about $100 a month but that's better than worthless Zimbabwean dollars they were begin paid before. Probably the economy more than anything else subsists on the remittances sent in from Zimbabwean immigrants living abroad. That said, Zimbabweans are very well educated people, very industrious, when given the opportunity and, I think, it could come back relatively quickly if and when Mugabe goes and if and when there is a reasonable government.

Q: Do these people who have taken over the farming land have a real stake in it or is this just sort of a place to lounge in or something?

SULLIVAN: I suppose some of them thought they had a stake and thought they could make something out of it but it takes a lot of hard work, it's a seven day a week job, and it takes investment and most of them didn't have capital to invest themselves and the state by that point was so bankrupt that it did not have the capability of leaning money to them. The financial system in general had crumbled in ways that there really was no effective lending for agriculture available. What will happen there is a serious question. I think the opposition at this stage has said that it does not aspire to retake this land that would be a very unpopular act in an overwhelmingly Black African country, but instead try to make it productive again. To do that I would imagine that many of these people would sell their land for whatever the current value was to somebody who was capable and willing to farm on it.

Q: Well within Zimbabwe are there any people there who have the right skin complexion who could take it over? I mean…

SULLIVAN: There are some, and even among those people who were given the land, there are potentially good farmers, given the right circumstances. In addition, there are many black Zimbabweans who have farmed for generations. Even though the system of communal land under which many black Zimbabweans farmed is a dependency-inducing phenomenon in which people don't have land in individual title, but only as part of a community, they do have farming skills. In the right circumstances if black Zimbabweans were to receive land in a system in which the system designed to foster more productive farming and provide them with the means and the capital to do such, I believe many of them would succeed. Zimbabweans have written many excellent plans for how to do just that, but the Mugabe government has been making land distribution decisions on political grounds rather than on the basis of agricultural productivity..

Q: In a way could you say you in the embassy were essentially holding a waiting brief, waiting for the guy to die?

SULLIVAN: Well there were challenges and possibilities and, as I say, we supported the opposition. There was at least one more round of elections, where we tried to monitor to the degree that we could. Yet, at the end of the day there was no effective means of moving Mugabe. The opposition was unable to mobilize sufficient public in the streets to challenge him effectively. I'd say that in some ways Zimbabweans had a history of intimidation; intimidation certainly by Ian Smith and that regime, intimidation during the

independence campaign by Mugabe and intimidation in the campaign against Joshua Nkomo in Matabeleland. Most Zimbabweans or their parents have memories of that intimidation and never want to return to that sort of open civil conflict again. And Mugabe has used that in his favor.

Q: Often with embassies you end up with the senior officers, the ambassador, DCM and all you've been around the block you say okay this too shall pass and then you get junior officers who say for God's sake let's do something. Did you find that kind of split?

SULLIVAN: Not really I think that to the degree there was that phenomenon at the time I arrived, there had been a major and very activist AID mission very involved in democracy building, society building, etc., but in some ways doing their own thing without much coordination. I think we effectively implemented a system of a much more coordinated effort. That, notwithstanding, there were at least some individuals within that mission who were out on the edge, and the usual result of that would be that they would put themselves in situations where either people they were supporting would get arrested and we would try to intervene to prevent the worst. I wouldn't call it a policy dispute it was more differences over how to implement policy effectively.

We as an embassy were also fairly aggressive. We had one set of officers, who were documenting human rights abuses. They were out in the countryside and they were in effect rounded up by some so-called war veterans under the guidance of Mugabe's security apparatus. They amounted to sharp troops under Mugabe's political control. They came up and set upon our people, they beat an individual from an NGO who had brought our people to the site to talk to people. They laid a few blows on our embassy driver and instructed our group to follow them. Who knows what would have happened, but our embassy driver was wise enough to only follow them for a little and then speed off in the other direction. Our embassy people escaped the situation, but we faced viciousness like that fairly frequently.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, for instance, was being charged at one stage on trumped up treason charges so we and other embassies insisted on witnessing that trial and even forcing our way into the court room, not physically but by our presence. At the end of the day, those charges were dropped and our having insisted on our ability to witness the trial, as provided in Zimbabwean law, helped assure there could not be a secret judgment against him. There were certainly frequent circumstances of human rights abuse and most of what we could do was bear witness to it, document it in our human rights report, complain of it, and seek to have the United Nations pass resolutions condemning such violations. Some of those positions were being undercut by the failure of many Africans to speak out.

