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

AMBASSADOR MYLES R. R. FRECHETTE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: September 4, 2001

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Frechette.]

Q: Today is September 4, 2001. This is an interview with Myles Frechette. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Myles, what's your middle initial?

FRECHETTE: I have two of them, R, R.

Q: R, R, okay. Okay, well, let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born and something about your parents?

FRECHETTE: I was born on the 25th of April, 1936 in Chile. My mother was Chilean and she is still alive and is now an American citizen. My father was an American who got out of college in the Depression as an engineer from the University of Vermont and couldn't get a job in the States as an engineer except as a night clerk since it was the Depression. So, he took a job with United Fruit and went to work in Colombia and worked there on a two-year contract from '30 to '32 in Santa Marta. Then he got a contract with an American mining company in Chile and he remained in Chile from 1932 to 1951 working either for the Kennecott Copper Corporation or Anaconda Copper. I was born in San Diego. I have many cousins in Chile. I was partially educated in San Diego, partially educated in little company schools up in mining camps at different altitudes in the Andes. My early life was basically mining camps, small groups of Americans. We never played baseball. Usually it was too steep to have a baseball diamond, football or anything like that. So, we did Thanksgiving and that sort of stuff. My mother made a great Thanksgiving dinner with mincemeat. She first traveled to the United States in 1939. What was it the World's Fair in New York? That was her first visit to the States. Then we came again after the war in '47 and then in '51 my dad decided contrary to his original plans to leave Chile and he finally concluded that while it would be a comfortable life for him, he wanted something better for my brother and me. So, we moved to Canada and I lived in Canada for seven years in Vancouver. I am the only graduate of the University of British Columbia who ever entered the Foreign Service to the best of my knowledge.

Q: I've got to go back.

FRECHETTE: Sure.

Q: What is your father's family, where did they come from, do you know?

FRECHETTE: Well, his great grandfather was a carriage maker in Quebec. The name Frechette is a very common French Canadian name. You'll find it all over the northeast. Even in Washington when I first moved here I was the only Frechette, my wife and I. Now, you look in the phone book and there's a whole pot full not related to me except my brother and my son and my daughter. Anyway, he moved to a little place called Richmond, Vermont where he married an Irish girl. A first generation American Irish girl.

Q: Where is Richmond, Vermont?

FRECHETTE: Richmond, Vermont is north of Burlington. It's a very small town, very charming. It's got some of these sort of octagonal churches in it. Of course there were mainly Protestants, but there were a lot of Catholics, too. If you go to the cemetery in Richmond, it's mainly Irish. In fact, my great grandfather whose name was Frechette, my son Steven has a picture taken by the gravestone. These Irish guys sort of Anglicized it. It's not "ch" it's "sh", Frechette. If you look around, the Frechettes were the only non-Irish, non-Anglo Saxons in that town, and the living live cheap with the dead. There are three or four small cemeteries throughout Richmond and houses all around. It's a great place. I took my kids there because I wanted them to understand a little bit better where we came from. So, we're sort of half French Canadian, half Irish and then of course, I'm half Chilean, educated in Chile, educated in Canada. I got a masters degree later in the Foreign Service, but basically except for a three-month stint in a Catholic high school in Burlington, Vermont, I never studied in the States.

Q: Now, your father, what was your grandfather on your father's side?

FRECHETTE: My grandfather did very well in the insurance business, but he got some illnesses from the Spanish American War. He picked up malaria and something else in Panama City and he never made it to Cuba he was so ill. He died when my father was 14. It was a successful insurance business. There were two brothers, fortunately there was a little bit there so that my grandmother could bring up my father and his two sisters. My father had to work from the day he was 14, usually tending the furnaces in some of the homes. It was cold there.

Q: Was this in Richmond still?

FRECHETTE: No, this was in Burlington. They moved, they lived in two or three places, but Burlington was where this happened. Then he got a scholarship to the University of Vermont and did very well and graduated as a civil and a mining engineer, and of course there was no work in America.

Q: What is your mother's background?

FRECHETTE: Well, the name Reyes, which was my mother's name, was originally Delos Reyes which indicated the original people, it means of the kings. Obviously they had been in Chile for centuries; they probably were attached as clerks or bureaucrats to the office of the captain general. Delos Reyes implies that they had some relation to the king not in terms of lineage, but in terms of support.

Q: Courtiers.

FRECHETTE: Yes, well not even courtiers, just clerks. Typical family. During the colony they had a lot of land, but you know how it is in these Latin American families. They start dividing the land, so when my grandfather came around he had gone to the naval academy. He never worked a day in his life. He quit the navy and sort of lived off his land, which consisted of a little teeny plot in a town, and it if hadn't been for my grandmother, who was a poor, ignorant peasant girl from a little town not far from there who took in washing, it was my grandmother who made the family because they were very, very poor. She made sure that every one of her 11 children went to the university.

Q: My God, that's really remarkable.

FRECHETTE: Of course, the university is free in Chile.

Q: Yes, but still it's remarkable.

FRECHETTE: Yes. When you consider her background, she could read and write. She was from a little, teeny place, literally a village, maybe 10 or 12 houses. So, she made the family. Now, all of my cousins are professionals, doctors or lawyers. One of my uncles became commander of the national police, others were army officers, others pharmacists, that sort of stuff, you know, professionals. In other words they took their college education and did something with it. If it hadn't been for my grandmother I'm quite certain that all of my cousins would now be somewhere working on a vineyard.

Q: Did you know your grandmother?

FRECHETTE: Yes.

Q: Did she have much of an influence on your life or was she too old?

FRECHETTE: Not much because I didn't live with her much. We lived in these mining camps. I used to see her every once in a while. You have to understand in societies such as that the grandmother or the oldest person has a lot of influence, and she still tells her sons and daughters, be they in their sixties, what the hell to do. You know, she was a sort of an august figure and sort of a distant figure. She was nice to me, but I don't recall particularly having a great deal to do with her. I had more to do with my grandfather. Unfortunately, Chile is a cold and rainy place, and my grandfather died of tuberculosis. One of my uncles, for whom I am named, died of tuberculosis and I had tuberculosis as a boy. But I remember my grandfather picking me up. You know, it's hard to know, is this

really a memory of mine or is it something my mother told me it used to happen. I don't know. I recall somebody who used to pick me up and complain that I was always going to the bathroom in my diapers.

Q: Well, then you as a kid, young kid you sort of lived in these mining camps. What are your memories of the society there?

FRECHETTE: Well, actually, because my father was an American we lived in special camps called for the gold, the gold payroll that means the Americans. There were no Chileans living in those. They were usually Americans, but I think there were a few Brits, a few Knuts, usually the engineers. Today it's all different. Chilean mining engineers are among the very best in the world, and people are hiring them all the time. In those days there were very few Chilean mining engineers. We lived in these little camps maybe 10 or 15 families. There was a lot of social life just like there is in a Foreign Service post, and the people get together a lot and have cocktails and that sort of thing. I remember my father went through a state there where he drank too much and my mother and some of his other friends pulled him back from that. It was a fairly common occurrence. There wasn't much to do. However, I was very happy because as a kid it was wonderful. We lived for a while in the Central Valley in a very nice home, but far from the Americans. It was about a mile. I had to walk about a mile to go to school and back. There were wonderful eucalyptus forests there and I used to wander around and get in trouble in all kinds of fruit trees. I remember one time I traded my bike for this string of mules and talked this little boy into giving me the string of mules loaded with cut wood. The kid liked the bike. Well, at the end of the day I had this string of mules. What the hell do I do with that? So, I brought them into our property, which was huge, and I put them in the back so my father wouldn't see them. Sure enough about 7:00 in the evening, the father of the boy came around and said, I just lost one days wages because I wasn't able to sell that kindling wood. Where's your damn kid. Of course, I was hiding. He brought back the bike. I had two dogs. I had a horse, walking around through all of those forests and along the river. It was just fun. That camp has been preserved. It's called Quoia and it's been preserved by the government, wisely I think as a mirror of what camp life was like in those days in the '30s and '40s. It brings back great memories to me. Most of the other camps where I lived have been destroyed. I must say the first time I realized that I cried. I went up with some cousins of mine to look at this place and I was trying to find where our home was. It's very interesting and sad to realize that your home has been literally destroyed for political reasons. They didn't want people to remember that the Americans had been there. That's very sad. It's interesting. I cried a lot and my cousins comforted me. They were very nice and about a year later I went back to Chile and I went up there with the young Chilean man who had grown up after the Americans had left in this same camp, and he was now an engineer. He had the same reaction. He couldn't find his house and we sort of commiserated together. Very sad. I never realized how sad it is to see the place where you once lived no longer exists. I can certainly sympathize with people from Europe and other parts of the world to whom this sort of thing has happened.

