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

LEWIS M. (JACK) WHITE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the June 19, 2001. This is an interview with Lewis M. White, W-H-I-T-E, who

is known as Jack. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy and this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. Jack, let's sort of start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

WHITE: Yes, I was born August 22, 1921, in Chase City, Virginia, where my father was opening up a Coca Cola bottling plant. But my father was really from Bedford County, Virginia, where they were settled before 1800.

Q: Where's Bedford County?

WHITE: Bedford County is 200 miles south of Washington, and it has a certain notoriety because on June 6 they dedicated the national D-Day memorial there; President Bush went down to address the 15,000 people who came.

Q: That's where so many people from the 29th Division came.

WHITE: That's right. They had over 35 people from Bedford--the National Guard unit--23 died on that day.

Q: Let's talk first about your father, then your mother. What's the background of your father's family?

WHITE: Well, if we went back to the original background, to the early history of Virginia, they practically all were farmers; they were landowners. And when they came, on both my mother and father's side, to central Virginia, Amherst County and Bedford County, in the 1700s, they still owned farms. Eventually they got into business; my father was in business, and they went into the professions, of various kinds, as the farms got smaller. So, in my generation they were all educated in the college.

Q: How about your father, where did he go to college?

WHITE: He didn't go to college. He was in rural Virginia, where even the local school was just a log school at that time, so he did it on his own. He read a great deal, and so he was more or less self-educated. My mother was raised seven miles away, she got a better preparation, living with relatives in Newport News, and she did go to college.

Q: Well, let's take your father first. Your father's business you say was with the Coca-Cola bottling plant.

WHITE: Yes, after four years in Chase City, where he opened up a Coca Cola bottling plant and managed it successfully with a profit every year. Then he got a job as manager of a chain of Coca-Cola bottling plants in Michigan and we moved to Grand Rapids. So we lived there for about five years, until I was eight years old, and then he moved back to Virginia, where he always planned to go back when he had enough money. He settled on the family farm, in the family since 1819, and built his dream house, a large brick home. It is across the road from the brick home of my great-great-great grandfather, which in his

time was the manor house of a plantation of about 1,300 acres. The village here is called Cifax, Virginia. It was originally called Sycamore, but there were so many Sycamores that the Post Office asked the postmaster to select another name. He had a horse named Cifax and that is how the village got its name. And Cifax, Virginia is now on the landmark register, both local and national. On the Virginia Landmark Register it is called the Cifax Rural Historic District. The original manor house was called The Cedars and the one built by my father was called Glen Alpine. Both of these houses passed out of the family when my father died in 1962 and my mother moved to Richmond. When the Worshams bought The Cedars in the early eighties, Mrs. Worsham and I collaborated on a book on the neighborhood entitled *The Cedars of Cifax: A Virginia Rural Historic District.* I contributed many of the photos for the book. The place is a very beautiful part of Virginia, within sight of the Peaks of Otter in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Q: What about your mother and her background and her upbringing?

WHITE: Well, she lived on a farm, about 900 acres, seven miles from where my father was raised. He was raised at The Cedars. My mother was a Rucker. The original Rucker came to Virginia in 1700 and the family has proliferated. From 1990 to 2,000 I was treasurer of the Rucker Family Society and we had around 750 members and was still growing. We have reunions every two years.

Q: But your mother, her family was of basically the same stock, coming from, having_?

WHITE: That's right. Since both the Ruckers and the Whites came to Bedford County before 1800 and married into families which were also early arrivals, we always had a lot of people around who were kin. On my father's side we have a book called Our Kin, which has over 800 pages, and includes most of the old families of Bedford County, and we have another one on my mother's side *The Rucker Genealogy*, which includes all the Ruckers, so we know that we're related to many of the old families, in that region. The tradition is that the Ruckers were French Huguenots even though the name is Germanic, but they married into families with English names. Both of these books were first published in the early 1930s but they have been reprinted several times.

Q: Where did your mother go to college_?

WHITE: She went to Farmville, which was a teachers college at that time.

Q: She went to where?

WHITE: It is now called Longwood College and is located in Farmville, Virginia, about 40 miles east of Lynchburg. She took teacher training.

Q: Teacher training. But her parents were basically farming?

WHITE: They were. But none of the descendants were. They went into something else.

Q: What about, how did your mother and father meet? I mean, they must have met when they were kids.

WHITE: They did. My father was about eight years older, and for a long time she was just one of the younger girls: he was more interested in her older sister. My mother had three sisters and four brothers. All of the girls were very attractive and popular. Eventually Dad saw that Mother was developing into a very pretty and vivacious girl, so he took an interest in her. They started dating and soon they were married when Mother was 20. It was a good marriage and we had a happy home. I was the oldest and had two brothers and three

Q: Well, do you recall, before you went to Grand Rapids anything about_? You grew up in a small town, then?

WHITE: Yes. Chase City had maybe 2000 people. Several of the people from Cifax were in the Coca Cola bottling business when it was getting started. They had the contacts. The Thomson family, one of our kin, owned the general store in Cifax. Henry Thomson married Lula Lupton and the Luptons were among the pioneers in franchises for Coca Cola bottling plants. A number of the Thomsons and Luptons became wealthy in this business. One of the Thomson boys was a contemporary of my father in Cifax and he built one of the most beautiful estates in Virginia on the road between Cifax and Lynchburg.

Q: How about as a kid? Did you go to elementary schools in Virginia before you went to Grand Rapids?

WHITE: No, I went to kindergarten and the first grade in Grand Rapids, and then we came back and I entered the local school, which had seven grades. It had two rooms, one teacher would teach the first, second and third grades, and another teacher would teach the next four grades. We used to walk to school on dirt roads at that time, and I can't say that we got the best education in the world in that rural climate. But that's the kind of schools they had, and before us they were even worse than that. Now they're centralized and it's quite different.

Q: You came back from Grand Rapids when?

WHITE: 1929.

Q: All right, and then in high school you were in Virginia.

WHITE: I was the youngest one; I was a lot smaller than anybody else in my class. I had skipped the third grade.

Q: The runt of the litter. Well now, you came back and started schooling just at the time when a certain thing started, and that was the Great Depression. How did that affect you all?

WHITE: Well, actually, it was a little tough in the beginning, but my father was a partner in the Coca Cola bottling plant in Decatur, Illinois, so that began to produce a good income, enough so that - he had six children in his family, and he educated all of them in college. He sent the two youngest ones to prep schools instead of the local high school. And he built a nice big home, so it was the earnings from his investment that really paid off. Eventually as finances improved my parents joined the country club in Lynchburg, they were socially accepted everywhere, and had many friends, both in the rural areas and in the surrounding cities. But my father ran the old family farm, too, because he really liked doing it.

Q: Tell me, do you recall anything about the elementary school, anything that you were particularly interested in, studies or activities?

WHITE: I think I was especially interested in geography and history. And my father subscribed to so many magazines, The National Geographic included. It seems that he subscribed to almost every magazine there was. He also subscribed to a book club, The Literary Guild. I started reading them at a very early age. So we kept up with what was going on in the world.

Q: How about, yes, you recall the War Between the States, was that a major subject, both in school and discussion, coming from where you were in Virginia?

WHITE: No, I don't think so, I think actually people were pretty reconciled to the situation, and that being Americans, nobody wanted a separate Confederate state, nobody wanted slavery. I think the situation had been accepted, and probably among the most patriotic parts of the country was the South. My father used to say he was tired of hearing about the civil war and a number of his best friends were northerners who had moved into the area.

Q: What about black-white relations at the time you were there?

WHITE: I think we actually loved the blacks that we knew, and we were very fond of them because there was a certain loyalty - they felt loyalty toward us and we felt affection for them. And we still look back with a lot of love and respect on all the blacks we knew around home, and there were a lot of blacks around home. We wrote about them in our book on Cifax.

My ancestors on every side were in the Confederacy. My great grandfather, John Milton White, fought all the way through and was finally captured in one of the last battles. He was a lieutenant. Before that both the Whites and the Ruckers were in the Revolution.

Q: Where'd you go to high school?

WHITE: We had a consolidated high school at that time called New London Academy, which was really the oldest chartered secondary school in Virginia. Thomas Jefferson had

his place Poplar Forest close by and he knew the school. His nephew went there. It was private for a long time and then finally they made it public. It wasn't comparable in my time to the better city schools, but we managed to learn something there and there was a good group of people there. I always thought they were wonderful people, the people I knew in Bedford County. They were my schoolmates. I still go down almost every year to the high school reunion.

Q: Were any of the teachers there particularly remarkable from your point of view?

WHITE: I think they were dedicated teachers, and if you wanted to learn, you would learn. I think I would pretty much leave it at that. They did their job, and I think I learned Latin, French, whatever they had to teach. If there were any failings, it was no doubt my own fault. For example, I was elected as president of the senior class, but out of some perversity I refused to accept it.

Q: Do you recall any books that were particularly influential in your learning about the world or about life or anything like that?

WHITE: I don't recall that the school I went to at Cifax had any library at all, and the New London Academy didn't have a very big library - but where I learned was from the Literary Guild that my father subscribed to and all the magazines; he took, quite a few, and we had a neighbor, a cousin, who went to Harvard and Washington Lee and had a big library of boys' books from a previous era. He loaned us books all the time. We read all those books - Tom Swift and his inventions, a series on the adventures of the Boy Scouts around the turn of the century. My father subscribed to three boys' magazines for us: *The American Boy, The Open Road for Boys, and Boys' Life.*

Q: In high school, did you find that you were concentrating on anything in particular?

WHITE: Well, I did take drawing, I liked art. And I liked history. I liked French, I liked Latin. I didn't like math very well at the time, but later on when I was studying math on my own I developed a fondness for math. But at the time I wasn't too fond of math.

Q: You graduated from high school about 1939 or so_?

WHITE: '38.

Q: That's right, you skipped a grade. What about events in Europe, were these of any concern within your family, to you or to the school?

WHITE: I think at the time people were more concerned about the Depression. And we thought the British and the French were powerful countries and they could probably deal with the situation without us. And I think the general tendency at that time was probably more isolationist. We had to have Pearl Harbor to get everybody patriotically involved and behind the war effort.

Q: What was the family's attitude towards Franklin Roosevelt?

WHITE: My father and his closest friends who were businessmen were not much in favor of the New Deal. But I myself thought, reading about the New Deal, that it was the best way to deal with the problem at hand. The CCC camps and a lot of programs like that were very good for the country. And I probably didn't think too much about capitalism and communism at the time. But looking back, it seems that FDR saved capitalism. We subscribed to *Time* magazine from its beginning and I always read it from cover to cover. We also subscribed to *Life* and *Look*.

Q: One does get that impression, looking back. So you graduated in 1938. What did you do?

WHITE: My parents thought that since I'd come from a rural school and was rather small, that I should go to a small college first. They had met the treasurer from Hampden-Sydney College, which was about 50 miles from home - a small liberal arts school with about 400 students. It had an excellent reputation with a high number of graduates in Who's Who, the highest per capita in the U.S. So they thought it would be good for me to go and spend two years at Hampden-Sydney and maybe from then go on to something bigger.

Q: Well, how did you find Hampton Sydney at that time?

WHITE: I thought that Hampton Sydney at that time was a place where I met a lot of boys who became good friends. I joined a fraternity. They had a certain amount of hazing of freshman, but I could take it. They had some excellent teachers, but if I compare the teaching there with what I got at Georgetown, I would say it wasn't quite as much what I was interested in. I did extremely well at Greek but algebra was a disaster. This was my own fault because later on my own I developed a fondness for math and had no difficulty in solving the problems. And when I switched from the assistant football coach who was trying to teach math to the regular teacher I did well.

Q: Well then, after two years through '41 - you went where, to Georgetown?

WHITE: Yes, I had a fraternity brother who had the catalogs of Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He had examples of the old Foreign Service exam, and looking over the exam I thought, "Well, if I can learn enough to pass these exams, I'll have the kind of education I want." I thought I could pass it; so I persuaded my father that if he would send me to Georgetown University School of Foreign Service that I would be better equipped than I would be by just getting a liberal arts education.

And at that time there was a lot of business administration in the Foreign Service School, and since he was business oriented, I think that he was impressed that I would be studying commercial law and accounting and all of that. And he always wanted to learn a foreign language himself, so I persuaded him, and he agreed to send me to Georgetown University, which I liked very much. I will always appreciate my father permitting me to

go to Georgetown. It changed my life. I know he would have loved having an education like that himself, but since he didn't get the opportunity, he did his best to see that his children did get an education. I owe a lot to my parents.

Q: So you were there from "41 to_?

WHITE: I was there from '41 to '43, and then my Draft Board called me up. I was ready to start my senior year and wanted to know if I would be able to finish it before being called up. They said that if I joined the "enlisted reserve," they'd probably permit me to finish the senior year. I tried to get into the enlisted reserve, and they said, "You're underweight and one of your eyes is bad, so we can't accept you." So I signed up for my senior year at Georgetown, but after about a month the Draft Board called me up. I passed with flying colors the exam to get into the army, and I was glad that I was accepted, since I really wanted to serve.

Q: Let's go back to Georgetown first, Father Walsh was the head of the School of Foreign Service._?

WHITE: Yes, he was.

Q: How did you find the School of Foreign Service?

WHITE: Well, I found it excellent. First when I went into the second year Spanish class, the members of the class were speaking Spanish and I didn't speak Spanish because they didn't teach it at Hampton Sydney: they taught Spanish at Hampden-Sydney, but they didn't teach you to speak it. We had a Mexican at Georgetown and he was teaching you how to speak it. So I had to go to some Spanish school and get some tutoring before I could pursue Spanish at Georgetown.

Q: This was a private organization, S-A-N-Z is it?

WHITE: Yes, Sanz Spanish School. I went there for a while and learned enough to get back into the Spanish class. Father Walsh was teaching geopolitics and he was a wonderful teacher. After I was drafted, my father was having trouble getting a refund because I'd only been there a month. But I wrote to Father Walsh and he sent me a very nice letter, and I got a refund right away.