Q: What sort of human rights abuses were there?

SULLIVAN: Well there were a couple people killed, not high numbers but probably in the tens of opposition activists killed. Many tortured, many beaten as well as failure to abide by the commitments that Zimbabwe had made in their own constitution and

elsewhere to have a fair judicial system, fair civil procedures and humane prison treatment; much of that became politically manipulated.

Q: What about the British embassy and you and other embassies. Were you all sort of united or doing your thing? How did that work?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think we were quite united and the British embassy and we exchanged information closely. We had a somewhat larger embassy, but they had a lot of traditional relationships and a lot of information. We exchanged that information, we compared notes on how were could most effectively seek to influence the problems and most of the Europeans were in harmony. The European Union did take pretty strong positions, often at British urging. So the West was fairly united. I spent a lot of time with the Africans because I felt their taking strong positions was likely to be more effective than our taking strong positions. Many of their embassies, if not the majority, were in agreement with the criticism of Zimbabwe, but their governments back home took ambiguous positions. The most important country of all to Zimbabwe, South Africa did not take clear positions. Ironically the critical factor in breaking Ian Smith's government was the decision of the apartheid government of South Africa to end its support for Smith and, in effect, force him to negotiate towards a majority rule. This South African government, Mbeki, was not prepared to do a similar thing and wound up giving cover to Mugabe, even within internal African forums. I think South Africa's unwillingness to take a strong stand was the critical factor in having Africa as a whole not take a stronger stand against the abusive policies of Mugabe.

Q: It was far afield but was Qadhafi messing around in there?

SULLIVAN: Funny you should ask that but it was a little bit, a little bit, not a lot but a little bit. Ironically in the midst of my time, there were the beginnings of the great change in U.S.-Libyan relations in a way that made our concern about Libyan involvement in Zimbabwe moot. If the U.S. was now much closer to Libyan what was our problem with Libyan involvement in Zimbabwe. I think the broader point was that Mugabe found himself isolated from the West, which he used to admire. He speaks British English with a terrific accent and great vocabulary. He used to relish his trips to Europe, he had a new young wife who used to love to shop there and he was personally, I think, anguished over being excluded from this life. That said, he did what people do in circumstances like that. He turned to whomever he could and there were a series of countries and leaders willing to give him some comfort, Malaysia and several others. He used to travel there and had a close relationship with the previous Malaysian Prime Minister. He also cultivated better relations with China.

Q: Why would China care about there? I mean is it just…

SULLIVAN: Resources basically,. Zimbabwe does not have petroleum, but it does have a great deal of mineral resources. Zimbabwe's historic resource was chrome that was an issue way back when when the U.S. Senate sought to prevent the administration from boycotting Rhodesian chrome for fear that our only source of chrome would be the Soviet

Union. More recently there are other newer resources such as titanium. Zimbabwe had set up in the '90s some investment vehicles for mining and some of it produced significant investment resources. There was also some diamond mining taking place which, I understand, has increased substantially in the last couple of years. The instability in Zimbabwe was diminishing Zimbabwe's attractiveness to Western and even South African investors. China saw opportunities and beginning to invest at the time I was there.

Q: Did you have many discussions with the Chinese ambassador?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, I used to do some social events with him and so on. The Chinese at that time had a pretty common line whether it be in Cuba, Angola or Zimbabwe and it tends to be that, "Well sure we advise them to follow our economic reform model and yet we are not going to interfere in their internal affairs. We don't adopt political criteria in our assistance or our investments and, therefore, we are not going to raise political concerns in our conversations. And because we have a great shortage of resources, we acquire them wherever we can and will follow a strict commercial criteria."