Being able to wander through the woods gave me a love of nature. I still hike, my wife and I walk around Europe on foot, and our kids all hiked. That was wonderful. Now up in

the mine itself there was sometimes 20 feet of snow, there were no roads there. It was all stairs. It's all very steep mountain, but there was a lot of fun there. The miners used to steal dynamite, and I could buy a stick of dynamite for five pesos and detonate it and it was a lot of fun. I had a BB gun, and occasionally there were owls that used to come and sit on the electric lines in our camp. I remember one time I hit this owl and the damn thing didn't fall. That's when I read that some owls have some muscles that actually lock into place and they don't fall. They're dead as a doornail, but they don't fall. It's only when decomposition takes place that they fall out of these trees. Anyway, I had a great time. I did skiing, a lot of hiking in those places. We lived above the tree line. There was no grass even that grew up there, just bare rocks.

Q: What was the mining?

FRECHETTE: Copper.

Q: Copper. How did they get it down from there?

FRECHETTE: Well, they had a thing that looked sort of like a ski lift, but instead of people it carried huge buckets of ore and it hauled them down to the mill and the smelter. The place where we had lived originally, Quoia, was the place that generated all the electricity that made all this work. I have very fond memories of the place and my father bought me a lot of books in English that I read and I read constantly. I still read and my kids read a lot, too.

Q: Were you brought up in a bilingual household?

FRECHETTE: Well, at first I spoke mainly Spanish, then I had to learn enough English to go to the school with these other American kids because I spent every summer with my cousins. Yes, I think you could probably say bilingual. However, when I left Chile in 1951 and we went to Burlington for three months and then to Canada, I had a heavy accent, which I got rid of very quickly. I liked Canada a lot. It was certainly a much bigger society than I had ever seen. It was the middle of the Korean War and it was very exciting. I've always been sort of an amateur actor. I got a lot of parts on CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and also worked as an extra for the national film board, and enjoyed it very much. I really thought that I was going to settle in Canada and teach comparative languages. When I finally got my degree and began graduate work was when I realized that I really didn't want to be a teacher of comparative languages. I left and I thought it was time now for a big break, and why not go to the States. I moved to Seattle.

Q: Well, let's go back.

FRECHETTE: Sure.

Q: Were you at all aware of World War II or were you too young?

FRECHETTE: My father had two radios, which we used to tune in to the Voice of America everyday. Everyday we tuned it in and it seemed to give a sort of stereo effect, I'm sure it was just in mind. We had big maps and we tracked the war, each front. We'd have little pins and flags for the enemy and for us. So, the war was a big thing in my life. It still is a favorite topic of mine.

Q: For one thing, I think for anybody who goes through the experience it is one of the great geography lessons that any kid could have that you can't get from sitting in a classroom.

FRECHETTE: I got that, I mean we had maps. I remember when the Atom Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. I said to my father, you know, we heard that this atom bomb had been dropped. I said to him, what is an atom bomb. He said, I don't know. So, I walked to the school about a mile away and I walked into Miss Nielson, who was my teacher. She had just graduated a couple years before in the States. I said, what's an atom bomb? She didn't know either. It was astonishing. Nobody knew what the hell an atom bomb was. We knew it was splitting the atom, but how it released the energy, we didn't know.

Q: Did you find when you were in Chile at any point anti-America tensions or problems?

FRECHETTE: Oh, sure, of course. Chile was never particularly close to the United States until World War II. Prior to that time, yes, there were mining operations, but the Chileans considered themselves largely closer to Europeans, wanted European migration. There was strong pro-Axis sentiment with Chile. My uncle was at the time I think a major in charge of counter intelligence. It was his job to round up Nazi spies. There was a big colony of Germans who had come into southern Chile in the 1870s. There was a lot of pro-axis sentiment, but not just among the Chilean Germans, among the Chileans themselves. You know, who the hell are these gringos? The Germans did have a lot of spies in Chile. My uncle rounded them up. They weren't any better off than the spies here that got rounded up pretty much quickly. I was always aware of anti-American sentiment. My cousins, my uncles, I spent time with them in Chilean society. It was pretty clear to me that a lot of things that we did were not things that were appreciated.

Q: How about in the mining camps? Who were the miners? Was there a sort of a class system?

FRECHETTE: Well, the miners were very poor people, usually of peasant stock. Very good miners I might add. Chile has always had mines in fact one of the mines where I lived was discovered by a Spanish lieutenant. The Indians mined all up and down the Andes and he went up there and he found this copper mine where the Indians were producing some copper. That became a mine, but it was never a big time operation until old Kennecott came down and did the geology and all the rest of it and he decided to invest. Again, you know, the American presence was resented by a lot of people. The miners liked the Americans. As I said they were peasant people. Chile is a stratified society. Not as stratified as Colombia, but stratified nonetheless. You know, I knew from my mother's family, who were lower middle class by the time my mother was born, that

they were not received in certain social levels in Chilean society.

The miners used to like to imitate the young mining engineers. I remember one time this miner was walking along and he sold me a stick of dynamite as I recall and he stumbled and fell. When he fell he went, "God damn it, son of a bitch!" He was repeating what the American engineers said. The miners got along well. The Americans brought along the good miners and made them supervisors very quickly. Out of that developed a whole series of mining schools in Chile that produced some of the very best in the world.

Q: Was Kennecott, were you a company kid? I was wondering if it was brought up, I mean the mining company was the world or not?

FRECHETTE: I knew that it wasn't the world. You know when my mother married my father she was really blackballed by the Americans. My mother was a good athlete. To look at her today, she is a little teeny woman, but she actually played basketball and turned into an excellent golfer. Golf gave her entree because all these camps had golf courses. I remember one, we were stationed up in the north in the desert, the driest place on earth, and there was no grass. The greens were just sand. Later when I was ambassador in Cameroon, we had a golf course and the greens were just sand, too.

Q: Yes, we had that in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

FRECHETTE: My mother is very gregarious, and she quickly learned to cook American food. If it hadn't been for the golf it would have been a very tough life for my mother, but golf provided the entree. It's interesting because there was one other guy in one particular camp that I called Cansey from Canada who had married a Chilean girl, and golf was her entree as well. These Americans were people from the southwest and so on and so forth. As I say, with time she became integrated into this, but it took two or three years and was very tough for her. She didn't speak English. She didn't know it when she married my father. My father could speak Spanish from Colombia. She speaks very good English today with a heavy accent.

Q: Well, then when you moved to Canada, how old were you then?

FRECHETTE: 15.

Q: 15. So, did you go to a Canadian high school?

FRECHETTE: Sure, a place called Lord Bing.

Q: Was it hard to adjust?

FRECHETTE: To a certain extent. I had an accent, and I got rid of that very quickly because I found the Canadians. This was a time when Canadians were accommodating a lot of DP's from Europe, a lot of Czechs, a lot of Hungarians.

Q: DP means displaced persons?

FRECHETTE: Yes, displaced people from Europe and they were adjusting well to it. British Columbia was still very much a provincial Anglo society. The Anglican Church was dominant. If you go to Victoria, British Columbia, even today many of the buildings look very British, afternoon tea is still very much the tradition. One thing about Vancouver is that it had a huge Chinese population. Even today Vancouver has a huge Chinese population. It's growing. It's all these wealthy people from Hong Kong. Chinatown in Vancouver was really interesting because they had Chinese movies, Chinese newspapers. Even the street signs were both in English and Chinese. There were people, Canadians, who lived their entire life there but couldn't speak a word of English. They were not considered bizarre. Then Sikhs began to come in. We had Doukhobors who are sort of a radical religious sect from the Ukraine, the sons of freedom; they lived not so much in Vancouver, but to the north. Their way of protesting government action they didn't like was they would all take off their clothes and march down the road and it was just wonderful. I found the Canadian kids when I first met them a little resentful of the fact that I was, you know. I remember one of my very best friends said, "You know when I first met you I always thought you put grease in your hair." It shows you the conflicts. So, I acquired a Canadian accent, which I subsequently lost when I moved to Seattle. That was the first step. I mean getting rid of this, and then also buying clothes that were made in Canada so that I looked like others.