Q: I take it from your background that you probably came from what, a Protestant background?

WHITE: Yes, yes it was. They were Episcopalians up until the Revolution, and then they usually became either Methodists or Baptists, and now a lot of them have back to being Episcopalians. After I left home my folks joined the Episcopalian Church in Bedford.

Q: Did you find the School of Foreign Service very Catholic, Jesuit, or not?

WHITE: I probably didn't know what to make of all the priests on the campus and what their role was. I didn't know whether to call them Brother or Father. But eventually I began to feel very much at home and got to know the students. I had some Catholic roommates, I developed a fondness for the Catholics, and especially those of Irish descent. I appreciated the ethnic diversity of the U.S. And I still go back to Georgetown every time I get a chance, and I contribute $100 annually to their fund.

Q: Well, what happened when the military, you got drafted in 1943?

WHITE: It was in October 1942. I was drafted and I was sent to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma and an Ordinance Company. Actually, they called me "limited service," because I can't read out of my left eye, even though I can see everything perfectly well and at that time didn't even need glasses. We had an Indian squad leader and he recommended me for promotion to Private First Class.

After a while they wanted to form another company, so they made me a Tech Sergeant, that's one with the five stripes. So I went out to help train the next company. We trained at Camp Polk, Louisiana, and received regular infantry training. After about a year of training we were ready to go overseas. They said, "Well, you're 'limited service' and we're going overseas, and if you want to go overseas, you'll have to volunteer for it." So, of course, I volunteered. We crossed the Atlantic in a Liberty ship in December 1943; we spent a month in Algeria. That was fascinating—the first foreign country I had ever visited.

Q: What outfit were you in?

WHITE: The 173rd Ordnance Base Depot Company. We still have our reunions, every year. I organized one here, two years ago in Washington, and many came. I had a bus take them around Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore. So I'm still loyal to the old boys. I'll go again to one in August out in Spokane, Washington. Most of the men in our unit came from the West Coast.

In January we boarded a former Dutch passenger ship for an unknown destination. The Germans were still in Italy so they could bomb us. I have learned only recently that we were originally destined for Italy, but the Germans sunk a troop transport in the Mediterranean on Nov. 26, 1943 and over a thousand U. S. soldiers perished. Included was an ordnance company headed for India. So we were diverted to India. We arrived in Bombay, got on a train, went to Calcutta, and then on a riverboat up the Brahmaputra River to Assam in northeastern India where there are a lot of tea growing plantations.

We had a camp there, using a former tea warehouse, and we supplied ordnance for the Chinese. We shipped everything over the Himalayas, the "Hump." We didn't have a road through Burma to China at the time. We shared a camp with Merrill's Marauders - they had one side and we had the other with a field in between. They had a cement slab in the field where they used to cremate the Ghurka soldiers.

After a year of supplying the Chinese from Assam, a new company was formed in Kunming, China to operate an ordnance depot at that end. We were mainly handling automotive parts. I was chosen to go to Kunming, China, and spent a year there. So we flew over the Hump, and we were in Kunming when they finished building the Ledo Road through Burma.

Q: That's L-E-D-O.

WHITE: Yes.

Q: In the first place, while you were in India, was there much contact with the British Army, the Indian Army?

WHITE: There was more contact with the British. The Indians were agitating for independence and we wanted to concentrate on winning the war. We had an instance in our company in which a number of our men got court-martialed because they saw a case of Belgian pistols and thought they were authorized to take some as souvenirs. One of them sold a Belgian pistol to an Indian and the British found out about it. Fortunately, I didn't know about those pistols and wouldn't have wanted one if I had known.

Q: Were there British troops near you?

WHITE: No, there weren't. But we were occasionally invited to rest camps where we mingled with the British. I spent a few days at one rest camp. We had very friendly relations with the British. We thought it was kind of peculiar the way they played ball, kicking the soccer ball around. We went out with one British soldier and we paid for everything. I think he was embarrassed because we caught him without any money. Because later he invited us out and he couldn't do enough for us.

Q: What about Merrill's Marauders, they were quite badly chewed up, weren't they?

WHITE: They came from Guadalcanal after they had cleaned out the Japanese on Guadalcanal. They fought the Japanese in the jungles of northern Burma and when they captured the town of Myitkyina it was possible to complete the Ledo road. We used to hear them over there shooting off their guns, and celebrating because they were coming back out of the jungle. We lost a plane of ordnance people going over the Hump, too. They had to come back through the Burmese jungle after the plane crashed. I had no fear flying over the Hump, but I have read that many planes were lost on that route.

Q: When you went into China, you were in Kunming?

WHITE: Yes, Kunming, the capital of Yunan province..

Q: You were there what, forty_?

WHITE: One year, we were there in '45. We were there when the war ended.

Q: What was the situation when you got there?

WHITE: At the time Governor Yung Lung—I believe that was his name-- was a warlord in control of the province. He was supposed to be pro-Nationalist, but Chiang Kai-shek didn't trust him. So when the end of the war came and he needed somebody to go down and disarm the Japanese in Vietnam - French Indochina they called it - he sent Governor Yung Lung down and the next day we saw that Nationalist soldiers had moved into Kunming to take over. Chiang Kai-shek was consolidating his hold on Yunan province.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Chinese while you were there?

WHITE: We had a lot of contact. More contact than we had with the Indians. I even made a good friend there, Donald Young, who looked me up in New York after the war. They would entertain us and we would entertain them. The Chinese girls were attractive, but I never did date a Chinese girl. I was shy at the time. Some of the guys did get dates with the Chinese girls and we always had some at our company parties.

Q: Were you there when the Chinese launched their big offensive to pick up the airfields and all that? Or did that happen before?

WHITE: What was the question?

Q: Well, there had been a big Japanese offensive against the airfields, I think we put B-29s in, and I was wondering - Kunming was pretty far away, I guess?

WHITE: We used to get attacks from the Japanese trying to bomb the airfield. The first time they came over, we hid among the Chinese graves, which were built above the ground. Then we built some trenches and we would go there and hide. But they were very ineffective in Kunming. And I don't think they were effective any place in the western part of China, because we clobbered them.

Q: What was your impression of the Chinese military that you saw?

WHITE: I think Stilwell didn't trust Chiang Kai-shek, but he probably worked well with the Chinese people who were in his command. The Chinese did keep the Japanese from going beyond a certain point--but I don't think we thought that they were very well trained or equipped troops. There was a problem with training. We were trying to train them and equip them. Maybe the people that actually had contact with the soldiers would have a different opinion. I don't know, but the Chinese we dealt with, we had a pretty good opinion of them.

Q: While you were sitting in China and India, were you thinking of what the future would hold for you, what did you want to do?

WHITE: Well, yes, I still thought that I would like to go into the Foreign Service; I even

started studying Mandarin there when I had a teacher in Kunming, but we moved our camp and I lost the teacher; so I had to stop studying Mandarin. I saw the U.S. Consulate building there in Kunming, I didn't know at the time that I would eventually know in DACOR (Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired), the man who was there as consul.

Q: Who's that?

WHITE: Wellborn, Alfred Wellborn. I saw him recently at the DACOR Memorial Day ceremony. I had always thought that I would take the Foreign Service exam at some point. But I was anxious to spend some time in the States, date some American girls, and finish my education at Georgetown before applying to take the exam.

Q: Did you come back and finish at Georgetown?

WHITE: I did, in about six months. I came back in January, and by that summer I'd already finished it.

Q: That was when?

WHITE: That was in '46.

Q: Had you taken the Foreign Service exam at all at this point?

WHITE: No. I took the Foreign Service exam one time in New York in 1949, but I got - I think you had to have 70 - and I got 68. So I decided I would take it again. And when I was in Paris - I went to Paris in 1950 - I studied French at the Alliance Française and started at the Sorbonne. I took the exam at the Embassy in Paris. And unfortunately when I was taking the languages exam, I got sick. I think the tension was so great, that I asked to be excused and I went outside where they could keep an eye on me. But I couldn't finish the exam, so I didn't pass the language exam. They said, "If you pass the rest of it you can take the language exam again." So I passed the rest of it, and then when I went back to Washington, I took both French and Spanish, and I passed both of them.

Q: This is, you say 1950. What happened between 1946 and '50?

WHITE: I had a class in exporting at Georgetown and the teacher was with the Department of Commerce. He said there were some jobs in the regional offices; if we had good enough grades, we could qualify. So I got a job with the New York office of the Department of Commerce as a commercial agent. They were overwhelmed with trade complaints coming in from abroad against American exporters. The wanted me to work on this backlog of complaints. So I would get a batch of complaints against firms in a given area and every day I'd go around to visit these firms and see if I could settle the complaints. It wasn't an easy job.

Q: Did you do that for almost three or four years?

WHITE: I was there doing that work until I went to Paris in 1950. It was a great experience living in New York at that time and I enjoyed it tremendously. My roommate was my brother's roommate at Virginia Military Institute and he knew my family well. We had a large circle of friends and we entertained a lot. He had been a Air Force officer in Europe during the war.

Q: Did the Foreign Service still have a certain amount of priority for you?

WHITE: Well, yes it did. I used to see the FSOs coming through the New York office. I'd talk to them; in fact, later I met some of them that I now know very well that I remember when they came through for briefing. I was always thinking I might try taking the exam and see if I had a chance of passing it. We had an FSO who was assigned to the New York office. I used to talk to him and he encouraged me to take the exam. But I still rather enjoyed living in New York. I enjoyed being back with my family, being with Americans again. But it was intriguing, the whole idea of serving the United States abroad. I always thought of the United States as being on the right side of history. I thought we had a lot to contribute, and I wanted to be a part of it.

Q: Had you developed your own family yet at this point; were you married or_?

WHITE: No, I didn't marry until I got to my first post in Bogotá, Colombia. I dated a lot and I considered getting married once or twice, but I never was really in love until I met my wife and we have been married for 48 years.

Q: You took the written exam in 1950, you said. When did you take the oral exam?

WHITE: '51, the spring of '51.

Q: Do you recall anything, any of the questions or_?

WHITE: Well, yes, I do recall many of them. Actually, there were four of us who went in there, and I was probably one of the least impressive looking of the bunch. As I recall the examiners were Ambassador Dreyfuss, returning from Afghanistan. Mr. Merrill - I think he was the head of the Economic Commission for Europe at one time. There was a Mr. Brown who was the retired head of the civil service. There was a gentleman, a Mr. Moser, I believe, who had been head of the Far East Division of the Department of Commerce. There was also a representative of the private sector, a gentleman from Westinghouse.

They wanted to know about China, they wanted to know about India. They wanted to know what books I was reading and what newspapers I was reading. They had part of the exam in French; I was able to at least communicate with Ambassador Dreyfuss in French.

They wanted to know my interest in art. In fact, we had a discussion where they eventually decided I was right and they were wrong. Just where the impressionist art was in Paris, not in the Louvre but over in the Jeu de Paume. There was no question they

asked me that I didn't answer correctly, except one about what kind of plant was established in Hopewell, Virginia after World War I. But they did ask me a difficult one: "Why did you have difficulty with algebra at Hampden Sydney?" "Do you think you could get out the post's books?" I said, "I took two years of accounting at Georgetown and I did very well." And, actually, the only reason I did poorly on algebra at Hampden Sydney was because my teacher was the assistant football coach, the class of the main teacher being too full. Since then I have studied algebra on my own, and what seemed hard then seems easy now. And when I had trigonometry under the main math teacher I did well.

Q: Were you told at the time you had passed?

WHITE: Yes. They called the two of us who had passed in and told us we had passed. The other one now serves with me on the Musical Committee of DACOR.

Q: Who's this?

WHITE: Franklin Crawford. We had lunch together after being informed that we had passed and we compared notes. Oh, yes, another thing they asked me about was my drinking habits. I'm practically a teetotaler, but my friends - my brother's roommate at Virginia Military Institute for one, drank quite a bit and my best friend up there who went to Paris with me - he was a lieutenant j.g. (junior grade) in the Navy during the war - was a hard drinker. So probably my group of friends had a reputation of hard drinking, but for my own part, I hardly ever took a drink that I would finish. Franklin Crawford said they asked him the same thing.

Q: Actually, at the time I think they were concerned that you might not drink.

WHITE: I told them that if I were offered a drink, I would take it; I wasn't a teetotaler.. I would take it, but I didn't drink very much. Just whatever they had to offer, I'd take it. I still don't drink very much, just a little wine with a meal, a little beer if there is something that goes with beer, pork for instance.

Q: I'm just trying to recreate the times. I think there was a concern at times that they might end up with teetotalers, in particular people who might be rather vehement teetotalers, which, given the Foreign Service, if you were abroad and you didn't serve wine and drinks this could be a detriment.

WHITE: I think I gave the right answer; if the hosts serve alcohol I'll drink it, but not too much of it. And then they wanted to know about my girlfriends. I had lots of girlfriends, but they were interested at that time in homosexuality; they wanted to see a picture of the girl I was more or less engaged to. Fortunately I had my wallet with her picture in it. I persuaded them that I liked girls. We always did a lot of entertaining in New York and we always invited girls.

Q: I took my exam in '54 and I remember I was engaged, and that seemed to take care of

that sort of thing.

WHITE: Well, I was engaged more or less, but I changed my mind and married somebody else.

Q: When did you come in to the Foreign Service?

WHITE: In October ’51. I didn’t have to wait too long after I passed the oral.

Q: Did you have regular training; I mean did you go into basic officer’s course?

WHITE: That’s right. We took three months of that.

Q: Do you recall any of the people on it, what they were like; I mean, how was the training?

WHITE: I thought it was very good, extremely good. At the time, we had language training. I had Spanish, intensive Spanish. We took a field trip to New York and we went to the U.N., I believe. We went to different places in New York. I thought it was a very good course and top-notch people there. There was one person there that was trying to persuade us - he seemed like an atheist - that we had to have an open mind about different religions of the world. We sort of discounted what he had to say, and kept your own view of things.

Q: Was Haxie Lee Smith, or something, there, a linguist?