Q: Well then you left there in 2004 was it?

SULLVAN: Correct.

Q: Whither Zimbabwe when you left?

SULLIVAN: Well I guess stuck, stuck and stuck in a bad place. There's been perhaps a slight improvement since then in that the opposition has joined the government and, at least, introduced some elements of economic rationality. But Mugabe turns 87 this year and doesn't think it is time for him to retire nor to prepare his succession. So it's a sad situation and I'm afraid the Zimbabwean people will continue to suffer until he does go one way or another. There is supposed to be a new election within another year, whether he will do that or he would ever agree to a fair election I am dubious. Certainly within his own party and we did have discussions with a number of people within his own party who wished that he would go, one of whom actually did put himself on the ballot as an independent candidate for president in the most recent presidential election about three years ago and received some modest support. But at the end of the day, most ZANU PF leaders are unwilling or unable to break with Mugabe. And ZANU- PF and Mugabe and his security forces are willing to use whatever force is necessary and whatever fraud is necessary in order to continue in power.

Q: What about social life?

SULLIVAN: Social life? For the majority of our time it wasn't bad, we could get around the country; we could have family come out and visit, go to the game parks and do some terrific things. Those things began to tighten up in our time. There was a period in which there wasn't enough gasoline and we were able to make a separate arrangement in which

we got enough gasoline for our own vehicles but certainly if you drove out to the deep country side and needed to refill you were in trouble.

There was another period in which local currency became unavailable and so there was no way to exchange your dollars for local currency because there wasn't any; yet you needed local currency in order to make most of your purchases. For us it was a relative hardship, we had some means of acquiring things, I think we even sent some convoys down to South Africa to pick up some supplies and bring them back. For our Zimbabwean employees it was a great hardship, an enormous hardship. This had been a relatively sophisticated financial system; we had already some years before instituted direct deposits. I recall the gardener at the residence who was not literate unlike the majority of Zimbabweans going down to use his ATM card to withdraw his money and instead gets a notice that must have said that the bank was out of currency. He put his card in again and it promptly got swallowed and he didn't have an ATM card anymore. We had to negotiate that for him but it was a huge handicap.

In the convoys of food that we began bringing up we began seeking to take care of our FSN staff as well; they were affected more than us.

Q: Oh yeah. When you left did you pay a farewell call?

SULLIVAN: No, I did not on Mugabe. I decided that it would not be productive, that there would be nothing to be gained. I did call on the foreign minister with whom we had a reasonable relationship but not on the president. I think I decided that it would not be productive and informed Washington that I did not think it would be productive and that we should just leave it to my successor to have the next meeting with the president. My successor had actually got in some difficulties in his confirmation hearings. The nature of these things was that if the U.S. has a difficult relationship with the country one is nominated for, Senators asked very tough questions in the hearings and one is expected to give very tough answers. Yet those tough answers are very unpopular in the country you are going to. So that happened and it became a bit of a flare up in the press with some question about whether Ambassador Dell's agrément should be withdrawn. I went in and managed to smooth that over and he was on route. In fact, my successor in Zimbabwe, Chris Dell, had also been my successor in Angola. Chris had the next meeting with Mugabe although I don't think it was any more productive than my meetings with Mugabe.

Q: What did you do when you left there?

SULLIVAN: I left and had requested to come back to the U.S. as a diplomat-in-residence. So that's what I did. I took a position as diplomat-in-residence at Tulane University in New Orleans and spent two years there.

Q: What were your impressions of the university?

SULLIVAN: Well the university is a good solid university. I happened to be there the summer of Hurricane Katrina; so that event dominated. I wound up for a time being the State Department's coordinator for international issues affecting New Orleans and the Gulf region in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The university itself was a good university; it was very disrupted and closed during the fall semester of 2005 after the hurricane but then reopened in the spring. Our strongest interest in the region and the unique role diplomats-in-residence could play was reaching out to students who otherwise might not consider the Foreign Service as a career. I used to spend a lot of my time not at Tulane but at other universities Dillard University, a historically Black university in New Orleans, Southern University another historically Black university in Baton Rouge. I think we had some very good people come out of those settings and make unique contributions to the Foreign Service.