Q: Well, were you getting a different view of the United States from Canada?

FRECHETTE: Oh, sure. Although it was Korea and we were both fighting in Korea, but at the time I remember the Canadians were, well, the Canadians always fear the United States and particularly the American culture, that it's so overwhelming. The Canadians really have a lot of difficulty with the fact that when it comes right down to it they don't have much culture. It's sort of an appendage of ours.

Q: Sometimes you think their main reason for being is that they're not American, you know?

FRECHETTE: Later when I became an ambassador I remembered my Canadian colleagues who were ambassadors who would often in a moment of perhaps friendship and extraordinary candor would say, you know, I'm trying to bring out some cultural root from Canada that is really Canadian, but there isn't such a thing. I mean you might have some Inuits or something. The musicians played the same kind of music, and of course anybody in Canada who had any kind of talent migrated to the States. I remember in those days Senator McCarthy was going full steam and the Canadians laughed at him. There was an actor called Loren Green who later did a television series called The Ponderosa. Loren Green imitated McCarthy's voice and he did this funny record in which this sort of investigator congressman dies in a plane crash and goes to heaven and starts to investigate heaven. So, God puts him back on earth and makes him come back to life. There was a lot of feeling about that. There was a lot of fear of American culture and that sort of thing. I must say growing up in Canada it just came through loud and clear from

all my friends and all my teachers. There were things about the United States that weren't quite right. Canadian culture is very different and there was no question about it. There was a certain group of people. Lord Bing was a very middle class neighborhood, but Prince of Wales, which was just a mile or two away was a neighborhood where the people were in society and everybody knew it, and they're still in society. I've never been to a high school reunion, but I'm thinking of going one of these years. It's always very funny. Judy Harper, who was from a prominent family, is still sort of the big cheese, it's bizarre. I like Canada and I actually thought of becoming a Canadian because I kind of liked what I was doing, but then when I realized that I really had barked up the wrong tree on the whole question of comparative languages, I thought this is a time for a break. My dad was American and I had two aunts who were American, so let's go to the States.

Q: But at that point, you weren't an American, is that right?

FRECHETTE: I was, yes. When I was born you did not acquire citizenship through the father. Later there was an exception whereby if the father worked in copper mines in support of the war industry, the child did not have to live in the United States to acquire citizenship. I had acquired citizenship through this law. I have a certificate of citizenship from the INS because prior to that time I would have had to have been an immigrant and lived here I don't know how many years. I remember when I was a consular officer in Honduras for my first tour. I'd just come back from Honduras. I remember looking up this law because we had the immigration act, and in the back was this particular amendment in the law that existed for like five years.

Q: Did you feel American, I mean, was this being pushed at you by your father or your mother or did you feel Chilean or Canadian?

FRECHETTE: I felt a little bit of everything. I came to the States and of course went to work right away and got some good friends and went to work to become an American. Some things I have never really acquired. For example, football, I played for a bit at Lord Bing, but I never became a big fan of football. I never played baseball, so both of those sports which my family loves don't do much for me. I'm just not interested. Don't know why, but I've always regretted not having served in the armed forces. I really feel that had I done that I would have had sort of a fully rounded American persona. It's interesting. My father tried to enlist in the army when he was in Chile and they refused him because he was in a critical industry, copper. My wife's father actually enlisted in the army and of course the war ended in '17. He enlisted in 1917 and the war ended before he even finished his basic training. He so resented that. He was a county agent, he worked for the farmers. When World War II came along he made a big stink and even went to his congressman, but he was too old by then. Serving in the armed forces really does do something for you.

Q: We have, I mean, I did my time, but I think in lots of elements of society and in our particular one, the Foreign Service, I think it hurts that many of our young people who come in have no feel for the military.

FRECHETTE: I think so, too. There was a lot more of those when I joined the Foreign Service. Bill Boucher for example, who was my boss, he had been born the son of British missionaries in the very south of Argentina, Tierra del Fuego. He came up here to study divinity I guess, and World War II came along and he enlisted and out of that he got his American citizenship. He's very old now and sickly, he's always remained very religious, but didn't become a pastor and lives as a matter of fact in a parsonage in a little tiny town on the Rappahannock. You go to the town and it's about ten houses and people say, well, that's the CIA man and that's the FBI guy and there's the State Department.

Q: At high school, how about Canadian history? Did you find that Canadian history, was there, I'm just curious, did you feel that they were slamming the United States?

FRECHETTE: Not particularly, there was a division. Canada and the United States really did not have big rows. I mean, we had the dispute over the San Juan Islands and that sort of thing. Many loyalists left the United States and went and settled in Canada. You feel that in Canadian history.

Q: Ottawa, isn't it, I mean that's mainly Ontario, where so many of those went.

FRECHETTE: That's true. Not out to BC. BC wasn't there at the time of the war, but of course, it began as trading posts in the San Juan Island war, took place out there. No, the BC people are west coasters. They feel as much a part of eastern Canadian as Californians feel of the east. They laugh at it. They call them apple knockers and one thing or another.

I read a lot, and they were American books. So, I had a sense of what our history was having been through World War II. You know, the Canadians always went out of their way to tell you that theirs was a better society, just more peaceful, etc. I didn't feel a lot of slamming. One time in my life when I was getting a masters at UCLA I remember reading a Peruvian history book about the war with Chile. I remember having studied that war when I was in Chile, and it was a totally different rendition of what had happened. Of course, then I read Fred Pike's book on the same period and it was different again.

I don't think the Canadians and the Americans, at least in the history that I studied, had that big a difference. It was the cultural thing more than anything else. You know Canada looked very different than the Untied States. I remember BC and Vancouver looked very British, houses done in Tudor style and that sort of stuff. Then you go across the border into Bellingham and it was a very different thing. Today it's like a huge megalopolis. Kentucky Fried Chicken, pizza parlors, McDonalds, I mean there's no difference. You go across the border, well, you're in a different country, but you scarcely know it. The license plates are different.

Q: Well, you went from high school to the University of British Columbia, is that right? You were there from when to when?

FRECHETTE: At the university?

Q: Yes.

FRECHETTE: From ‘54 to ‘58.

Q: All right. Now, did you get into languages? I mean was language your specialty?

FRECHETTE: I studied French and I was good at it and I discovered at the university that I was really good at languages. I could do the accents very well. I thought, hell, I speak Spanish already. That's one for me. I’ll do the French and I’ll do comparative literature. I remember I had a Mr. Rush who was a very nice guy and he said, do comparative lit, you know. Rush had been a great guy, taught me French and he’d been in World War II and helped liberate Paris and all that kind of stuff and became a French teacher, a nice guy. I just hadn’t thought it through. I just wasn’t very mature. I really didn’t know what I was going to do. The same thing, my entry into the Foreign Service was quite fortuitous. Nothing to do with anything.

Q: But at British Columbia, while you were at the university there, you were?

FRECHETTE: I was an American, they looked on me as an American.

Q: An American?

FRECHETTE: Yes, they knew I was a landed immigrant, but I had an American passport. I must tell you that my experiences with the Foreign Service in the ‘50s in Canada were not great. My father used to go to renew his passport and they didn’t treat us very well. They never seemed very friendly. They always seemed very bureaucratic and cold and stiff, and you went in there and they’d tell you to be there at 3:00 and hell, they didn’t receive you until 4:00. They sat there cooling their heels for 45 minutes. I remember this and I did not like the diplomatic service at all. I did not particularly like the way they treated my father who was an American. So, really entering the Foreign Service was very different from what I imagined it.