WHITE: That’s right, they had two people in the language class; I thought that was very good. They had a linguist and a native speaker of the language. And eventually, I got qualified in both French and Spanish in the State Department.

Q: How about your fellow classmates. Were they pretty much all veterans at that time?

WHITE: I think so. I was one of the oldest ones. So it is possible that a number of them were too young for much service, if any, in World War II. I know one was a captain. They were all highly educated and a fine group of people in my judgment; I think maybe two made ambassador. They all had substantial careers, I think. Some left the government to go into banking.

Q: Were you given any choice of where you would go, or was this in the laps of the gods?

WHITE: I think it was in the laps of the gods. I didn’t really care where I went. They could send me anyplace they wanted to. I had that view all the way through the Foreign Service; if they said they wanted me to go to someplace, well, I’d go there, and make friends and actually end up liking the place.

Q: Where were you assigned?

WHITE: I was assigned to Bogotá, Colombia.

Q: And did you go straight there?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: How did you get there?

WHITE: We went by plane from Miami, but I remember when we got a third of the way from Jamaica to Barranquilla, Colombia, we had engine trouble and we had to go back. So we spent the night in Jamaica, which I liked very much. It had such a nice tropical atmosphere. And then we went on the next day.

Q: You were in Bogotá from when to when?

WHITE: I got there around January '52, and I spent three years there. I think I left around December '54. Three years.

Q: What was Colombia like when you got there?

WHITE: Well, the big event was the "Bogotazo" in '48.

Q: You might explain what that was.

WHITE: Well, the Liberal party was pretty much in control - Alfonso Michelsen and Eduardo Santos - during the thirties. In the 1946 elections, the Liberals were split with two candidates, Gabriel Turbay Ayala, a moderate, and Jorje Eliecer, a populist on the left. The Conservative candidate Mariano Ospina Perez won the election because of this split in the Liberals. At first he had Liberals in his cabinet but eventually they were excluded. The Liberals united behind Gaitan for the 1950 elections. Then Gaitan was assassinated at a time when the OAS was meeting in Bogota. The resulting outbreak of violence was called the "Bogatzo." About 1,500 people were killed and 20,000 wounded.

The Liberals stayed out of the 1949 elections and the Conservative candidate Laureano Gomez. He was the publisher of *El Siglo*, the Conservative newspaper. He was way on the right side of the conservative party. He didn't have any Liberals in his government. He admired Franco and he wanted to have a constitution that would be more or less along the Phalangist lines of Franco.

He was always anti-American, but in spite of all that, he sent a battalion to Korea during the Korean War. I think at that time he was thinking that the United States was the principal protection against communism, so as far right as he was he thought we were the best alternative for a lot of leftist activity in Colombia. It wasn't safe to go into certain regions of the country at that time.

When I was still there, they had a coup by the military, the first one in a hundred years. It was led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, chief of staff of the army. At the time both Liberals and moderate Conservatives preferred Rojas Pinilla to Laureano Gomez with his new constitution. So Rojas Pinilla was approved as president and later he was elected for a full term as president. But eventually he became dictatorial and unpopular.

And then after that the Conservatives and the Liberals got together in 1958 and decided they would have sixteen years of alternating the presidency. The first one was Alberto Lleras Camargo, and he was a very good man on the Liberal side. At one time, he came into my office for a visa for him and his wife when I was in charge of the consular section. I knew his background. Both he and his wife had diplomatic passports. I was pretty new to the game and the regulations did not say that as an ex-president he was entitled to a diplomatic visa. At the time he was the publisher of a weekly magazine like *Time*, called *La Semana* I knew that he was a good friend of the U.S., that he had been secretary general of the Organization of American States, and that he had briefly been provisional president of Colombia in 1945 when President Alfonso Lopez resigned. I did not want to have him bring in wife so that both could be fingerprinted for tourist visas.

So I explained to him my situation. He said, "Well, what kind of visa did you give Alfonso Lopez?" So I looked it up. Lopez was an ex-president and we gave him a diplomatic visa. So we had a precedent and I was delighted. Later I found I probably could have decided it all on my own in spite of all those regulations, but I was new to the game and I was in charge of the consulate, responsible to Congress for every visa I issued.

Q: When you arrived there, what was your first job?

WHITE: I was first a vice consul in the consular section. The consul was Bill Kane. His wife and children had returned to the United States. Bill was living alone and suggested we get an apartment together. He was handling German passports and everything connected with the Germans. He was also handling the immigrant visas and I was handling the non-immigrant visas and the citizenship. Then after a while they rotated me into the economic section under Tom Campen. Then when Bill was transferred they put me in charge of the consular section as the only officer there. I liked consular work as well as economic work.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WHITE: At first we had Capus Waynick. He was a newspaper publisher in North Carolina and a political appointee. After that we had Rudy Schoenfeld, who was career man, an old bachelor. He was ambassador in Guatemala before coming to Colombia. In London during World War II he was minister to the representatives of governments-in-exile. On the whole I've always preferred career ambassadors to political appointees.

Q: In the consular section, was there much of a demand for visitors' visas; I mean were many people going from Colombia?

WHITE: There was a huge demand. The waiting room was always full. Visa applicants had to make an appointment and you had to check to see if they were excluded by our legislation. The U. S. came out with new visa regulations while I was there, excluding over 20 categories of people.

It was difficult to give people visas without forcing them to wait for our security check. We had lookout cards going way back to the war years and we frequently had to get into old files that were not in the consular section. I remember we had a lookout card on one man and we didn't get clearance in time for him to make his plane. The investigation showed there was nothing against him. I felt so badly about it that I invited him and his family to dinner and gave them their visas and made some friends that way. I felt a great responsibility to abide by the law in issuing visas. But I thought it was great experience.

Q: How well did you find you were supported by the Colombians that were working for the embassy, the FSNs?

WHITE: Oh, they were great. Actually, I would say that the ones I had were great. But the one that was a staff employee before I got there in the visa section was selling visas, so they removed him. He was gone by the time I got there.

Q: Was the drug problem at all_?

WHITE: I don't recall in any big drug problem like they and we have now. We did have to inspect coffins in which bodies were being shipped back to the States to see if there was some contraband inside. I know of one case where we had an airplane accident and an employee of Texaco's plane ran into a military plane and he was killed. I was supposed to go and check whether there was just his body in the coffin or whether they stuck something else in there, too. That went back to the old days of Prohibition, I guess. I don't recall any great concern about drugs at that time.

Q: Were you in the consular section most of the time, or did you move around at all?

WHITE: I moved around. I worked more time in the consular section than in the economic section. But they were rotating me. I thought it was very good experience. The problem with the economic section at that time was the lack of statistics on Colombia; it made it very difficult to do economic reporting; they didn't have the statistics themselves. I had excellent relations with the chief of statistics in Colombia. He used to invite me to parties in his home.

Q: Was this a lack of organization or was there a demand for statistics?

WHITE: Well, I think there was a demand, but they just didn't have them; they didn't have it organized properly. If they had them, they'd give them to you. We had very good relations with the Colombian government when I was there; I had good relations with all the officials. I loved the Colombians. I used to date a lot of Colombian girls. Frequently

they were chaperoned.

Q: Did you have any problems with protection and welfare of Americans?

WHITE: We did; I had one case of a guy with schizophrenia, a big guy, and he was trying to commit suicide. I used to go out to the insane asylum where they were keeping him. They kept him very well, but we had to repatriate him, and I had to arrange to fly him to Panama and put him on a Navy vessel.

The American Society gave me some money to get clothes for him. I took him up by plane to Panama and spent the night with him in a hotel in Panama City. I was a little worried because he was a big guy and suicidal, and they had a balcony right outside the window. He'd step out there every now and then, and I'd have to watch him.

I put him on a train the next day and took him over to Colon where I put him on a Navy ship that took him to New York. They sent us a message that they'd put him in a straight jacket as soon as they got him in New York. But I was lucky because he was docile all the time he was with me.

We had a lot of welfare cases there. I had to go down to the jail when Americans were incarcerated for one reason or another. I would offer to get them an attorney

I thought it was all very interesting and I wouldn't have minded doing more consular work at other posts.

Q: How was jail for Americans?

WHITE: They treated Americans pretty well, I think. I know I went to visit one American down there, he'd gotten in a brawl and he showed me a knife, and he said "I'm glad they didn't find this knife on me." So we saw that they got a lawyer, and kept an eye on them. They probably treated Americans better than they did the Colombians.

Q: Did the ambassador pay much attention to you all?

WHITE: Ambassador Schoenfeld did. When I went to get married in Washington, he wanted us to call on his mother and to bring him 10 boxes of candy back. I think we were on very good terms with Ambassador Schoenfeld. He seemed to think I was doing a good job as chief of the consular section.

Now Ambassador Waynick for some reason had the idea that I was down there playing poker in the Jockey Club and criticizing the president of Colombia. But I had never been in the Jockey Club, and I hadn't played poker since I was in Colombia. And I certainly wouldn't criticize the president or any other Colombian official. I had great respect for all of them. The ambassador finally found it was someone else.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

WHITE: I met her to a certain extent through my boss, who was of Czech descent, Bill Kane - he was originally Bill Kubalik. His family had emigrated to the U.S. but eventually returned to Czechoslovakia. He joined the embassy as a visa clerk in Prague, eventually worked up to consul, and he knew a lot of Czech refugees in Bogotá. Since we went to many things together I also got to know many of the Czech refugees.

I was sympathetic to the Czech refugees; I was sympathetic to anybody who was anti-communist or anti-Nazi and for democracy. The Czechs were telling me what wonderful wives Czech women make. So I said in a joking way, "Maybe I should get a Czech wife." So they took me seriously and one of them fixed me up with Dagmar.

All the Czechs there knew her family, because her father was one of the top generals over there in World War II. After the country was occupied by the Germans in March 1939, he escaped the Germans surveillance and went to fight in France. When the French collapsed, he went to London and served as President Benes' military adviser. He had also been in World War I, fighting in Russia for Czechoslovak independence, and came out as a colonel. So the Czechs there all either knew him personally or by reputation and thought highly of him. When the Communists took over Czechoslovakia in 1948 he came with his family to the United States.

The family settled in Washington. They'd been there just about five years when we met Dagmar. So I thought that there would not be any problem with marrying Dagmar, because she had received a university education in the United States. She had gone three years to Charles University and three years to the Conservatory of Music in Prague before coming to the U.S. In the U.S. she went to the University of Kansas and got a degree; she went to the Julliard School of Music and got another degree; she went to Columbia University and got a master's degree. She spoke five languages. She was 26 and a beautiful girl. We hit it off right away. I thought she would be a great asset. I was right and we are still married.

Q: What was the situation then if you became engaged to a foreign national? What did you do?

WHITE: Then you would have to get permission to marry. One of my officers in Nicaragua had to wait maybe a year for approval for him to marry a girl from Guyana. I'm sure that they would have authorized the marriage to Dagmar, because her father was working with the Pentagon, he was anti-communist, he was anti-Nazi, and pro-democratic. In fact, her brother was engaged to the daughter of the American ambassador in Prague at the time; eventually it broke up, but they were well connected and I didn't think there would be any problem in that respect.

Anyway, she got citizenship two days before we got married. And actually the time in Colombia didn't count against her because they passed a special law in Congress to authorize her to get citizenship. Just in time for the marriage. She had come to Colombia after graduating from Julliard because she had a contract to teach in the Colombia

National Conservatory of Music. She was also continually singing with the National Symphony and giving recitals. Eventually she had a regular television program with selections from operas.

Q: Was there a problem with Nazis? Had they all been cleared up by this time?

WHITE: No, it hadn't. I had a number of people that came in that had Nazi associations. Sometimes it was just a question of passing out Nazi propaganda, and I turned a number of them down. But then we had a law come through that unless they were concentration camp guards they could be eligible. A lot of them had been detained in Colombia during the war, because Colombia was on our side. I remembered some of those I had regretfully turned down that had become eligible and I invited them to come in for a visa.

Q: That was the Immigration Act of 1953, the McCarran-Walters Act.

WHITE: Yes.

Q: Obviously, everybody was alerted to be concerned about communists, but did that involve you at all?

WHITE: It did. I am sure I turned some down because the files showed they had Communist activities. I tried to be fair though. The file had to be pretty convincing.

Q: Was there a strong communist movement in Colombia at the time?

WHITE: It was substantial. They weren't in the government, but they were creating problems. Leftists, you know. I had some come in. You had to make a determination whether they were real communists or whether they were just a newspaperman keeping an eye on them. You had to be just, and their families, you couldn't penalize the family for something the husband did. You had to be fair. You had to make a decision in every case.

Q: Were we concerned on the communist side with the universities? There is a tendency in so many universities, particularly in Latin America and even elsewhere, where the students become red-hot communists while they're in the university and quickly become capitalists as soon as they get out and start working for Daddy or something like that. Were you finding that the universities caused a problem at the time?

WHITE: They were having problems with the government, because the government would go in reacting to some demonstration. The students would demonstrate and celebrate - recognize the day when a student had been killed by the military. Sometimes the government would shoot some of the demonstrators.. There were problems like that. I don't remember any specific visa cases involving students.

I think there was a certain amount of communist sympathizers, but there had to be a certain amount of anti-Americanism, too. Some would think like the Argentines that the

United States was an imperialistic power. You had to make friends and show them that we were benevolent, that we really wanted to help Colombia.

They had to learn that communism was a very bad system. A lot of the Latin Americans have. You take the president of Brazil right now, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. He used to be a Marxist; now he's free market. They have a lot of them like that in Latin America.

Q: The prime minister of France was a Trotskyite.

WHITE: Jospin. He tried to deny it until recently. Actually, when Felipe Gonzalez came in as prime minister in Spain, he was a Socialist. But he said he wasn't going to make the mistakes of Mitterrand and was not going to nationalize everything. He considered himself more of a centrist. And the government of Spain right now is more of a centrist than a rightist. Actually, they're no longer a pariah among nations. Spain has arrived.

Q: What was social life like there?

WHITE: It was great if you could get out in a car and get around. Local transportation wasn't any good--I had to buy a car. But we were invited every place by the Colombians. That's the reason I think in many respects Latin America is one of my favorite places; you always get invited, you always get to know the people.