Q: What was your impression of say the local government's response to Katrina?

SULLIVAN: It had numerous failings. I did not have too much direct responsibility until after Hurricane Katrina and then I did work for a time on a task force based in Baton Rouge. I, like everybody else, had to evacuate the city and basically stayed out and could not return to New Orleans for several months. For most of that period I was the State Department's specially designated emissary to a federal task force that was under FEMA leadership. Certainly the federal government had lots of failings as demonstrated in numerous studies thereafter in its response to Hurricane Katrina, but both the state and the local governments had lots of failings as well. The city of New Orleans in particular had a long history of failure to educate its own people and care adequately for its own people. So the public school system in New Orleans was a disaster. If there was anything good that came out of Katrina, it was creating the conditions for a virtual end of school board authority over local schools in favor of state of Louisiana intervention in that school system. Many charter schools were created and received private foundation support. The New Orleans school board in many cases had diverted funds that were to have been used for the education of children into contracts for their relatives and friends in very corrupt ways that led to convictions of a number of people. So it was a distressing situation. There were people who managed to make it out of that environment and deserved great credit for it.

I think Louisianans, in particular, have very strong roots and a lot of unique qualities to contribute. So for those that I did manage to recruit, some at Dillard University, some at Loyola University, which was right next door to Tulane, a Haitian-American lady, in particular, I think that they really are in a position to make very interesting contributions to the foreign service. Cynics used to say that New Orleans was the closest we get in the United States to third world conditions with a combination of poverty, corruption and many other problems. Yet they are people with a tremendous amount of humanity. When I came back to the city for the first time after the hurricane and would visit a newly reopened grocery store, we customers and workers would ask each other how we had fared in the storm. The answer that I received most frequently was that they were blessed because even though they had lost their possessions, they and their loved ones had survived. That is a special type of humanity.

Q: Oh.

SULLIVAN: I don't know many parts of the United States that would have not such a spiritual response to their misfortune.

Q: No, so just to wind this up what are you up to now?

SULLIVAN: Well I did do after those two years I did two more years with the inspector general's office, which probably I can't talk about very much in any case.

Q: No.

SULLIVAN: Then I retired in September of 2008 and resettled to Walnut Creek, California. I still do unusually two to three months a year stints for the office of the inspector general so I've lead inspection teams since retiring to one to three African countries, one to Laos and Malaysia last year and to Korea and Mongolia this past spring.

Q: Where is Walnut Creek?

SULLILVAN: Walnut Creek is East Bay so it's about twenty miles east of San Francisco, 15 miles East of Oakland.

Q: Oh yes.

SULLIVAN: Yeah.

Q: Okay, by the way I am starting with Jack Leonard tomorrow.

SULLIVAN: Great, great, great. I would say particularly in the business of Nicaragua at the time of negotiating its way into elections Jack has insights that I don't think even anybody in Washington has. I mean I used to talk to him daily.

Q: Oh that's great.

SULLIVAN: But he didn't need to tell me everything he was doing to make things work. He just got them done.

Q: Okay, well anyway I want to thank you very much Joe and what will happen now is we've sent, in fact, our last interview has gone to the transcriber so this one will. So within a while you'll get the full transcript and you can edit it and also not just edit it but add. I mean gee I didn't add this, I can expand on that. Please do.

SULLIVAN: How should I add that just type it in?

Q: You will get it in electronic form. If you can work just put it in.

SULLIVAN: Okay.

Q: You can put in something to keep the conversational thing going and say, "Oh yes, I would like to mention so and so." I mean that way but don't worry about my questions; it is your account that is going to hold up.

SULLIVAN: Great.

Q: Okay this is great I really appreciate this.

SULLIVAN: Likewise Stu. It's been terrific working with you.

Q: Okay well take care.

End of interview