Q: Did you get any feel for the academic life? I mean when you went on for a masters.

FRECHETTE: Yes, but I dropped it after one quarter. I could see that was a mistake, not the masters, it was the idea. I had a sense that I would sit around in tweeds and smoke a pipe, and I was a big mountain climber in those days. I sort of climb mountains on the weekends, go skiing and then come down and teach the kids. It was like out of the movies. It was thoroughly unrealistic. I admired these guys who taught me. A guy called Mr. Greg also encouraged me very much in this. I admired them. I mean they sort of looked like what I wanted to do with life. Contemplative, buy books, and culture and one thing and another and you could also go out on the weekends and have a great time doing mountain climbing or whatever.

Q: Well, then.

FRECHETTE: Parachuting. I took up parachuting at the time.

Q: Oh my God. By the time you graduated from college you picked up a significant other or not?

FRECHETTE: No. I went through girls. It was interesting because at the University of British Columbia I played upon the fact that I was a Hispanic, so I used to hang around with the Hispanics and we used to have a lot of parties. I was in a band and I played the bongo drums. Of course, Chile has nothing to do with Central America and Cuba and guys from the Caribbean. There were a lot of them there. The Canadian universities have always had a great outreach to the Caribbean so I went to school with a lot of guys from Central America and English speaking islands in the Caribbean and even some who spoke English as a second language. I played on that, and then of course the Canadian girls fell for that. I had a lot of girlfriends at the time, nothing permanent. My grades suffered, too. I found at the end of I guess it was my junior year that my grades had really dropped. So, I sort of left all that. I also had a drinking problem at the time. I dropped that, too, and worked like hell that last year so that I could get out with a decent average. I sort of let myself just wander.

Q: What brought you, you said you started for a masters and decided the academic life just wasn't.

FRECHETTE: It's not what I imagined in my mind it was going to be. I remember, I had just graduated and I was teaching at the summer session. I was teaching Spanish. I had all these teachers of Spanish in high schools who were coming through to learn Spanish and I had a guy called Thorne. I spoke to him in Spanish. I said now I want you to write down all these things. I remember he handed in his paper, I'll never forget this, and he put at the top, lesson, instead of "lexion" and he put fivo, F-I-V-O. I thought I'm in the wrong business here. Jesus Christ, this guy doesn't know shit. I don't want to do this for the rest of my life. Thorne was a perfectly fine high school teacher from Cutney Ridge in the north, a nice guy, but he had no gift for languages at all. That was, how shall I say it, that was the thundercloud that really opened my eyes. I remember I was very depressed. I thought how could I have done this to myself? What the hell am I going to do with my life? So I moved on. It's interesting that when I came to FSI I got 36 on my language aptitude test and they called me in and they said, you'll never be able to serve in anything but an English speaking place. I said, but you know, I speak Spanish and I speak French, and they were absolutely amazed. They had me speak for them and then they were even more amazed and they said, why don't you take the test again? I said, no. The badge of honor for me, just give me my test. I take bad tests.

Q: I guess the score goes on 100 doesn't it or something like that?

FRECHETTE: Yes, in the end they gave me an arbitrary 63, which was a passing grade. It was a 36 at first. I bombed out totally.

Q: You graduated in '58? You came to the United States into Seattle?

FRECHETTE: Into Seattle because my father was working there. He had gone to Canada because there was work there and eventually he thought he liked Canada, but he wanted to move back to the States. So, he moved back and he was working for Boeing as a matter of fact. I came back and first I sold encyclopedias on the road, and then I joined JC Penney in the merchandise trainee program and I was really successful at that. They really wanted me to stay in the company.

Q: They had quite a good program, didn't they?

FRECHETTE: Excellent. Along with Sears they were the best in the U.S. at the time.

Q: I remember. These were highly prized programs.

FRECHETTE: The JC Penney one was to recreate JC Penney's life. He began sweeping the floor, literally. Then you went into the backroom and you stocked.

Q: You were saying, you were bringing clothes out.

FRECHETTE: Yes and putting them up. Then eventually they let you sell on the floor. Then eventually you became the buyer. This was the progression. See, you knew everything about the business. You'd done it all. It was very good training and I made all kinds of money. The pay was ridiculous, $300 a month. You get all these bonuses and I was a good salesman. After about a year I thought, gee, I don't want to do that for the rest of my life. Besides at Penney's the salaries were very low until you became a manager and then they went up like that. I thought what about all these years? I'm going to live like a church mouse, plus working six days a week. Six days and then on the seventh day you went home and you did your buying. I mean you took your buying books home and made your orders. I didn't think that was a great job. I still know guys who went with Penney's and are now retired managers out in Seattle. So, it was really those years that Americanized me, and I married my wife.

Q: This was about '58 or '59 or so?

FRECHETTE: '58, yes.

Q: In a way we're working through a process of elimination, the academic career just wasn't and then you're looking at the sales career. I mean these are two big hunks of professions that didn't appeal.

FRECHETTE: I did not like selling encyclopedias because I felt that we were basically fooling people who did not have a college degree that by buying the books they could do the stuff. I thought that was dishonest.

Q: It was like 36 volumes or something?

FRECHETTE: Yes. I sold Colliers, too, which was dreadful. Anyway, I left Penney's because I thought, gee, I don't want to do this the rest of my life. At that point the University of British Columbia said, since I was a skin diver and knew a lot about biology, how would you like to go down with an expedition to Panama and help us out. You know the work and you speak Spanish. So, I went down with them for three or four months to Panama and actually thought about staying in Panama. I met a girl who I was very fond of, a Panamanian girl, and I thought, gee, her father's got money, I could start a little business here. But after a while I looked at Panama again and said this is not for me. I saw her about five years ago and God was right. She's not a very good-looking one. My goodness, she was so much smaller and fatter than I remembered, but anyway. Then I went to work for Boeing. Boeing at that time was 90,000 people, a huge corporate structure. They needed procedures analysts. I analyzed these different units. I worked on a special space program called Dinosaur, how they interrelated. It sounds very mysterious, but it isn't, it's really very simple. That's where I met my wife who shared an interest in literature and one thing and another, skiing. So, we got married.

Q: What's the background of your wife?

FRECHETTE: Well, she was born in Minnesota, in Duluth. Her father was a first generation American. They were Germans, farmers, very good people. The mother was of a Dutch family, distant relatives of Cecil B. Agnes and all that. Basically dentists and doctors in Minnesota. Her father didn't even have a high school education and her mother persuaded him to go to high school and then persuaded him to go to a teacher's college, and they were both teachers together. Eventually he became a county agent, so Barbara grew up in different places in Minnesota, then they moved to Montana and then to Washington State and she graduated from university there. In fact one of her teachers, a Father, married us. She's the one whose really made me sort of more American than I was at the time.

Q: I'm going under the assumption that you were brought up and were a practicing Catholic or not?

FRECHETTE: Yes.

Q: Did you find a division between Catholics and Protestants? Today there really doesn't seem to be much, but I was wondering, social conditions in Canada and in America at that time. Was there much of one?

FRECHETTE: I didn't detect it. Barbara was an Episcopalian when I met her; however, she had studied at a Catholic school and one of her friends was a poet. She was a nun and so she had this strong feeling of affinity for Catholicism and she converted to Catholicism. She complains about it every once in a while, but she converted to Catholicism and so we brought up our children as Catholics and have been Catholics. We're not the very best Catholics in the world, but we go to mass every week and contribute and help and so on and so forth. I was the first American ambassador to

Colombia who had been a Catholic. We went to mass every Sunday and Colombians could never figure that out. They always thought gringos were Protestants.

Q: When you were working for Boeing, how did this work out?

FRECHETTE: It worked out very well. Except that I quickly realized to get to the top in Boeing, and I wanted to get to the top, you had to be either a lawyer or an engineer or a scientist. I was none of them. I realized that being a procedures analyst was going to give me a good life, but I was never going to rise to any position of authority in the company. My wife and I then transferred to this little unit and we worked together with a secretary sort of doing this work and she was the good guy and I was the bastard. We used to work as a team. I'd go in and see some section chief about how he was doing his work and I was hard as nails. Then she'd go in and see him and she was more sympathetic. Between the two of us we were a damn good team. I mean we really analyzed what was wrong with units and why they were doing it wrong and so on and so forth. We wrote, both of us, very well. There was no chance that I was ever going to become a senior guy.