We used to get invited places in Morocco, too, but it wasn't quite the same relationship that we had with the Colombians, or the Nicaraguans, or the Dominicans – any place I served in Latin America.

Q: In '54, where did you go?

WHITE: In '54, they said they were sending me to New Caledonia as vice consul; now that's about as far as I could go away from home. As I have said, I didn't really care as long as they didn't send us to a communist country. My wife would have been very nervous in a communist country, with her father being with the Pentagon. They could have nabbed her, and she didn't like communists because they'd had a terrible time with the communists and Nazis back in Czechoslovakia. I disliked them as much as she did, but I would have gone to a communist country if the Department had wanted me to go before I was married. And if they still wanted me to go I would have had to arrange for my wife to wait for me in the U.S.

I told them I'd go anyplace, and I thought it would be very nice in New Caledonia. Dan Montenegro, the consul, wrote me a nice letter. He said we had to cover the South Pacific, all the islands there that were British or French possessions. He said we had to travel a lot through the area and I thought it would be very exciting.

Q: You better explain where New Caledonia is for somebody who might not be geographically aware.

WHITE: I would say it'd be about 1200 miles east of Brisbane in Australia. It's an island about 200 miles long, 40 miles wide. About half the population was French and half Melanesian. It had a lot of French culture there. Excellent French restaurants. We got along well with the French.

Q: Was New Caledonia part of the French commonwealth?

WHITE: Yes, it was a French overseas territory. They had a *conseil general,* a local legislative body with mixed French and Melanesian membership. The main decisions were made in Paris and the government was mainly in the hands of a French governor and a French staff. At present they have more autonomy than they had then and in about ten years there is an agreement to have a referendum on independence.

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At the time neither I or my predecessors predicted that the islands that were in our jurisdiction, like the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the New Hebrides Tonga, Fiji, and French Oceania (including Tahiti would become independent countries. Now the Solomon Islands, the New Hebrides, the Gilbert Islands, the Ellice Islands, Tonga, and Fiji are all independent. But New Caledonia and French Oceania remain dependencies of France.

Q: Was New Caledonia having problems between the Melanesians, and who else was on there?

WHITE: Well, there were the people of French descent, the *colons*, the one's that had been there for years. Some of them came, they claimed, as guards when the island was used as a penal colony. I don't recall much agitation for independence then or any conflict between the local French and the Melanesians. Now there is an independence movement by the Melanesians and there has been some agitation.

Q: Were there Tonkinese there at the time?

WHITE: We had some of them, too. They were workers in the mines, different places. You know Bloody Mary back in Mitchener's book *Tales of the South Pacific*. I loved the book and it was made into one of my favorite musicals. It dramatized the South Pacific for me.

Q: The play by Rogers and Hart.

WHITE: I had an Indonesian in the consulate as one of my main assistants; he was very effective, very good.

Q: What was the setup? Was there a consul general?

WHITE: No, we didn't have anybody above us. There was just a consul and a vice

consul. The Indonesian desk officer had the responsibility for the Pacific Islands. The Office of Dependent Area Affairs in the Department was followed developments closely and sent delegates to meetings of the South Pacific Commission.

Q: So you were the consul?

WHITE: I was the vice consul, at first, for the first year, but when Montenegro left, they made me the principal officer. Two inspectors came out when I was the sole officer there after Montenegro departed. They gave me a very good report and it was no doubt on their recommendation that I was named principal officer. After a few months Sam Wise was transferred from Palermo as vice consul. He came with his wife, Mary, and a baby daughter. We found a house for them to rent near the consulate. My wife and I had put so much work into the bungalow that we did not want to move. Housing was very hard to find in Noumea and I recommended to the inspectors that we should build housing for the staff if we stayed in Noumea instead of moving to Fiji. The employees of the South Pacific Commission had very nice homes that were owned by the Commission and I thought we should at least have something equivalent to what they had..

Q: What were the responsibilities?

WHITE: We traveled. We had the South Pacific Commission there; we were a sort of liaison with the South Pacific Commission; we attended their sessions, we kept an eye on them.

And then we had to travel to places like Fiji and Tahiti and give consular services and report on what was going on there. I visited the New Hebrides and reported on the situation there. I went to Fiji and Tahiti, reporting on those places and doing consular work. I visited the Solomon Islands. People come in, they want passports, they want visas. One thing or another. The Department wanted us to travel even more than we did travel. But the wives didn't like for us to be gone all the time.

Q: What were your main tasks? Were you basically reporting on what was happening?

WHITE: We reported on what was happening, but there was not really a whole lot happening. But I know in one case we had some Melanesian up in the New Hebrides - Espiritu Santo - he'd gone up into the high hills there hunting boars and found a skeleton and a crashed plane from World War II. There was a little bracelet that said Howie Falten.

So the French made a little coffin and sent all the remains down to us. We kept them in our storeroom and got in touch with the Pentagon and finally sent them to the U.S. I know the family were very glad to get them, but it wasn't Howie Falten, Howie Falten got out. The person flying with him was the one who was killed. That's a case where we were able to get somebody's remains back. After the plane crashed in World War II there were search expeditions but they never found the plane.

Q: Did you run into feeling, particularly from the islands, of nostalgia for World War II, when we were pumping a lot of aid and troops and money and everything else in those areas?

WHITE: I would think there would be a certain amount of that. Some Americans just stayed on there. When I went to Espiritu Santo, they said they had "million dollar point" where the Americans had shoved a great deal of equipment into the ocean rather than transport it back to the States. One of the locals there offered to take me scuba diving to see it all, but I just took his word for it that it was there. I asked the British district officer in Espiritu Santo if I could see the air field we used during World War II. He took me to see it and it was still in fairly good shape. I took photos. The British and French were very helpful on all of my trips.

We had a little bungalow in Noumea. It was built by a Navy captain during World War II for his own residence. He got court marshaled for it because he wasn't authorized to do it. So we inherited it as a place for the vice consul. It required a lot of work for my wife and me to make it habitable.

The New Caledonians anticipated that if the Japanese moved beyond Guadalcanal, New Caledonia would be next. One day they looked out and the harbor was full of American Naval vessels, and they knew they were saved. So they have a very good feeling toward the United States in New Caledonia. And the other islands I went to, too.

Q: Did you find that the French were at this time pretty touchy about Americans?

WHITE: They were, especially in 1956, when they had the war with Egypt over the Suez Canal. We had not trouble with the French we knew in New Caledonia. But there were some French who came down from Vietnam and seemed particularly hostile because they thought we had not done enough to aid them there.

Q: Suez crisis.

WHITE: We didn't support them in that war. We actually got together with the Russians and we called for a cease-fire. I had to travel through the Pacific and call on the different people, the governor of the Fiji Islands and the governor of Tahiti. The governor of Fiji, whom I had met in New Caledonia, invited me to a dinner. Some of the British expressed disappointment that we had not supported them in the Suez operation.

The governor of Tahiti invited me to a reception, with the dancing girls and native music. But he didn't seem to object one way or the other. I felt myself that we were probably right in doing what we did, because as soon as the French and Israelis and the British launched their attack on Egypt, the Russians thought, "Well, that gives us a free hand to launch an attack on Hungary, " so they moved into Hungary and put down the revolt against the government and communism there..

Q: It was not an easy time. Did you report essentially back to Paris, or straight to

Washington, or how did it work?

WHITE: I usually reported to Washington. But in case somebody would request aid in the Solomon Islands, I would contact London because they had an AID office there that had responsibility for British possessions like the Solomon Islands..

Q: Were the Solomon Islands under the Australians at the time?

WHITE: No. The Solomon Islands were under the British. New Guinea was under the Australians. We didn't have any islands that belonged to Australia or New Zealand in our district, although we did visit them.

We had Tonga with the British, and Tonga is independent now. And Fiji is independent. We didn't have Western Samoa (it is independent now), because they were under New Zealand. And French Oceania is still a territory. But Tuvalu and Kiribati are independent. And Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides, is also independent. So it is a different situation now.

Actually there's been some excitement recently in the Fiji Islands. Indians are about 47% of the population, and they had an Indian prime minister. There was a revolt by the Fijians, because they don't want the Indians to take over the Fiji Islands. The Indians had been brought in years ago by the British to work on the sugar plantations.

I always reported on the situation. At that time, the Indians were getting to be the majority; a lot of them have left since then. But that's the sort of thing we would report on - the relationship between the Fijians and the Indians. The Indians couldn't own land. The Fijians owned the land; Indians would have to lease it. I met the Indian Commissioner in Fiji, a charming man, and he invited me to dinner.

I recommended that we move the consulate from New Caledonia to the Fiji Islands, because we owned land in the Fiji Islands and we didn't have any direct plane connection between the United States and New Caledonia as we had when the consulate was established. Mail would have to go by way of Australia and wait for a plane to New Caledonia. Quantas, the Australian airline, flew to New Caledonia every two weeks. The Fiji Islands were centrally located in our consular district and it was served by Pan American Airways. After I left, the consulate was moved to Fiji.

Q: How did you get around?

WHITE: We'd go to Australia and there get a plane for the Fiji Islands. And then we'd take Teal, the New Zealand airline, and go to Western Samoa, the Cook Islands and then Tahiti. I visited the New Hebrides by boat, taking my wife with me. I also visited Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands by boat because I did it on the way home. No one else had been there from our consulate. Lady Gutch, the governor's wife, whom we had met in New Caledonia, invited us for lunch and put her car at our disposal to visit Henderson Field, that we had used during the war. The Governor was absent at the time.

Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands, was a new town established at the end of World War II. The center of town was really just a circle of Chinese stores.

Q: At that time, it was a little early, I take it there weren't men who had served there coming back to look over the place? Veterans - Guadalcanal.

WHITE: We were invited by another family for dinner in Honiara. Everyone seemed to have a very high opinion of the Americans and how we cleaned the Japanese out of Guadalcanal. I didn't hear of any veterans returning at that time. It probably was a little early for anyone to want to come back to where they no doubt had a very bad memory.

Q: When you would go to one of these islands, like the Cook Islands, would you let them know beforehand that you were coming?

WHITE: I wouldn't do it in the Cook Islands because that was a New Zealand colony, but I would in the case of Fiji. And in Tahiti. I would notify people I was coming. They would broadcast the news on the radio for the people in outlying islands to come for consular services.

Q: What sorts of things would you be doing?

WHITE: Well, there was visa work; you give visas, you give passports, notarials. And we'd report on whatever conversations we had. We'd usually call on the top officials if we could get an appointment and I always did get one..

There was an Office of Dependent Areas in the Department; they were interested in more participation by the local people in the government, and insurgencies of any sort. There really weren't, that we knew of. The Melanesians have become much more active in New Caledonia since I left.

Q: How much social life while you were in New Caledonia? What would you and your wife do?

WHITE: Quite a bit. The French invited us; we didn't have a very good place for entertaining, but we would entertain in a restaurant that would cater things for us. On the Fourth of July we would have receptions at a local club there. We did have small dinners in our bungalow.

We knew the French very well. The French can be prickly on occasion, but my wife speaks fluent French, and I did all right. We've always been rather fond of the French we know.

Q: You were there until what, '57?

WHITE: Yes, that was '55,'56,'57 we came back. And that was kind of unusual, too, because my wife - I didn't realize it at the time - what a fear of flying she had. Now she

always reads these books on fear of flying, and she's gotten more or less used to it.

But we had a chance of going back by boat. So I took the chance of going back by boat, and it just took 12 passengers; that's the way I got to the Solomon Islands. At first they didn't want to take us on the boat because we had a 2-year-old child, my wife was eight months pregnant, and the ship had no doctor. They had to go to Australia and load up, they had to go to New Guinea and load up; it was a Norwegian tramp steamer. It took us about seven weeks to get back to the States.

I thought that the Department would not like me taking so long to return and that I would have to rush to Washington. I hurried back to report to duty, and I think that was about May or June, and they said, "We don't have a thing in the world for you to do until you start at Harvard in September." I would have come back in a more leisurely way if I'd known that.

Q: So you went to Harvard?

WHITE: Yes, they gave me a choice. They said, "We'll give you economic training. Name three choices." I knew Harvard had some very good economists. I knew that Yale had some good ones. I knew that the University of Pennsylvania, the Wharton School, had some very good ones. So I gave them in that order, and they gave me Harvard first. That was the only time in the Foreign Service that I got a first choice. And it was worthwhile. I really enjoyed it at Harvard.

Q: How did you find the usefulness of the academic training that you got at Harvard?

WHITE: Theoretically, it has always enabled me to understand the macroeconomics of almost any situation. But I thought that from a practical matter there ought to have been some course on the tools of aid, for example.

You go into a country like the Dominican Republic, where we just got rid of Trujillo, what kind of loans can you give, what kinds of technical assistance can you give, what are the conditions for it? Can you get a 2% loan? Just what are the possibilities?

You don't get any of that at Harvard. And I didn't get any of it before going to the Dominican Republic. That's something I would have thought would have been as useful as the theoretical training I got. With the experience I developed later I would have gotten it through briefings in Washington.

Q: You were at Harvard, what, '57, '58? Did any of your courses seem outstanding that you recall?

WHITE: The professors were excellent. I have forgotten the names of most of the professors. I do recall that Dr. Mason was very good on economic development. I had an excellent Austrian professor on international economics. At one time I remembered all of their names very well. There was an excellent teacher of money and banking. Also I had

a good teacher in public finance. I attended some of the lectures by Henry Kissinger and I greatly admired him.. The Department did not encourage us to get a master's degree since it just wanted us to get exposed to the latest thinking. But I thought it would be a good discipline to try for a master's degree. I missed some classes when I was moving the family to Boston and when I was in the hospital three days with a kidney stone operation. But the grades were good enough to get the master's degree.

Q: By the way, when you were in the Foreign Service, you were there when McCarthyism really hit. Did this affect you or the people around you at all? This goes back to Bogotá and New Caledonia.

WHITE: They would have these cartoons in the Colombian papers about what a buffoon McCarthy was and all that; they seemed to think all of us thought like McCarthy did. I was opposed to communism, but I think the way he attacked the army, the people in the State Department, the way he was going about it, he didn't have any proof - I thought he was a disgrace; they had to get rid of him. And eventually the Senate did.

Q: It was a nasty period. Did you feel concern, I mean were people around you being fingered as being communist and all that?

WHITE: As I recall there was one person who had been prominent in the Roosevelt administration, who was living in Colombia and working for the government. I believe he was a suspect. He came in once for a notarial. It was the only contact I had with him as he didn't move around in the circles I was in. There was one Colombian journalist who was considered to be pro-communist who criticized me in the press because I insisted on making one of his relatives wait for a visit until we made our security check. We had a lookout card on the individual

Q: Not so much being pro-communist, but maybe disagreeing with the extreme right win; sometimes this had a tendency to make the people following McCarthy think, you know, labeling_?

WHITE: I would be against any action against those people, because they were just expressing their opinion, but I can't say that I knew any personally. I followed the McCarthy trials and proceedings pretty closely, and I was always critical of the way he was doing things.

Q: In '58 you went to the Dominican Republic, was that it?

WHITE: No, I went back to Washington and was assigned to INR (Intelligence and Research).

Q: You were there from '58 to_?

WHITE: I was there from '58 to '62. Four years. And I was working in the section dealing with communist economics. And especially the foreign economic policy,

especially of China. I was dealing with China, writing reports on their activities, and also the Soviet Bloc aid and trade in different countries.

I thought that was very useful, very interesting - that's when they were expanding wherever they could. The Chinese were building things in all kinds of places. I never had any sympathy for the Chinese communists. They were always coming out with these slogans, such as "The East Wind is prevailing over the West Wind." But, of course, History has shown that the opposite is true.

Now I think we have a Chinese Communist Party over there which may be Communist in name only since it is privatizing at a rapid rate. It has opened the economy to foreign investment and they have joined the WTO. There is some democracy at the local level. They send about 50,000 students here every year.

Q: While you were there, '58 to '62, what was happening in China, was this when they started, what is it, the "third line," this is when Mao was moving factories away from the coast?

WHITE: Well, actually I think I identified, and some people disagreed with me, that around 1960 the Chinese and the Russians weren't getting along. They expelled all of the Russian technicians. I was there when they had "The Great Leap Forward," when thousands of people were trying to build steel in backyard furnaces, even using their agricultural instruments as pig iron. The result was that millions died of famine and no steel was manufactured in the backyard furnaces.

We were asked if we could replace the Russians as a trading partner for the Chinese. At that time I couldn't see it, because the Chinese were exporting human hair and things like that. I couldn't see where we could replace the Russians anytime soon as a market for the Chinese. Now, of course, we are probably the biggest market for Chinese exports and the composition of their exports has changed completely. But this wasn't when I was there.

Q: How did you find information coming out of China?

WHITE: We had radio sources; we would read FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), and we had different places - Hong Kong. And we got information from the countries where they were active, where they were offering aid; where they were doing things, the trade; we got the trade figures pretty well. We knew what they were doing and where they were involved. They were competing with the Taiwanese.

Q: Did you find any change when the Kennedy administration came in?

WHITE: I think in Latin American things improved considerably under the Alliance for Progress. They were impressed with Kennedy in Latin America. I think Kennedy was very popular in Latin America. Nixon, on the other hand, went down and got stoned in Caracas. They didn't think Nixon was very much a friend of Latin America.

Of course things have changed a lot in Latin America. Practically no Latin American country now except Cuba and maybe Venezuela is following an anti-American policy. They want cooperation with the U.S. At that time that it wasn't true. Argentina was difficult to live with at that time. We had problems with countries like Peru with their policy of expropriation of American firms and the extension of their fishing limits. And, of course, there was Cuba, which was trying to foment leftists revolutions throughout Latin America.

Q: Your INR, you were looking both at Latin America and at the Far East?

WHITE: No, I was just looking at the foreign policy of the communist countries. As it involved Latin America, of course, I was always looking at what they were doing with the economic penetration of the communist countries in the developing countries of the world. They were active in Africa.

Q: How about Africa, because the Soviet Union and the communist Chinese put quite an emphasis on African countries?

WHITE: We knew exactly what they were doing; we knew how many personnel they had there, what the personnel were doing, what the loans were that were being drawn down, what their projects were, and their trade promotion. A lot of those African countries were following leftist policies at the time after they became independent. They weren't permanent leftists; they just found it convenient at the time to become leftists; and to deal with the Soviet Union as they were suspicious of what they considered neo-colonialism. Very few of the countries had a good investment climate at that time, nor do they have it now except for natural resources, like oil.

Q: Were we concerned with Soviet penetration, particularly in Africa, at that time?

WHITE: We were concerned about it in West Africa in places like Guinea, Ghana, and Mali - the countries that had recently gained independence from the British and the French. The Portuguese still had Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau and those countries did not get their independence until the mid-seventies. We were concerned about the independence movements and which way they would go. We were concerned about Zaire under Lumumba, but he was assassinated and an anti-communist government took over. I am sure we welcomed it at the time. Haile Selassie was still emperor of Ethiopia and was not deposed by a communist coup until the mid-seventies.

Q: Did we have a pretty good fix on what the Soviets and the Chinese were doing?

WHITE: We knew exactly what they were doing, I think. We had our informants inside the communist countries. We knew what they were doing and we were countering wherever we could.

Q: Did you get any feel for how well your efforts in INR were being used by the various bureaus?

WHITE: I know that I wrote a report in collaboration with some others on communist penetration of Africa; and that was praised, because we detailed pretty much what they were doing in Africa. I wasn't the only one responsible; I was the main one, but some other people made contributions.

Q: Did you have much contact with the desks?

WHITE: Let me see. I don't think we had much contact with the desks in INR. I don't recall very much. Occasionally they would ask us for something..

Q: I was in INR doing the Horn of Africa around this time, and as I recall it, the desk sort of did its thing and we did our thing.

WHITE: I think that's the way it was in our place, too. I don't recall dealing with the desk or asking them for anything. Maybe they got what product we had.

Q: Then, in '62 you were off to the Dominican Republic?

WHITE: '62, yes. We went down there about six months after Trujillo had been assassinated in May 1961.

Q: I thought I would stop at this point. So in 1962 we have you going off to the Dominican Republic, and we haven't talked about that at all.

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Today is July 17, 2001. Jack, do you know how your assignment to the Dominican Republic came about? And then could you tell me a bit about what the Republic_?

WHITE: I think they probably sent me to the Dominican Republic because I spoke very good Spanish, I was rated as fluent, and I had had economic training at Harvard University. But the kind of work I had been doing in Washington when I was working on the communist bloc wasn't exactly the sort of work that was required in the Dominican Republic.

It really should have been somebody who was very familiar with the instruments of AID, how we could help a new country that was recovering from 30 years of dictatorship. I had to learn on the spot by actually doing it.

I think the first question the consul general - we didn't have diplomatic relations at first, we were just establishing diplomatic relations, because there were sanctions by the OAS because of Trujillos's interference in Venezuela. So he asked me what was the cheapest interest we could give on loans. I did a little research and I said 2%, but I don't think I was very well qualified to say what kind of loans we could give at that time. Later we gave them a loan at zero percent. Now I would of course be a lot more competent.

Q: You were in the Dominican Republic from '62 to when?

WHITE: '64. Two years there.

Q: Who was the consul general when you arrived?

WHITE: Calvin Hill. He made a good impression on Kennedy because of the way he handled things after Trujillo's assassination., Some brothers of Trujillo tried to return and take control of the country. We sent some naval forces off the coast there and when the brothers saw these forces they knew we opposed their return and they left quickly. I think Calvin Hill was in charge of all that period there. They asked him how he could be rewarded, and he wanted a promotion, from FSO-3 to FSO-2. He got the promotion but died soon afterwards. I recently read an excellent novel, *The Feast of the Goat,* by the Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa about the last days of Trujillo and the aftermath of the assassination. He spoke highly of Calvin Hill in the novel.

Q: What was the political and economic situation in the Dominican Republic when you got there in '62?

WHITE: It was actually in turmoil. Under Trujillo it had a fairly stable government; he had done some things like building infrastructure, promoting exports; the economy was based on sugar and bauxite at that time. Trujillo in the 31 years of dictatorship had not allowed any opposition. There wasn't much in the way of foreign investment. The climate wasn't particularly good at that period, but we agreed to establish diplomatic relations when Organization of American States (OAS) sanctions were lifted.

Q: What was your position?

WHITE: I was economic officer. I was the second in command. Harlan Bramble came down as economic counselor. He had been in the Economic Bureau of the Department working on commodities. He himself had to familiarize himself with getting aid to a country like the Dominican Republic - what we could do to help them. Eventually Newell Williams, a former oil company executive, was assigned as AID director.

Q: Had the Trujillo government pretty well run the economic side down?

WHITE: I think it was probably a dictatorship that was efficient in some respects. He didn't permit any opposition. But he wasn't president all the time. He had somebody else as president about half of the time. The OAS imposed economic sanctions on the Dominican Republic in 1960 and all of the OAS members broke off diplomatic relations and imposed economic sanctions. This had a negative impact on the Dominican economy.

In '61 Joaquin Balaguer was president and he was right of center. But he was efficient, and later he was elected president for about 22 years, of and on. So he competed in

political campaigns later, and he was found to be the person who could run the country most efficiently. They had elections and occasionally he was replaced. The house we rented in Santo Domingo was next door to Balaguer's home on Avenida Maximo Gomez. He was in exile in New York at the time, but his sister used to play a cassette with his speeches loud enough for us to hear them. Mario Vargas Llosa in his novel seemed to have a good opinion of Balaguer as an astute and calm politician, who knew how to get things done.

Q: Was there a ruling class, or were there various centers of power, or what were you dealing with?

WHITE: We were dealing with the business class that were trying to do business; they did business under Trujillo. None of the Trujillistas were in charge of government. The Bonnelly government tried to purge the government and military forces of Trujillistas. Some 1,300 officers and men and about 7,000 civil servants with links to Trujillo were forced into retirement. In the government departments; there were rather young people, rather inexperienced. The ministers were frequently young people. It was hard to get statistics, and hard to get people who were really too well informed. They were finding their way.

Q: Were there American businesses that had been doing business there that were continuing to do business?

WHITE: There were. There was investment in sugar, in bauxite, different industries. I always tried to have good relations with the American business community. I always felt that ultimately the private sector had to be strong. In every country I went.

Q: The bauxite and sugar people, the Americans - were they having to deal in a new situation? Had there been the equivalent of cozy deals with the Trujillo regime that they had to have work at a different level with the new regime?

WHITE: I think they probably prospered under Trujillo more than they did in the transition period because of the instability. I know they sometimes had trouble getting money that was owed to them by the government. The oil companies in particular were trying to collect money owed to them. But I always looked on them as people who performed a service there in the Dominican Republic. I did a report on all the Trujillo business enterprises that had to be sold off, and the government was willing to sell them to people that would invest. Eventually a government department was organized to manage all of these firms.

Calvin Hill was replaced by a political appointee as ambassador. This was John Bartlow Martin. He was particularly interested in the Dominican Republic for some reason and had asked for the assignment. He was President Kennedy's speechwriter. He was very liberal; I think he was a member of Americans for Democratic Action. He was suspicious of the business community.

I always thought we should get the business community to be on our side, be progressive and do various things that would benefit the country. We had some problems there with the business community, some antagonism toward the embassy.

Q: I think you referred to this before as a period of transition. Was this_?

WHITE: They had gotten a group together, right of center called the Union Civica National. This was Rafael Bonnelly's party. Balaguer stayed on until the OAS sanctions were lifted in January 1962; after that the opposition to Balaguer selected Rafael Bonnelly to serve as a provisional president until democratic elections could be held in September. Bonnelly would not be a candidate.

In '63 they did have elections, and they elected Juan Bosch, who had been an expatriate. His party was the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, a left of center party. I don't recall how he made a living in exile, but I do have a book of short stories he wrote. So he may have been a writer. I did not think that Juan Bosch was a communist because he made a number of anti-communist statements. He described Communism as "death, war, destruction, and the loss of all we own." The right-wing opposition thought he was too far left.

I thought he was on the left but non-communist. And I think the embassy agreed on that. Eventually the military and some of the business groups decided that they were going to have a coup after he was only president about six months.

So they had a coup to remove Juan Bosch. And they put in a triumvirate to rule. And then they had a revolt later – this was after I left - by the ones that supported Juan Bosch. This developed into a civil war in which we had to intervene to protect American interests and property.

Eventually that intervention broadened into an OAS intervention. The occupation lasted until they finally had elections, and they elected Hector Garcia Godoy as president. He was the foreign minister under Juan Bosch, so he was in the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Dominican Revolutionary Party). That was after I left, though.

Q: How were relations with the political and the business groups there - did people get together all the time for social and business occasions, was it easy for the embassy to_?

WHITE: It was easy enough once you identified the people who were not tainted by being Trujillistas. We got along rather well with the people in the junta once it was clear that they would prepare the way for elections. I got along well with the business community. We had our contacts in the political parties. But we tried to avoid contacts with anyone who had a Trujillo connection. Ambassador Martin didn't want us to rent any housing that had a Trujillo connection. The director of the Peace Corps had rented a house with a swimming pool owned by one of Trujillo's mistresses, but had to give it up. Before the ambassador arrived I had rented a house owned by Trujillo's doctor, who was in Miami.

Q: Looking at it, do you feel the embassy could have done more, or was there a sort of anti-American feeling that was set up - going to be insulted or put out no matter what happened?

WHITE: No, I think actually the feeling toward the U.S. was rather positive by the Dominicans who were looking to us for help. Many, many Dominicans wanted to go to the United States; we had long lines waiting for visas. There was some anti-Americanism, of course. I remember one occasion when my wife and I visited our USIS office in Santiago, one of the other Dominican cities, a young man offered to go with us in the car to show us where the office was located. We were told that a short time before he had gone with a mob to demonstrate against the office. Later someone saw him in line to get a visit for the United States. He explained that, if you couldn't beat them the best thing to do was join them.