Q: Also, going around and criticizing people is not the way to go up to the top.

FRECHETTE: Well, that's true, but the problem was that I couldn't see any career path out of being a procedures analyst or a tech writer. I mean there was just no way. There were hundreds and hundreds of them in a big company like that. It was a good living. What I wanted was decisions, power, and so I began to study Russian at night because I was fascinated by the Soviet Union. I enjoyed studying it. It's a beautiful language. One night I saw an ad that said Foreign Service exams are going to be held here. Fill out this form and send it in, and that's how it all began. No particular design. I filled out the form, I took the exam.

Q: Did you talk to your wife about this?

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes. She had no idea what the Foreign Service was, poor thing. She wasn't married to me yet. We were dating; doing something that was not done. She worked for me and we were dating, so we used to hide and see each other and sort of take trips out of Seattle so that we wouldn't be seen by people and so on. Well, we never were discovered. Anyway, I took the exam. It was Christmas of '62. I took the oral, no I beg your pardon, it was earlier than '62 I took the exam.

Q: Normally the exam was given the first week in December in the old days.

FRECHETTE: Maybe that's right. Anyway, I passed, and I was astonished by that.

Q: You said you were a poor exam taker?

FRECHETTE: I don't know. The exam for the Foreign Service was broken up into so many things. I liked it very much and I did pretty well, and I had the orals. I was the only guy interviewed there in Seattle who got in the Foreign Service.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

FRECHETTE: Well, they ask you about questions that I knew a lot about. It was amazing. At the time they told me later that there was a big push on to get officers from other parts of the United States other than the Eastern Seaboard and California, which seemed to be at that time the preponderance of people entering the Service. So, I may have benefited from that, but they asked me questions about mining. They asked me questions about complaints by Latin Americans about U.S. policy, and I gave them answers that showed that I knew something about it. I don't know if they agreed with me, but I passed that. Then they said, great, but now of course since you've lived abroad all your life it's going to take a long time to get your clearance, besides there are no slots for you. I said, well, what should I do? They said, well, you know, why don't you take some graduate work in history and that sort of thing. So, I did and I went to Boeing and said I'd like to work half time and work on my masters in international relations. This was the end of January perhaps, '63, and I was doing just fine. One day in March I got this letter from the Department saying there is an opening and you can come in in April. Barbara and I got married and we flew to New York, and we had a great honeymoon for all of three days. I reported to duty in Washington on the 20th of April 1963. Married on the 15th.

Q: You took your A-100, the basic officers' course. Looking at It, what was sort of the composition of your group?

FRECHETTE: Well, I was 27 at the time. I was a little older, although we had two or three who were 31 which was the legal limit if you will. Ernie Preeg, who lives around here…

Q: How do you spell his name?

FRECHETTE: P-R-E-E-G. Ernest Preeg. There was one other guy, Timothy Towell.

Q: Yes, Tim Towell.

FRECHETTE: Tim Towell, who was about to be selected out, and then George Bush senior liked him in his job at protocol (which I got for him, by the way) and made him ambassador to Paraguay. So, he didn't get through the career outlets. He was going to be selected out. Anyway, those two guys were 31 as I recall, or about to be 31. They were on the cusp of this process. Others like Ted Russell who ended up as ambassador to the Slovak Republic. That's it. The three of us.

Q: Any girls?

FRECHETTE: Ann Swift.

Q: Oh yes, I know Ann.

FRECHETTE: She went to Iran and there were two others. Ruth Schimel who had been in the Peace Corps, and she left the Foreign Service fairly quickly after ten years. She's a consultant around town, legal relations. Then there was Linda Pfeifle. She finally married a CIA guy and I don't know what happened to her. She may have retired by now.

Q: Any minorities?

FRECHETTE: No, we didn't have any minorities. We had two mustangs, Bob Dillon who had been a pouch carrier, and his wife was a secretary. They didn't last very long. He was the only guy I've ever met who had been a lieutenant in the army and in the air force and an ensign in the navy. He just didn't have the discipline to work. He was from Philadelphia. When I first asked him where he was from, he said, "Philider." Philider? I didn't understand. Nice guy, very Irish, very nice wife. There was another guy called Jed Collard who was a Mustanger, a staff guy and he didn't last either. We had one guy called Paul Berry who quit the Foreign Service after three months, and he sells insurance up in Maine, Bangor, Maine. That was it, a small class, I think 22.

Q: When you were there did you have any feel for where you wanted to go or what you wanted to specialize in?

FRECHETTE: Yes, political work, and I wanted to be a political officer working on Soviet affairs. I remember going to see the career guys and they said, oh, what do you know about Russia? I said, not very much. I speak some Russian, probably at the two level. They said, look, we have Ph.D.s coming out the ears on Soviet stuff. If you go into that you will simply be outpaced. Don't do that. You will hurt yourself. You won't have a good career. Go to Latin America, that's what you know a lot about, do it. I did not like that idea. I felt that I was being pigeonholed. I felt that I was being sort of put into an area that I knew was not very important in American foreign policy, but I did talk to a number of people who were in Soviet affairs and it was clear those guys were right. I mean I would be working with people who knew a hell of a lot about Russia.

Q: Well, this was the premier area at that time.

FRECHETTE: All I could do was speak some Russian and I'd read a lot, but I mean, I was competing with some really extraordinary people. So, that was right. For a long time I resented being in Latin America. I got over that in time, but I felt that perhaps because of my background I was being put there.

Q: I think this is an interesting thing to examine a bit because in the Foreign Service the people I've known who have gone to Latin America have sort of gone there and stayed in a way. In sort of asking people to come into the Foreign Service, the ARA or American Republics usually ranked pretty far down the line. I mean were you getting that when you were in the A-100 course?

FRECHETTE: Sure, no question about it. They made it very clear what they call the

cucaracha circuit, that means cockroach, and it was pretty low down. I remember that in my A-100 class we voted the San Pedro Sula school of Honduras and N'djamena, Chad as two of the worst armpits in the Foreign Service. I got them both back to back. I remember, too, [name removed], he got selected out, he was one of our guys doing the A-100. He called me one day and said, you know, you're not going to make it in the Foreign Service. He got an attitude of a smart-ass and I said, well, gee I'm sorry about that, but I came in here by competitive exam and I think I'll be okay. He lasted three more years and then was selected out. I've never thought why the Department would put people who were clearly marginal performers into FSI. I still can't figure that out.

Q: This is a real problem because you would think that particularly to teach the A-100 course that you would go to the very top. I mean you put your very top people there. I had some who I thought were pretty good people when I came in, in '55, but what I gather it's often just an assignment and not really a very career enhancing assignment. Because you would think this would be one that people would fight for because they wanted to put our very best there.

FRECHETTE: No, he was a disgruntled guy. I guess he didn't like some of my attitudes or some of my answers to some of the questions. I guess he thought that I was just sort of questioning them. Perhaps he felt ill at ease in knowing that his own service had not particularly judged him well, I don't know whatever it was.

Q: No, I mean that's really something. I mean it shows an attitude.

FRECHETTE: Oh yes, right. The guy basically told me I should give it up. I didn't get angry. I got very angry later at home with my wife, but I was very calm at the time. I've got to tell you I'm sort of ashamed, but when he got selected out I was happy. I thought he was a prick.

Q: Well, it's nice to see the pricks get their comeuppance.

FRECHETTE: Get theirs.

Q: I mean after all, the Germans have a term.

FRECHETTE: They know exactly, you sort of whoops, but you're laughing, too and the guy is flat on his back on the floor. That's right. Anyway, so that's how it all began.

Q: When they came around to ask you to fill out the equivalent of the April Fools report, which is where you'd like to go, what did you put down?