They wanted us to do things, but they wanted it done right away. But we couldn't administer aid right away without making some kind of feasibility studies We had to study the situation and find out what the needs were and how we could help them. We did intend to help them as long as they were democratic, and headed in a democratic direction.

Q: Were there pockets of Trujilloists, or were they pretty well gone by that time?

WHITE: They were always there, of course. They were there, and they profited under Trujillo and they didn't think the country was going in the right direction. Some of the business people were behind the coup against Juan Bosch.

But I think when Balaguer came in again as president and was right of center, they were satisfied with the government. Though occasionally Balaguer was replaced by somebody who was in the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, which is on the left, there were no coups after the one that occurred right after I left the Dominican Republic. There appears to have been orderly elections.

Balaguer was president from 66 to 78 and again from 86 to 96. He was in his nineties when he finally agreed to step down. They have had regular elections since then.

Q: Who was the president when you were there?

WHITE: Rafael Bonnelly; he was just an interim president. He was somewhat right of center. The business people were satisfied with Rafael Bonnelly. He was fair. I was also there when Juan Bosch was inaugurated. I remember going to his inauguration and my wife's chamber music group in which she sang, provided a concert.

Q: What about aid programs; what sort of things were you doing?

WHITE: We were giving them some loans at the lowest interest rate we could possibly

give, so that they could finance their imports. We were providing technical assistance for agriculture. We started a Peace Corps program. We saw the possibilities for developing tourism and were considering loans for this purpose. Ambassador Martin took personal interest in a clinic in Higuey.

During the two years I was there, I did work closely with the people who gave them aid; and we were giving them aid, as long as they were headed in a democratic direction. We curtailed it, I think, when the coup happened, until they agreed to have elections.

Q: But the coup happened after you left, is that right?

WHITE: No, the coup happened while I was there. The civil war happened after I left.

Q: Where were you and how did the embassy respond when the coup came about?

WHITE: We cut off relations, at first. But then we talked to the coup leaders, the triumvirate, and they agreed to prepare for elections. When they agreed to set up elections, we restored our aid program and we started to work with them.

We knew the people in the coup pretty well. They had some fairly good - I mean in the *junta* - we knew them very well. I think some of them were pretty good people; Donald Reid Cabral was the leader.

They did have elections eventually, and they did elect somebody who was on the left. But not far on the left. He was just left of center, I would think.

Q: Were you finding Bosch a problem?

WHITE: I think the ambassador may have found Bosch a problem; he had a lot of discussions with him. In fact, Ambassador Martin wrote a book about his experience, in which he detailed his discussions with Bosch._

Q: <u>Overtaken by Events</u>, I think it was.

WHITE: Is that it? I believe it was. I read the whole book. I think he used to get frustrated with Juan Bosch; but after all, Juan Bosch was elected democratically, and it was better than having a coup. We should have had more patience with him. We were always concerned about any sympathy for Castro, of course.

Q: Did you have a feeling that our help and our attitude set up the coup?

WHITE: I don't think so. We actually were very cool to the coup; we didn't like it.

Q: Did you get to travel much in the Dominican Republic?

WHITE: Yes, I did. I went all over the place. They were trying to promote tourism. They

were trying to develop the northern part of the country; they had a Jewish settlement up in the northern part of the country. Trujillo wanted a humanitarian image and he allowed some Jewish people to settle up in the north. They had some dairy businesses up there. Also I visited the eastern beaches of the Dominican Republic with some Dominicans and I could see the possibilities for tourism.

Q: What was your impression - was money trickling down to the farming community, or was it pretty poor?

WHITE: No, I don't think so; not at that period; it was too early, after the Trujillo period. During the period there was a tremendous amount of poverty and a lot of unemployment. Since I was there, a great many Dominicans have emigrated to the United States. And I am sure that their remittances home have helped the Dominican economy. The tourist business has grown a great deal since I left.

I've always thought that globalization was the answer to economic development in many countries of the world. The countries that wanted foreign investment would have to improve their investment climate. And the ones that didn't want it would have to learn by observing its contribution in other countries.

Q: What were relations like in this period with the Haitians?

WHITE: The Dominicans never trusted the Haitians, because the Haitians took over the Dominican Republic for twenty years, from about 1820 to 1840. Trujillo made some border adjustments with the Haitians, killing a number of Haitians who had come into the country illegally. There was always a certain amount of pressure because of the overpopulation in Haiti. I don't think the relationship with Haiti was ever comfortable.

Q: Was Castro messing around in there?

WHITE: Yes, he was. He came in in '59; he was trying to expand his influence any place he could in Latin America. He was successful in some places.

Q: I assume we were on the watch for it very closely in the Dominican Republic?

WHITE: Oh, we didn't want any Castro influence there. If we thought Bosch was under Castro's thumb, we certainly wouldn't have supported him. But he professed to be anti-communist; he cracked down on the communists. This is as I remember it. Maybe those who were in the political section would have a different version. I always had a high opinion of Harry Shlaudeman, the political officer, who became a career ambassador.

Somebody on the political side would know more about it than I do, but I had the impression that Juan Bosch was not really a communist or pro-communist, even though he was on the left. The very fact that his party has had people become president since he left - the first democratically elected one was Hector Garcia Godoy - indicates that it really wasn't a communist party.

Q: You were there during the Cuban missile crisis?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: How did that_?

WHITE: They were very pro-Kennedy, the people in the *junta*, the people that took over the government. I think practically everyone was pro-Kennedy, except the communists.

They were just waiting for us to recognize them and continue with the aid and do what we could. We were helping in clinics and things like that, some social projects of all sorts.

Q: Did you feel that the aid effort was pretty effective?

WHITE: It might have been effective had I stayed there longer, but they would have had to have a longer period. They were just getting started when I was there the first year, and it didn't get very far the second year. But I think it was beginning to be effective.

I think the most effective aid program we've ever given them is just allowing thousands of Dominicans to come to the U.S. and send their money back. And they're all over the U.S. now; there's a huge population of Dominicans in New York.

Q: Did that cause any problems for you all, political pressure or anything like that?

WHITE: We had the problem with the visas. We didn't have the personnel to handle the huge mobs of visa applicants; they used to have riots in the lines for visas at the consulate. Once they almost even attacked the consul because they thought we were giving visas to Trujillo supporters, and they all hated each other. That was a real problem, to be in the visa section. They all wanted to get out because Trujillo didn't allow them to travel.

Q: You left there in '64?

WHITE: That's right. The end of '64.

Q: What happened when all of you heard about the assassination of President Kennedy?

WHITE: The transitional government had some sort of a ceremony there, with even a coffin in memory of President Kennedy. That was the *junta*; they all favored Kennedy and really admired Kennedy. The ones that we were dealing with in the government were all opposed to Castro and any Cuban influence. I am sure they had Cuban sympathizers in the country, but I don't think they were very effective at that time. Those of us in the Embassy were very much in favor of Kennedy's Latin American policy; the Alliance for Progress.

Q: Where did you go in '64?

WHITE: I went to Nicaragua as chief of the economic section. But they'd reduced their staff there. They had three people in the economic section, and they lost their commercial attaché, so they asked me in the Department of Commerce that in addition to being chief of the economic section that I also serve as commercial attaché. I was very glad to have this title as I was always interested in promoting our trade. We had another officer who was a commercial officer.

Q: You were there from '64 to when?

WHITE: '69.

Q: What was the government situation in Nicaragua when you got there?

WHITE: It had been ever since about 1936, I would say, controlled by the Somoza family. Anastasio Somoza, Sr. was assassinated in '56. He was in the National Guard that we set up and trained during our long occupation of Nicaragua. We thought this institution was necessary to provide some stability and guarantee orderly and democratic changes of government. He was elected president and ruled as a dictator. When he died, his oldest son, Luis Somoza, became president.

Then they had Rene Schick Gutierrez, who was pretty much a stooge of the Somozas. He had been Minister of Education and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was a bit of a womanizer. He used to flirt with my wife, who was a beautiful woman. Finally it appears that he was getting ready to flee the country with his daughter-in-law when he had a heart attack and died. There were ghastly photos in the newspapers. I knew him rather well and he knew me be sight. He seemed to be fairly popular. At the time Anastasio Somoza, Jr. (Tachito), was in charge of the National Guard. He was a graduate of West Point..

They had a good rate of economic growth, about 3.5% a year; and just about every year that I was there you could say that there was economic growth and some kind of stability that was favorable to U.S. business, favorable to the Central American common market. I don't recall any excessive inflation. It was an anti-communist government, of course. No communist countries were represented by embassies. They were strongly opposed to Fidel Castro and communist Cuba.

Tacho Somoza was eventually elected president. We were not partial to Tacho. We just accepted the fact that he campaigned for the presidency and was elected. The opposition to him was fractured, which made it easy for him to win.

I think Luis Somoza was probably more effective than Tacho Somoza, but he died while I was there. And he wasn't as harsh as his father. His father invited Sandino to talks and then he had him assassinated when he came. Sandino was one of the original people who fought against our Marines.

I don't think the Marines made a very bad impression, though; they were asked to come in by one of the factions because of the instability in Nicaragua. But we were also in the Dominican Republic for quite a while, collecting the customs and trying to bring some kind of stability.

I don't think there was enormous resentment of the Marine; a lot of Nicaraguan women married Marines. The Marines helped out in their earthquake. We were trying to establish a situation where they would have orderly changes of government. And eventually, when it seemed that that was possible, the Marines were withdrawn.

Q: As economic counselor, who were you dealing with in the Nicaraguan government?

WHITE: Well, we dealt with everybody. I could call on Somoza when he was president. I could see President Schick at social events and discuss some problem we might be having. I knew the president of the Central Bank very well and even sent him to the U. S. on a Leader Grant. I always had good relations with the Minister of Economy and the Chief of the National Planning Commission. I could call on the Minister of Agriculture. The officials in Nicaragua were very accessible. I had many contacts in the business community. I liked the place and stayed there five years. I had many contacts and made a list of all of them for my successor with a sketch on each of them.

Somoza supported the Alliance for Progress; he did what he was supposed to do to promote the Alliance for Progress. I think it got worse later when they had the earthquake and he had the constitution changed, and had himself elected for seven years. Then the opposition really got bad; it wasn't bad when I was there, we didn't have much communist insurgency in the country. But after the earthquake in December 1972 that killed around 10,000 people and left 300,000 homeless, repression of the communists increased.

There was one event that sticks in my mind. Prior to the election for president the opposition confronted the National Guard with the demand that it remain neutral in the election process. That led to violence. Somebody shot at the National Guard. I think it was Juan Parisi. Maybe he killed somebody. Then the National Guard killed about sixty people. And the conservative opposition had snipers on the roofs; they were shooting at people in the streets. The candidate of the Conservative Party, Dr. Fernando Aguero, and his supporters retreated into the Grand Hotel, holding a number of people, including Americans, hostage.

So we were faced with a situation. How could we get those hostages out? Our commercial officer, who had been observing the whole thing for the embassy, was caught in there, too.

Q: Who was that?

WHITE: Walter Cadette. After that, he retired from the Foreign Service. He had part of

his ear shot off when the National Guard surrounded the hotel and tanks were blasting into the place and shattering glass.

I was in my home in the suburbs at the time. But when the DCM's wife called me up and said, "There's something going on in town," I went in to the embassy.

Ambassador Aaron Brown and the DCM, Jim Engle, were there. We had to decide what we were going to do.

The consul we sent down came back and said he couldn't get through the military lines. And I said, "In the Dominican Republic sometimes we used our military people for things like that, because they're recognized by the military." Colonel Francisco, who administered our military aid, had red hair and I knew he would be easily recognized.

So the ambassador asked that the military attaché Colonel Ladne and Colonel Francisco come down, and Colonel Francisco got through the military lines and talked to our people inside. Eventually we sent Ted Cheney, our political officer, and maybe some others down, and they worked out an agreement to let the people out. His daughter recently wrote an article in *The Foreign Service Journal* on how he mediated this conflict So far as I know, they let everybody out, even the people that were in the uprising, and didn't do anything very drastic. I believe the opposition leader Fernando Aguero was under house arrest for about six months. I thought the Embassy deserved a lot of credit for the way in which it mediated this affair and no doubt saved many lives.

Jim Engle, the Ambassador, and I were in the Embassy until about 2 a.m. when the ambassador told Jim and me to go home so we could come back the next morning and he would stay through the night.

So when I came in the next day, Juan Parisi, the public enemy number one, who fired the first shot - apparently, because his brother had been killed by the National Guard - was in my office. He wanted asylum. And he stayed there all day. I had to feed him, and his family kept coming in, but we weren't associated with that uprising as far as I know.

So I told the ambassador that I would take Juan Parisi down to the Venezuelan embassy, where they did give asylum. We could give it in the case of hot pursuit; but in this case, we didn't want to give asylum, we didn't want to be associated with the uprising. I took him in my car down to the Venezuelan embassy in the middle of town. But that was a little touchy because my car wasn't operating. It kept chugging along; I didn't know what was the matter.

But the next day when I went out to take the hostages who spent the night with us to the airport my car broke down altogether. And later I saw that somebody had cut the water hose. So I think somebody must have known I was going to take him to the Venezuelan embassy, and they cut the water hose so I couldn't do it.

Q: How did it come out? I mean, you got the man to the Venezuelan embassy?

WHITE: Yes, I got him there. They took him in because he was a friend. We didn't want him all night in the embassy. We didn't want to appear to be involved in the uprising in any way.

One of the inspectors came through about a year later, and he grilled me on it. He seemed to have had a report that the embassy was involved; but I don't think it was. I told him, I thought the people in the political section always had their contacts with the conservatives, and I had my main contacts with the government, dealing with economic issues. I didn't really keep up with the political opposition and didn't get invited to their affairs. I told the inspector that I didn't think we were involved in any way whatsoever. We were just observing what went on and maintaining normal contacts with the opposition..

Q: Did we have an aid program there, or were they self-sufficient?

WHITE: No, they needed aid, and we had an aid program. I remember we were building the Rama Road with a U. S. loan.. We were engaged in various projects to help them; we gave pretty substantial aid. I know I got some Export-Import Bank loans to build granaries. It was part of the Alliance for Progress. They were in the Alliance for Progress just like all the Central American countries. They had a Central American Common Market and I spent a lot of time reporting on developments in the Common Market.

Q: Were you feeling any political pressure while you were there, because the Somozas had pretty good contact with certain elements within our Congress? I was wondering if you felt any of that?

WHITE: I didn't feel any political pressure at all. In one case, I decided to recommend the president of the central bank, who was a good friend, always a good contact, and I though he was a pretty able man, for a Leader grant in the United States. Then Somoza fired him. And then he came in and said, "Well, do you still want to send me to the United States on a Leader grant?" I said, "Well, certainly. I think if you've got the abilities and capabilities_" So we sent him to the States; I know Somoza didn't like it - the man they fired we sent to the States on a Leader grant.

Q: Of course, the whole idea is that it's not somebody that 's already in the government, but somebody that's got potential. Isn't that part of the promise?

WHITE: I had that impression. And I knew that former Ambassador Brown had a high opinion of the president of the Central Bank. Some of his enemies were saying that he had been a communist as a student in Chile. But we had no evidence of that.

What would the Congress want us to do, that we didn't do? What kind of pressure?

Q: I was just wondering whether you were getting pressure from somebody in Congress to, say, be sure to approve this particular aid request or something?

WHITE: No, I don't think so. But I don't think we would do it if we didn't think it was a valid request, being useful to the country, just because somebody from Congress thought it should be done. We might listen to it and consider it, but that wouldn't be the determining factor.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

WHITE: We had Aaron Brown as ambassador; he was a career man, a very good man. An Excellent man. Then we had Kennedy Crockett, who had been a civil servant with the Department and I think was "Wristonized" down there. He had been DCM in Costa. He was a very good man; he was from Texas. So we had two very good people there. I liked the embassy team quite a bit and I loved the Nicaraguan people. I hoped we could do something about their poverty, which was extreme.

I might add something at this point about my wife. She was very active in cultural circles wherever we went. Tacho Somoza was married to an American, Hope Portocarrero, whose uncle was Nicaraguan ambassador in the U.S. She asked my wife to go with her one time to see the Conservatorio of Music in Guatemala with the idea of establishing something similar in Nicaragua. Later Joaquin Chamorro, the publisher of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa,* present my wife with an award as the person who had contributed the most to Nicaraguan culture in that year. After we left Chamorro was assassinated - some say by henchmen of Somoza - and later when free elections were held his wife Violeta de Chamorro defeated Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista, in the presidential elections.

Q: How about the banana companies? Was United Fruit a power there at that time?

WHITE: Well, we had Standard Fruit, but I don't think they were a power. I went over and visited their establishment on the Atlantic coast. We had the Bonanza Gold Mines; I visited the gold mines too with Ambassador Brown. I don't think they had any influence on the government, didn't try to influence the government. Occidental Petroleum built a fertilizer plant. The government was very glad to have these investors, as far as I could determine, and they wanted even more U.S. direct investment.

But the climate wasn't good in Nicaragua for foreign investment. Other countries in Central America were more pleasant place to live.

Q: Was this because of the weather and that sort of thing?

WHITE: Yes, it's hot in Managua. In Guatemala it was much better. In Costa Rica, the cities were more pleasant to live in and the climate was better. But as far as being pro-American, friendly people, I think the "Nicas" were just about tops.

Q: Were we sensing a major divide between the peon class or the peasant class and the ruling people?

WHITE: I used always to be very sorry for the people in Nicaragua because they were poverty-stricken. They had unemployment; they had a lot of poverty. Even the wealthier classes did not seem particularly wealthy. And the problem was, what could you do about that poverty? Even the Somoza government - they were part of the Alliance for Progress - they were doing some things. The principal cash producing exports were coffee and cotton. Both were very dependent on world prices and there was a quota for coffee. Some Americans were there growing cotton, but when the price declined they were forced to close down and return to the U.S. With the exception of the Somoza family I didn't see tremendous wealth there. But I always thought globalization was the way to deal with poverty in these countries. Private investment. They have to have the proper climate for it. I didn't think big government programs were the solution.

Q: What about the ruling family? Did the Somoza family and its offshoots pretty well control everything?

WHITE: They had a lot of land, a lot of property, a lot of companies. But Somoza always said, "It's better that we invest our money here and create employment, rather than invest it abroad." But his companies were not always profitable. Some owed money to American companies. I could have said we are not a collection agency. But if I had some influence, I used it. I knew people in the business community very well and was on good terms with them.

Q: How successful were you?

WHITE: I usually got it eventually. I was dealing with Somoza's people, and they found the money one way or another.

Q: Did you have many Congressional groups coming down?

WHITE: We always had Congressional groups every place I've been. And other kinds of groups. We had the Vice President come down - Rockefeller. Different delegations. You know how it is in the Foreign Service. I don't think there's a single country where you don't have these delegations. Of course, we didn't have the big ones like those we received in Morocco.

Q: No, no. Well, sometimes. I was talking to somebody that was ambassador to Costa Rica, I think in the early '70s, who said the highest American government official to come was the lieutenant governor of Mississippi. And he just happened to have spent the night there. I realize this is in Costa Rica.

WHITE: Well, I don't think we had an exorbitant amount, but every now and then you'd have a delegation of somebody from Washington, even if it was only one of the staff aides.

Q: What was your impression of how the National Guard operated and acted towards the people?

WHITE: They wouldn't be like Costa Rica, where they were nothing but a police force; they had more control than that. There were firefights when they had leftist opposition in the countryside - a few firefights when I was there. I don't think it was as brutal as say Argentina and Chile during the seventies.

I was not a tremendous admirer of the National Guard, although we did create it because we thought they could guarantee free elections, an orderly change of government. But I guess they had to have some sort of an army. It wasn't any worse than, say, the Guatemalan army or the Salvadoran army.

Q: During '64 to '69, there hadn't been many great changes in Nicaragua, had there?

WHITE: There was the fact that they had the rate of growth of about 3.5% a year. They had a pretty good economy as far as exports were concerned. I don't recall much inflation. And they tried to make the investment climate good. They were cooperating to a certain extent with other Central American countries in the Central American Common Market. There were programs of the Alliance for Progress that were going ahead.

After I left it got worse, because then they had the big earthquake that killed about 10,000 people and destroyed Managua. Then Somoza became more dictatorial. And especially the communist activity became much greater.

Eventually he stepped down because he was losing control. He ended up in Paraguay where he was assassinated. And the Sandinistas came in at first with other opposition groups, too, but then it became more and more leftist and more and more dependent on the communist countries. An unfriendly government.

Q: In '69 you left, and then whither? Where'd you go?

WHITE: I went to Rabat, Morocco, as economic counselor.

Q: You were there from '69 to when?

WHITE: To '73. Four years.

Q: How did that assignment come about?

WHITE: I spoke French, so they were looking for somebody. I guess they thought after the long period of time I'd served in all these developing countries, they would send me to a developed country. At first they were going to send me to Oslo, Norway. They said that the ambassador there wanted me as commercial attaché. But my DCM thought I should try for an economic assignment. So I waited. They gave me economic counselor in Rabat; I guess they thought that was the closest thing to a European assignment. I didn't really mind being sent to a developing country. I'd go anyplace and serve anyplace and make myself at home. I always hoped it would be a non-communist country so I

could take my wife.

Q: What was the situation in Morocco, '69 to '73?

WHITE: When King Mohammed V died in 1961, his son Hassan became king as King Hassan II. They got independence in '56. His father died - King Mohammed V - and Hassan II took over. At first he ruled as a constitutional monarch, but after some riots in 1965 he dissolved the parliament and ruled henceforth by decree. That was the situation when I arrived. We considered him to be a friend and moderate on Middle Eastern issues.

He tried to cooperate with the Arabs, but he was a moderate on Arab affairs, and I thought he ended up, too, being a moderate influence in the Arab world. He wanted good relations with France. Many Moroccans were working in France and sending their remittances home, a big source of foreign exchange. France was also Morocco's biggest trading partner and the source of much of its direct foreign investment.

Q: What was the economic situation '69 to '73?

WHITE: I think there was a lot of unemployment. There wasn't much inflation. They were the world's biggest exporter of phosphates. And they had big citrus exports, too. And they had minerals. They had iron and coal. Lately, I think they've had petroleum. They had vegetables they'd send to France, and so forth. Tourism was one of the biggest sources of income. The French left a good infrastructure. So it really wasn't too bad. But they financed a lot of their budget with PL 480 wheat imports from the U.S.

Q: What about French influence? Were the French a pretty strong hold on most enterprises?

WHITE: The French had a very strong influence there, and a lot of the French were still there. I think they made a real contribution. From a tourism viewpoint, the hotels were all good in Morocco; the roads were good. It was a wonderful place to spend a vacation - and safe. It wasn't like Algeria.

Q: What was your major interest when you were there?

WHITE: I was interested in commercial matters, U.S. commercial interests and U.S. investment interests - business interests. And I worked with the aid administration, too, on things that we thought would help them, like the PL 480, where they could finance their budget. Because it was a moderate government and relations with the U. S. were good. In fact, Morocco was credited with being the first country to recognize the independence of the United States.

Q: It's true. Did you find yourself running up against an attempt by the French to wall off Morocco from other than French commercial ventures?

WHITE: No, we cooperated to a large extent with the French; we had good relations with

the French. We even had deposits in French banks. We didn't want to antagonize the French in Morocco. We knew they had vital interests there. We had no conflict with the French that I know of. The French Economic Counselor used to let me read his economic reports, which were very good. The French commercial attaché was also very helpful.

Q: Did you ever deal with Hassan or was that pretty much the ambassador?

WHITE: Hassan? I dealt with some of the ministers; but I was presented to King Hassan and he usually made a lot of the decisions. I dealt with him through his ministers. We had a problem with the Holiday Inn there. The Holiday Inn wanted to build a hotel; but they weren't putting any money into it; they just wanted to use their name and ability to get people to use it. The king didn't like it, so he canceled the agreement after the hotel was built. He didn't think it was a good deal for Morocco. That was one of the problems we had. We couldn't get the King to change his mind on this.

Q: At one point we had a lot of bases there, but by this point the bases had been disassembled?

WHITE: That's right. We disassembled those bases. We moved up to Spain, but we still had communications facilities. The personnel operating them were living at the Moroccan base at Kenitra. The Navy operated a high school for Americans there and my daughter and son attended it. Two years ago they had a reunion there and many former students went back. Both of my children went with their families. My daughter was one of the principal organizers. The place is a Moroccan military base and the commander gave them a nice reception on the base. They loved Morocco and had a wonderful time on their return.

Q: There were at least two major attempts to kill the king. Did those happen while you were there?

WHITE: In '71, there were five generals and about 1400 military cadets who raided the king's palace at Skhirat where he was entertaining many guests and tried to carry out a coup. In the shooting 28 dignitaries were killed, including the Belgian ambassador. After about two hours units of the army loyal to the kind came and rescued him

Q: This was during a birthday party, wasn't it?

WHITE: Yes, it was. His 42nd birthday celebration. They had a lot of diplomats invited there.

Q: Were you there?

WHITE: No, but our ambassador was. He was made to lie face down. The Belgian ambassador spoke up and said he was a diplomat; they shot him. So they were wild; but the question was, would the military remain loyal to the king? I always thought they would.

A labor officer in Casablanca, who later went on to be an ambassador and assistant secretary for Middle Eastern affairs, had a long report saying that we should not give all our support to the king; that his strength in the country wasn't that strong. Those of us in the embassy thought that the king was our best bet.

Our labor officer, Ed Djerejian, wrote a brilliant report, which I'm sure everybody admired. And we considered everything there, but we decided that the king was our best bet. And I myself thought that the military and the people in the rural areas would basically remain loyal to the king. He was descended from the prophet; he was a fairly modern monarch. And after about two hours, he talked his way out of it. He persuaded them to give up, and his loyal military took over. Then they were all let go.

Again the next year their was an attempt on the king's life. The officer who led it appears to have been General Mohammed Oufkir, who we considered to one of the most loyal supporters of the king. The dissident officers in the army who wanted a change tried to shoot down the king's plane returning from France. The plane was set on fire and they thought they had killed the king. The plane landed with two engines on fire, but the king survived.

Then the planes were shooting at the palace, too, which was just a few blocks from where I lived. I was at the Embassy and my son called to say he had been on the roof watching the planes flying over and shooting rockets at the king's palace.

And I myself was over at the Ministry of Commerce when they first got word that the king's plane had been attacked. There was a lot of excitement there, but I didn't know the reason for it. I had some usual business there. But they suspected we were behind it because we had people at the Kenitra air base, where the planes originated. But we, of course, had nothing in the world to do with the thing. The king survived, but they found out that Mohammed Oufkir, the minister of defense at that time, was behind it, so as I understand it he committed suicide. He disappeared altogether.

But his family ended up in confinement in some place in the desert for a good many years. his daughter has just written a book on it – about how harshly there were treated because of their father.

Q: During this time, were there any problems with Algeria?

WHITE: There were some, but they were settled. They had problems with Libya. They thought Libya was the one that had jumped to recognize that the coup - they said the king had been killed. Libya jumped to recognize the junta government when the king was still alive. I think Algeria held off awhile.

They had the problem with Algeria later, with the Spanish Sahara business. The Polisario.

Q: But that was after your time.

WHITE: That's right. That was after my time.

Q: Didn't they have the Green March during your time?

WHITE: What do you mean by that?

Q: This is, I think, when the king led_?

WHITE: I know what you mean. This was in 1975 when the king sent maybe 350,000 unarmed Moroccans to Spanish Sahara to reinforce Morocco's claim to the Spanish Sahara. Shortly afterwards, the Spanish left Spanish Sahara, assigning the northern two-thirds to Morocco and the other third to Mauritania. Mauritania eventually decided they wanted out because the Polisario were becoming active. These were the local people fighting for independence. So then Morocco claimed the whole area.