FRECHETTE: Well, I didn't have that kind of a choice. They told those of us who had lived abroad a long time we were going to serve in Washington. Ted Russell for example, who had been the son of missionary parents in India, and they said you're going to serve in Washington. An astonishing old friend of mine from Brooklyn, he served in Washington, too. A guy called Ed Elmendorf and myself. So they said, we really have a

plum for you. Cuban affairs. I loved Cuban affairs. I'm still a Cuban specialist, well sort of. I did Cuba a couple of times in my career.

Q: I'd like to talk about this. You had Cuban affairs when to when?

FRECHETTE: Well, I entered the Service in '63, actually got a phone call from President Kennedy in the days when he used to call desk officers. Then I went to Honduras in '65. Then I was coordinator of Cuban affairs from 1979 to '82.

Q: Let's talk about Cuba.

FRECHETTE: Can I bug out? I'm terribly sorry.

Q: No, this is a good place. I'd prefer to do this because I'd like to spend some time on Cuba.

FRECHETTE: I'll tell you a story you might like, that was after Cuba. Just in parenthesis, the Service said, well, how would you like to go to Oslo? I said, Oslo, you've got to be kidding. It's got to be the most boring place in the world. I have no interest in the Nordics; I have no interest in making rugs at night. I'd had problems drinking earlier and I don't want to go to a place where people drink a lot. So, they punished me and sent me to San Pedro Sula. My boss said, you know, Frechette, you're a guy who tries to jiggle the system. You know, we're great friends and I admire you tremendously, but he still thinks that I'm a guy who tried to jiggle the system.

Q: Okay. Well, I'll end here. We'll pick this up the next time when you're off to the State Department, first assignment 1963, dealing with Cuban affairs.

***

Today is January 18, 2002. Myles, you went to the State Department dealing with Cuban affairs from '63 to when?

FRECHETTE: I worked twice on Cuban affairs. I was a junior officer from '63 to about August or September of '65, and then I came back in '79 as the coordinator of Cuban affairs.

Q: We'll stick to this period here. When did you start because I think the date of this would be rather interesting?

FRECHETTE: Well, I began on Cuba, if I recall correctly, in August or September, because we finished FSI and then they didn't have an assignment. They sent me to personnel and I was checking things like the cold relations between Ph.D.s and advancement in the Service, masters degrees in advancement in the Service. I discovered I guess was sort of common knowledge that people with MAs are the guys who tend to go the farthest in the Service. The guys with Ph.D.s sometimes do, but not as many.

Q: They tend to specialize and maybe get involved and they're older, too.

FRECHETTE: There were several fellows with Ph.D.s in my class. It was interesting. Anyway, after that they said, well, you haven't lived long in the United States. How would you like to go up and work on the hill on something? So, for I think two months I worked for Senator Frank Church of Idaho answering constituent mail. It was a real eye opener. It was really fun. Two or three other fellows in my class who had lived some periods of time abroad went to that. Then they called me up and said, how would you like Cuba? I said I'd love it. I'd been reading all about the missile crisis and all that stuff and it was very exciting. I was tremendously excited. We went into an office where there were about six officers, a director, deputy director and several political officers and one economic officer and then the junior bird man, who was I. My job was largely answering constituent mail and there were tons and tons of it.

Q: It was an interesting time because this was before, correct me if I'm wrong, the Cuban lobby you might say got really cranked up and became such a powerhouse, wasn't it?

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes, long before.

Q: So, I mean you were dealing with a country with lousy relations but in its virgin state in a way?

FRECHETTE: Well, yes, you know, '63 was just about four years, less than four years since we had left Cuba, broken relations. Some of the officers in our office had actually served, three of them, Bill [inaudible], the deputy director, John Mullen and Wayne Smith had all served in Havana. So, they remembered and told me a lot of war stories about Havana and then leaving the place and what a crazy sort of atmosphere there was. You know there were Cubans who came up to them and said, you know, here are the keys to my Cadillac. When you get tired of driving it, put it in drive and drive it off the end of the wharf into the bay. It was just an amazing thing and so we began to work on it.

Of course, the big topic for the congressional mail was the missiles in Cuba. As you know, the missiles had sort of caught the United States by surprise and here we were a year later and there were people in Congress still trying to make hay out of this. One of the most persistent of those was Senator Kenneth Keating of New York who had always claimed that there were missiles there. He didn't have a shred of evidence that there were, but lucked out. So, he kept insisting that there were more and they were hidden in caves. Of course, the Cuban community in Miami, which was growing by leaps and bounds, was only too happy to feed him all kinds of disinformation. One of my jobs was to answer just literally thousands of these darn letters sort of saying, what are you doing about this? The other big question was did we trade the missiles in Turkey for a stand down from the Soviets? At the time the administration vigorously denied it. They said, absolutely not. The missiles were dismantled separately. They were Jupiters and were old, etc., no connection. Of course, now today we know there was. I got an inkling of this one day on the job and I must say I was really disturbed about it. I'm sort of the Boy

Scout, but the idea that the U.S. government would lie so baldly about something like this I found very disturbing.

It was on Cuba, too that I discovered two other things. One of them was there was a thing called the House Un-American Activities Committee. They simply did not like the letters that were coming out of the State Department on the missiles in Cuba. They were convinced there were missiles in Cuba. I had a very unpleasant experience I remember. A guy came over, a lawyer for the committee, and he went to speak to my boss and it was the only time really I had been deeply disappointed with my boss because he was a hero to me and a guy that I still look up to. He's retired and lives not too far from me as a matter of fact. He sort of called me into his office and said that I should talk to this guy. This guy was a lawyer and very nasty. Where do you get this information there are no missiles in Cuba? We know there are missiles in Cuba. I said, wait a minute, hold on. I've been in the Foreign Service three months, something like that. Do you think I make this up? I mean all of this stuff comes from other agencies, CIA and all the others. The guy browbeat me for about two hours and told me I was lying to the American people, in contempt of Congress. I couldn't figure out for the life of me why my boss would allow me to go through something like this. Here I was a brand new junior officer. He knew perfectly well that the stuff I was putting in the letters came from other agencies and the letters were fully cleared, and I had a list of clearances this long. But this I think was the first time I realized that the Department is not very forthright in protecting its officers from accusations. Later on I had a much more unpleasant thing.

The other thing I discovered was the extreme partisan nature of foreign policy and the deep divisions between the Republicans and the Democrats on the issue of Cuba, which I found shocking. I thought this was an issue of national security and that people should be pulling together. It never occurred to me for example that the CIA might be lying, they weren't by the way, but the Republicans should think that the CIA was lying about this. Now, not that the CIA had not lied in the past, but it was an eye opener.

Having said that, it was a tremendously exciting job. I got there about 7:00. I'm an early riser. I got into the office about 7:20, got all the cables and all that sort of stuff, long before the secretaries were there, long before my boss and deputy were there and the phone rang. I picked it up and I said Cuban Affairs and he said, this is the President, who's this? I told him who I was. He said, I want to know this. It was easy. I gave him the answers and he said thank you very much Mr. Frechette. A big surprise. Apparently Kennedy did this a fair amount. I'm not the only one who received a phone call like that. I was thrilled. I thought that was great. I thought that I was working right in the middle. Of course it was very hush hush.

We had top secret conferences on Cuba with the Canadians and the Brits about every three months. I was thrilled to be sitting in listening to this stuff. One of the jobs we had to do was to intensify the embargo. I worked with Charlie Carlisle who was our economic officer. We worked on that and we did a memo for Dean Rusk I still remember, in which he said, look this embargo is not going to overthrow Fidel and here are the reasons why not. However, what it will do is deny him the ability to put in place in Cuba a thriving

society. It turned out at the time, you know, they were getting five or six billion dollars a year that they later got from the Russians. It was a tremendously thrilling thing. I felt that I was on the front lines. I was answering just literally hundreds and hundreds of these international things and I was privy to all kinds of secret things and I thought it was a wonderful job, just a terrific job.

Q: An issue that didn't come up until my God until the Carter administration, but the Soviet brigade in Cuba, but was there at the time that you were there. We're talking from '63 to '65, was there an acceptance of the fact that there were Soviet troops at one time or another?