Q: How did you find American firms, were they able to deal in a straightforward manner with the Moroccan authorities and business community?

WHITE: I don't think it was completely satisfactory; I believe it was Goodyear Tire that wanted to come down and establish a plant there, but the government owned a tire-making plant, and they didn't want competition. So the Goodyear representative didn't get an appointment. I couldn't get an appointment for him, either.

But there was a lot of corruption in the government. They said that one of the reasons that some in the military had the attempted coup in '71 was because of corruption in the government. There was corruption, and I was reporting on corruption quite a bit; they removed a number of ministers and put them in jail. The minister of tourism, I know was one. Then they put the minister of finance in jail- he once entertained the ambassador and me at a French restaurant in Paris when we were there for a conference. Our ambassador did not think he was guilty and he was subsequently released.

Q: This was a time when an awful lot of young Americans were drifting around the world - the hippies and all that sort of thing - and Morocco was one of the places many went to get hashish and stuff like that. Did that cause any problems?

WHITE: I'm sure they caused the consular section a lot of problems. I know that a lot of them were running around. I was down at the embassy one time when some girls called up; they said, "We took this cab from Marrakech to Casablanca, and the guy said he would do it for $20 and now he wants $50," and they wanted me to resolve it over the telephone.

I talked to the cab driver. He said, "Gasoline costs $.50 a gallon. I couldn't afford to do it for $20." So it was his word against theirs. I knew that what he was charging was a fair rate, because I had already paid $25 for a taxi from Casablanca to Rabat, a much shorter distance; so I couldn't help them out over the telephone.

Q: Was Moroccan society easy to get to know? I mean, were relations pretty formal from your point of view?

WHITE: I think it was more of a formal relationship than Latin America. Of course, you get very good friends in Latin America; they open up their homes to you. A lot of them have families in the United States. A lot of them have studied in the United States.

In Morocco it is, as you say, somewhat more formal; you did get invited to their places, but it wasn't quite the same as Latin America. A bigger difference. I nevertheless made some very good friends in Morocco and entertained many of them in my home.

Q: What ambassadors did you have while you were there?

WHITE: First I had Ambassador Tasca, he was a political ambassador, but he was a very effective one. Sort of a career political ambassador. But he was only there for a few weeks after I arrived.

Q: How was Stuart Rockwell in dealing with economic problems? Was he good support?

WHITE: He always gave me all the support I needed. He was a very intelligent, impressive-looking man. And then we had Richard Parker as DCM. Richard Parker had a triple-bypass or quadruple-bypass operation, but afterwards he went on to be ambassador in three different countries, including Morocco. We had a good team in Rabat.

Q: Algeria, Morocco and Lebanon.

WHITE: Yes. So he has written books. I've seen him lately at Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired. Don Brown was Director of the AID (Agency for International Development) mission.

Q: Did you get involved much with AID?

WHITE: I went over there to their meetings, yes. But they were the ones making the decisions. Sometimes, if it was a question of commercial versus aid, I would frequently come down on the side of commerce.

Q: '73 you were finished. Sounds like it was about time to come home?

WHITE: That's right. Yes.

Q; So what did you do? Where did you go?

WHITE: I went back to the Bureau of African Affairs. I was the commercial coordinator on the economic policy staff. I had to travel around Africa quite a bit.

Q: You were there from '73 to '78.

WHITE: That's when I retired.

Q: Who was the head of African Affairs when you arrived in '73?

WHITE: Let me see who it was. Dick Moose was there when I left. David Newsom was Assistant Secretary when I first arrived and for the first few months I was there. After him there was Don Easum; later he was sent as ambassador to Nigeria.

Q: What was your job?

WHITE: My job was to keep in touch with the various desk officers, and see that we were commercially oriented, that we were taking advantage of the commercial opportunities. I worked closely with Commerce, too.

I traveled around Africa and talked to all the economic people in the embassies there. We tried to get them to focus their attention managing their resources so they could take advantage of opportunities for trade and commerce.

Later when I was there, the U. S. government had a policy of neutrality towards investment. Probably the result of labor union activity. I thought that was sort of a mistake, because I thought what many of them were interested in was promoting investment from the U.S. in Africa to give employment. As a counterweight to activity by the communist countries. A lot of them chose African socialism. And they had close ties with the communist countries.

I didn't think they were permanently that way - I thought they were opportunists. We have some African presidents now that were Marxists 10 years ago and now they profess to be democrats and in favor of the market. Several of them are like that.

Q: From talking to people and from looking at it, it seems like African socialism has been pretty much a disaster?

WHITE: It was. It was a disaster everyplace. In Tanzania; it's a disaster in Zimbabwe right now. Anyplace that they tried it, it was always a disaster. But frequently they were influenced by the former colonial powers: like the Fabian Socialists in Britain and the Socialists in France.

The ones that tried more for an open economy, like Botswana and Mauritius have done better. Ivory Coast used to be doing quite well at that time under Houphouet-Boigny and Kenya under Kenyatta. Now they're having problems. Senegal did fairly well with orderly changes in government. It's first president was Leopold Senghor, a very good man. Right now there's a dearth of good leadership in Africa.

Q: What was your impression of the African leadership during this '73 to '78 period?

WHITE: They had authoritarian governments, and too many of them were oriented toward the Soviets - like Zambia. Under Kenneth Kaunda, they nationalized practically everything. In Malawi they had Hastings Bandar, who was a dictator for many years. They had Kenyatta in Kenya. But he at least there was harmony between the races in Kenya when he was there. They say he ended up a rather wealthy man.

Kenya wasn't too bad in those days, and Houphouet-Boigny in Ivory Coast probably was one of the more effective presidents. I thought he really was a very good president. I didn't think much of Mobutu in Zaire. But the situation before Mobutu, was even worse. Idi Amin in Uganda was not only a dictator of the worst sort, but a buffoon. But Milton Obote who came before and after him was no better. Julius Nyerere was the long-time ruler of Tanzania and was considered a decent man - he translated Shakespeare into Swahili - but he was ruining the country economically and there were many human rights violations. A bright spot was probably Botswana under its first president Sir Seretse Khama, who was married to an English woman. There was racial harmony in the country and the country's wealth from diamonds was used for the benefit of the country. As I recall Rwanda and Burundi had received their independence from Belgium but were plagued with ethnic strife between the Tutsis and the Hutus. The Central African Republic was being ruled by the dictator Jean Bedell Bokassa, who had himself crowned as Emperor and finally massacred a number of schoolchildren because they were not wearing the school uniforms manufactured in his factory. He was arrested by the French after ruling about 13 years. Cameroun was relatively stable under the rule of its first president Amadou Ahidjo. In the mid-seventies General Felix Malloum was the president of Chad. In those year Chad was having difficulties with interference by Libya in the internal civil conflict between Muslims in the north and the non-Muslims in the South.

In those years Nigeria had a population of close to 100 million and was one of the world's largest producer of petroleum. In 1995 the corrupt and dictatorial government of General Yakubu Gowon, who was the leader during the Biafran war, was overthrown by Murtala Ramat Mohammed, who instituted reforms in preparation for democratic elections. When he was assassinated Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo continued these reforms until there were democratic elections shortly after I left the Bureau. He is now the president of Nigeria, having been elected in 1999 for a second term.

In South Africa the Boers were still trying to hold on to power but their position was becoming more and more difficult. After the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola became independent in 1976 the South Africans were providing help to rebels against the socialist regimes in those countries. They hung on to the territory of South West Africa which they had governed as a mandate and were fighting the Swapos under Sam Nujoma. who wanted the independence of that country. Namibia did not become independent until about 12 years after I left the Bureau.

Some of the countries that we considered communist in those days have now changed. Benin, for example, that was ruled for many years by Mathieu Kerekou, a Marxist, now is considered democratic and pursuing an open market economy. I could probably talk

about the other sub-Saharan African countries, but this is probably sufficient to suggest the changes that have occurred since the fall of communism.

Q: Did you feel part of your job was persuading American firms, or making the ground firm for American firms, to invest in Africa?

Q: Yes, and trade. I've always said that Nigeria was a country of over 100 million and had tremendous oil wealth, and that was the place where they would find the market if they were patient enough to develop it. Of course, there was a lot of corruption in Nigeria. All over Africa. And there was a lack of regimes of law in most of the countries to make them attractive for countries to invest.

And there were other oil countries, too. Gabon had quite a bit of oil. Angola had oil, too. In fact, all during the communist years, they had Chevron producing oil over in Kabinda, separate from the main part of Angola by Zaire. This oil no doubt provided most of the foreign exchange for the Angolan government.

Q: Were you able to help any investment in Africa?

WHITE: In what way would we help it? We'd give them investment guarantees. There were some cases of expropriation that had not been resolved by the time I left.

Q: And to encourage companies to invest there.

WHITE: Well, we would. Especially in petroleum exploration. Even in the socialist countries they would welcome investment in extraction industries; even though our government was neutral to other investments, they would favor investment in extraction. We promoted that as much as possible if we thought there was oil someplace.

Q: Did we get involved in diamonds?

WHITE: That was not a major concern when I was there. They had a lot of diamond wealth, but it wasn't always used very effectively. Botswana does - Botswana's main source of income, I think, is diamonds. And they use it very well. They've had three presidents, and they've all been very good presidents, I think. But in other countries like Zaire and Angola, the fight over diamonds has led to a lot of bloodshed.

Q: Yes, as a matter of fact, right now diamonds are the source of a lot of rebel movements and very nasty violence in Sierra Leone and Congo, too.

WHITE: The rebels and some foreign armies always want to get their hands on the diamonds.

Q: You were there both in the Nixon and Carter times. Was there a change as far as our economic interests in Africa between the late Nixon-Ford years and Carter years?

WHITE: I don't think there was any major change. Under Nixon at first we had the detente talks with the Russians. I was in Morocco then. We had avoided contacts before that. Then I was encouraged to talk to them and report on the talks. Which I was glad to do, because I was so opposed to their system, I didn't see how I could lose an argument with any of them.

So I got to know the Soviets, the financial counselor in Morocco, but he could barely speak English and very little French, so he was handicapped in carrying out his job. He was trying to help them build a dam.

Q: You left in '78 and you retired?

WHITE: Yes.

Q: What did you do after you retired?

WHITE: I have been active in Diplomatic and Consular Officers Retired, where I am on the Board of Governors, the Executive Committee, chairman of the Memorial Committee, and member of the Program and Music Committees. I am also on the board of the American Friends of the Czechoslovak Republic. We were successful in getting a statue of the Czechoslovak president Tomas Masaryk on Massachusetts Avenue this year. I worked on that.

I also got involved in a series of books on Czechoslovakia in World War II. You have these oral histories of the Foreign Service. I got the histories of the people in Czechoslovakia that fought for a democratic country after the war, a free and democratic country. So I got the memoirs of the war experiences of many of these people, and I put them in three volumes, which I think is probably a source book for their history. I also wrote some of the chapters. They don't have anything else like it. They gave me a medal for it. And they're always inviting me over to meet with the military people.

Q: What inspired you to do this?

WHITE: Because my father-in-law was one of the top generals in Czechoslovakia under Benes. He was in London during World War II as President Benes's military adviser and subsequently was sent to Czechoslovakia as it was being liberated to serve as the Commander of the Liberated Territories.. He came over to the U.S. in '48. So all I had to do was say I was General Hasal's son-in-law and I could get anything I wanted. They would trust me to take care of their papers.

Q: Did they ever repopulate the town of Lidice?

WHITE: Yes, but they put it in a different place. It's close by, but they left the original site as a park. It is designated a peace park and they have beautiful roses there. A very beautiful and moving place to visit.

The Czechoslovak government in London sent some Czechs and Slovaks from England to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, the brutal *Reichs Protektor* of occupied Bohemia and Moravia. He was assassinated in May 1942. Lidice was completely destroyed by the Germans and all men over 14 were shot in revenge for the assassination. The women and children were sent separately to concentration camps.

Q: He was Hitler's governor for... what do you call it_?

WHITE: A "protectorate," they call it - the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Q: He was a real nasty type.

WHITE: He was, yes. He assassinated many to inspire terror. The brave people who were sent from England to assassinate him knew his route and when he passed one of the two men waiting for him tried to fire his automatic weapon, but it jammed, so the other one threw a grenade into this car. The car springs were blown into him and he died about three days later.

*Q: It sound a little bit like the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand. Misfires, and_*

WHITE: Actually, Heydrich deserved it; but the Archduke Ferdinand, was fairly pro-Slav. He was more liberal-minded than Franz Josef. He was married to a Czech.

Q: Okay. On your wife's side of the family, how did they feel about the break-up of Czechoslovakia into two parts?

WHITE: They didn't like it, because the Czechoslovakians counted for more in the world than the Czechs and the Slovaks separately. In that period, Slovakia was governed by a prime minister, Meciar, who had a very bad human rights record. He was an ex-communist. We knew the last Czechoslovak ambassador here in '48; he resigned when the communists took over, and he was a Slovak. So we've known a lot of Slovaks.

We went over there with our children in '98; President Havel invited us over. He wanted to give posthumously my wife's father the Order of the White Lion, which is their highest decoration. We were given a private tour of the beautiful Prague Castle and then had champagne with President Havel and his staff. This was the first time our son and daughter had visited the Czech Republic and it was a wonderful introduction to the country of their mother's birth.

We've been to Bratislava; we've been to Prague a number of times since the Velvet Revolution, and I'm president of the Wilsonian club here. We have both Czechs and Slovaks in it. We meet at the Woodrow Wilson house. We honor President Woodrow Wilson and celebrate the independence of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Slovak Ambassador Butora has agreed to come and speak about Rostislav Stefanik this year. So we're friendly with both the Czechs and Slovaks. We go to both their embassies.

Q: Okay. Well, Jack, I guess this is a good time to stop. I thank you very much.

WHITE: Well, okay. I've enjoyed it very much.

End of interview