FRECHETTE: We knew that there were Soviets there training the Cubans and one thing and another, but we did not at the time realize that there was in effect an independent unit. At the time there was also not the Lourdes signals intelligence facility which Putin just said he was going to close down, which was installed much later and listened in on all our communications. It was intended as an early warning signal system for the Soviets in case that they could detect that we were gearing up for war. No, we didn't know that. We did maintain surveillance obviously of the place.

Cuban policy is strange because it has evolved in a way that is quite sui generis. In those days anybody who left Cuba was judged to be voting with his feet, you know, y'all come, Lyndon Johnson said when he arrived at the presidency. The culture began to grow up in Florida. There were billions of dollars given to the Cuban refugees, and they were hard working people, no question about it. Many of them arrived with the shirts on their back. They worked doing all sorts of things, and today many of them are millionaires. But, there was a climate that grew up, that in effect Cubans in America didn't have to obey the laws, even the laws that Americans had to obey. I knew perfectly well from working and reading things that there were groups like Alpha 66 and others down in the mangrove swamps launching little boats toward Cuba, and yet here we were invoking the neutrality act. The FBI was saying well, gee, we weren't able to find anybody. At the time there was also a huge CIA operation in Florida. I mean huge. Great big buildings, hundreds of officers. They were interviewing all these Cubans trying to gather intelligence. I met some interesting characters. There was a guy called Desmond Fitzgerald who was head of DDO in Central Intelligence Agency. A very fancy dressing guy who graduated I guess from Harvard. He was sort of typical I guess of some of the eastern establishment guys who had gone in the CIA right in the beginning. His wife was Frances Fitzgerald and she was a big Democrat and eventually they divorced over their politics. They have a daughter. I think the daughter is called Frances Fitzgerald. She's written several books including Fire in the Lake and all the rest of it. But Desmond used to come in cutting this very dandified figure, tough as nails. It was fascinating to sit in the room and hear him talk. Of course he didn't talk in front of us about things like killing Castro, but in fact he was in charge of the programs for killing Castro. Later on he told me that he had been in Paris on the 22nd of November about to give an agent recruited by the CIA a fountain pen which was in fact a poison injection. He was going to get Fidel to sign something and in the process he was going to prick Fidel and Fidel was going to die. We were trying all kinds of stuff. Depilatory, we were trying to make Fidel lose his beard and we were

thinking about putting poison in his boots. Bobby Kennedy was directing this.

I remember one day being sent by my boss over to the White House to pick up some documents. There was a guy at the Pentagon in those days, Joe Califano, who was very much involved in Cuban policy. He had a young assistant, Lieutenant Colonel Hague. I met Hague. Going over to the White House, I remember it was a warm afternoon in August, and Bobby Kennedy came by with Ethel and they were driving in a white convertible, a huge car. They were tan and they were wonderfully dressed. It was a thrill and because of my excellent Spanish I was invited a couple of times to the White House while Kennedy was still alive to be an interpreter. I remember the first time that Kennedy and Jackie came down the stairs. They played Hail to the Chief and I was down there with the guests. I couldn't help it, I was crying. I was so impressed with this thing. I mean he was a wonderful looking, and Barbara and I both were very idealistic, we still are, but we thought this president was the greatest thing that had ever hit the earth and we'd do anything for him. Later on of course there were some feet of clay here and there, but I'm just telling you these stories because they stick in my mind as sort of emblematic of that time in Cuban Affairs. It was a truly golden period.

Q: Was there any feeling within the desk or where people deal with it, was there anything like look, let's not throw everything at this, I mean we have other things and maybe we're getting too excited about Castro.

FRECHETTE: No.

Q: I mean everybody was playing, singing the same hymn.

FRECHETTE: There was no question about it. Cuba was hot. We had been through the missile crisis. We'd come to the brink of war. If it hadn't been that Khrushchev was an adventurist and that Castro was an adventurist and willing to take crazy risks we wouldn't have been through that. It was very much an awareness on our desk anyway that we come within an inch of war, and it was terribly hot up on the hill. Everybody was very conscious of Cuba and so on and so forth. You got the sense that this was hot stuff and that you were really working on something special. On the desk there was a guy that I mentioned to you, Wayne Smith, who even at the time doubted very much our policy toward Cuba. He was much more well disposed toward Fidel and even today, Wayne, now retired, has been railing against U.S. Cuba policy for the last 20 years. He's very big and out there; unfortunately he's often wrong. He misinterprets even the facts, but that was his shtick and it was interesting that he was that way even when I first met him.

Let's see, another impression of the Cuban Affairs. Well, of course, the day Kennedy was shot we were down on the second floor corridor on the C Street side I guess, and it was interesting, right across the desk was not another office of Latin American affairs, but Arab Israeli affairs. There was an officer over there whose wife later wrote a book called Living in State, Beatrice Russell.

Q: Beatrice Russell, yes.

FRECHETTE: His name I think it was Frank Russell, Francis Russell, something like that. She described him in the book. I remember Barbara and I both read it and she said that he comes out and looks around looks very much like a fox. That was very accurate. You know, I'd stick my head out of the office every once in a while and Russell would come and sort of on the TV, if you will, look around and he looked very much like a fox. Anyway, I was standing at the door going to the bathroom and all of a sudden somebody came running down the hall saying, they've shot the president, they've shot the president. I went running upstairs to the sixth floor and there they were all glued watching the TV, Walter Cronkite was crying as I recall. It was just pandemonium. All of a sudden I went back to the office to tell my boss that this was on TV and he said, go down to the passport office and get the file of Lee Harvey Oswald. It was this quick that there was identification of this guy. I went running down to the passport office and the passport office was down where personnel is by the D Street entrance. I remember that I ran in and I spoke to I think it was Frances Knight, what's her name, a very famous director of the past. I said, I'm Myles Frechette, here's my ID and I'm here to get a file of Lee Harvey Oswald. She said, see those guys? It was the FBI walking off with the file. We had a lot to do with the Warren Commission. I dug up a lot of documents for the Warren Commission. I think for a young officer it was hard to imagine a more exciting place and that you were even as a junior officer really plugged into some big stuff. I'm sure Soviet affairs was the same.

Q: Well, the Kennedy assassination, Oswald was connected to Cuba, too, wasn't he?

FRECHETTE: I think so. He was a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, something like that.

Q: Yes, he'd been in Mexico I think.

FRECHETTE: Yes, he'd been in Mexico briefly, but he lived in Russia.

Q: Speaking of Russia, well, the Soviet Union at the time, while were you in Cuban Affairs, you're really the junior member, but often you're the fly on the wall. Was there any discussion of whose jerking whom around between Castro and the Soviets?

FRECHETTE: Later that became much more common. At that time you were dealing with the Castro communists, that kind of discussion. '63 was a very unsophisticated period in analyzing Cuba. My later tours in Cuba were much more sophisticated and we can talk about that later when the time comes, but it was a fascinating episode and I shall never forget it. I'm very grateful, but as I say I had two unpleasant experiences. One being thrown to the House Un-American Activities Committee by my boss, which I thought was unconscionable and still don't understand why he did that. This other thing about lying about foreign policy. I know this must make you laugh, but I found that shocking.

Q: Well, I think all of us have run into things of this nature. You know, you feel that

you're on the side of right and you don't have to lie about these things. Often what you are is up against is now known as the spinmeisters who just can't stand to have anything that is not just perfect come out. How did you feel with this great CIA presence and all that? Was there a lot of stuff that came out that made any difference as far as what was coming on in Cuba or not, or what was your impression of the intelligence that was coming?

FRECHETTE: Well, of course, remember just about a year and a half or two years before we'd had the Bay of Pigs, which was a grandiose fiasco, and then you had Kennedy who'd exchanged tractors and food for the Bay of Pigs guys. I was impressed. I thought these guys had a number of operations going on in Cuba. There were still people in Cuba who worked for them. Later on the CIA couldn't get it right on Cuba and recruit people. They were all double agents. I can tell you stories about that later. This was something. There was another guy who used to come often to see us. His name was Seymour Bolton. He was Fitzgerald's deputy. Seymour Bolton was like a sawed off Edward G. Robinson. He was his number two in operations. Later I worked with his son. His son worked with me and his name is Josh Bolton. Josh Bolton is now the deputy to Andrew Card at the White House. They were special people. Fitzgerald had the look of a noble. He was sort of swashbuckling. Bolton was the guy who looked just as tough and as mean as nails. He looked like he could produce and do anything. I mean if Bolton had looked me in the eye and said, I had ten guys killed, I wouldn't have been surprised at all. That was just exactly the kind.

I must say I was very impressed with those guys in the CIA. Those were high level guys, and there were some lower level guys who came around every once in a while who were another thing. I had a lot of respect for what those guys were doing at the time. It was a very tough thing if you can imagine. It was the hottest thing. The Republicans were waiting for Kennedy to fail.

As I say the direction of Cuban policy began to change and the special treatment that we still give Cuban Americans grew up in that time. In 1965 Castro tried to get people to come from Florida and take Cubans out of Cuba. I might write a book about this, but the Coast Guard at the time just sat out in the Florida Straits and said, hell no, you're not going to Cuba, go back to the States. How different that was from 1980 when that special treatment that we'd been giving to the Cubans had simply eroded any respect for the Coast Guard, and it was not helping President Carter, who could not decide. It was just the most frustrating thing working on Cuba with Carter. Whatever he or some of his people decided in the morning had been changed by noon, had been changed again by mid-afternoon and by evening it was different. It was most irresolute.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Myles Frechette. Yes?

FRECHETTE: I felt that they were doing a good job. For instance there were many violations on embargo on ships in the Cuban trade, and in the United States there were sections of the law that instructed us to cut off aid to countries whose ships were in the Cuban trade. We turned ourselves into pretzels trying to find reasons why you didn't

want to do this. We'd call in the Spanish chargé every once in a while and read him the riot act on Spanish ships in the Cuba trade. I remember saying to my boss John Crimmins, and I shocked him terribly, I said, "Look, John, we'll call in the Spanish chargé, and Wayne and I will meet him at the door, but instead of bringing him up there, we'll take him out in the alley and we'll just beat the pee out of him. We'll just throw him out in the alley and deny the whole thing." It was a joke. It was just intended to make him laugh. He was furious. He said how could I possibly suggest something like that. John was a very serious guy. He'd been in army intelligence in World War II, and he was in INR, and he later joined the Foreign Service, so he took all that stuff very seriously. I will say one thing for John. That code word stuff and all that, he never shared any of that with us. People going and briefing with the door closed. He was a tremendously serious and a very compartmentalized guy. As I say, he is one of my heroes. He always became the standard against which I measured myself in certain way.

Q: I mean you were tossed into this hot spot right at the beginning. Did you get any feel for the rest of ARA or you were just off on your island concentration and that was it?

FRECHETTE: Nothing to do with the rest of ARA. Clearly Cuba was the elite place in ARA. The people who were working on Cuba were the really lucky guys. That was the hot issue. My boss later worked on the Dominican Republic and the invasion of the Dominican Republic at the end of '65. I was leaving the office when that took place, so I don't mean to suggest that other things were not happening that were exciting or important, but during my time it was really this tremendous focus on Cuba. We were working on Cuban claims, people who had claims against the government of Cuba and all that sort of stuff, and tremendous numbers of debriefs of Cubans.

It was at that time that I began to realize, and it's true even today, that the concept of truth is really quite different in Cuba than it is here. Many of those Cubans were tremendous fabricators. What we discovered many years later when I worked on Cuba as the Coordinator of Cuban Affairs was that Castro has extenuated the importance for Cubans to play along with the system, and it made them almost impervious to polygraphing. We had one guy who the CIA captured and he actually was polygraphed three times. Each time he passed the polygraph, but each time with a different story. So, we sort of began to realize the cultural differences, and many years later I used to lecture to the FBI and CIA counter intel people on the Cuban target, because I knew the Cubans very well. I'd tell them about the characteristics of things to do and things not to do in order to gain the trust of the Cubans. But this ability to tell you the most stinking whopper and not have any palpitations of the nervous system is something quite remarkable. I don't know if there are other cultures in the world that are that able to sort of give you two or three cover stories without any blinking of an eyelash.

Q: When Kennedy was killed did you see any change in how we approached Cuba at all?

FRECHETTE: No, not really. The change began to come much later, truly. I'm sure it had some effect on Bobby, and of course we now know that some of the things that Bobby was doing with the attempts to assassinate Castro, eventually dropped off. In part

because I guess Bobby was working with the mafia in the United States. There have been many shows about Bobby and Jack in Cuba and it suggests that they began to realize that it might be that some of the things we were doing were negative. Lyndon Johnson, I remember, told one fellow who was working then, he said, you know you could describe this whole business of Cuba policy like there was a word. What he meant was a criminal enterprise, that we were dealing with Cuba as though we were criminals ourselves. He felt very strongly that we had to back off. On the other hand, he as a very capable politician played up this line of any Cuban who came was fine, and they could come and they didn't have to meet the requirements of the law. That's still the case, and it still causes a lot of problems. The Cuban American community has always been led to believe by the Americans that they were different, that the laws as they apply to other immigrants would not apply to them.

Q: Well, then in '65, what were you thinking, was this having gotten your feet wet in this particular thing, what did this encourage you to look towards doing?

FRECHETTE: Well, I thought to tell you the truth I did a very good job there, and very quickly I passed beyond, shall we say, the level of the junior officer and began to get jobs with increasing responsibility because I was hardworking and persevering and serious. So, I felt that at the end of Cuba I would get a really good assignment. I felt that I had distinguished myself. It was clear my boss and his deputy trusted me more for certain assignments, even more than guys senior to me in that office.

Then to my disappointment I heard that I was going to go to Oslo. I told you that episode in part. I said, "Look, how is this possible? I busted my you know what on this desk and it seems to me I deserve some kind of recognition. Instead I'm going off to Oslo. Do you know what they do in Oslo at the embassy? They crochet rugs. I've talked to people who worked there." He took it poorly. He said, "Don't try to jigger the system. Whatever the system gives you, accept it, soldier." But, he thought it over and so he went back to personnel and said, he doesn't like Oslo. The next thing you know I was assigned to San Pedro Sula in Honduras. I could see the guys in personnel giggling to themselves because when I had been in FSI there were two posts that were considered the armpits of the Service. One was San Pedro Sula, Honduras, the other was N'djamena, Chad, and I got them back to back. But you know the truth is San Pedro Sula and N'djamena were probably, from the point of view of the family and my wife and children, the most pleasant posts, that we have the most wonderful memories of, because we had very little there. It was mainly up to us to entertain ourselves and do things. There was a lot of disease and we came through it very well. To tell you the truth, some of the greatest memories we have are of those difficult years.

Q: Well, I think this is often true. I mean people work together, you feel more intimate with where you are. Now, San Pedro Sula, you were there from when to when? '65 to?

FRECHETTE: I was there from '65 to '67.

Q: Describe it at that point.

FRECHETTE: Well, in those days San Pedro Sula was 40,000 people. It was the most important city in Honduras, although not the biggest. The biggest is still Tegucigalpa, but it was the center of business and it was a humming place. The United Fruit Company was there. There was a little town called La Lima just down the road a few kilometers where they did research and development on types of bananas that were resistant and more delicious and bigger and all that stuff.

I have an interesting story to tell you. Years later when I was ambassador to Colombia back in the '90s, my secretary said there was a young man from DEA who wanted to meet me. I made it a point to meet every new person who came into the embassy, no matter from what. We had hail and farewell parties, but if they expressed any interest, they were told if you want to meet the ambassador, he's happy to meet you. This guy came in, great big tall guy, thin, young. He said, "My mother asked me to show you this." It was the certificate of birth with a little tiny footprint and it was his and I was the guy who signed the piece of paper. It was wonderful. His mother remembered me.

Anyway, San Pedro Sula was hot; lots of disease, the water never worked, subject to heavy rainfalls. We had to live in a dreadful hotel for three months until we found a house. This was a post with a consul, a vice consul and an admin guy. We didn't have any GSO, nothing. We had drivers. That was it. We had to do everything ourselves. I finally found a house, but it was in terrible shape. I said, well, this has got to be fixed up. They said, well, we'll buy the paint and materials and you do it yourself, and so I did. I rewired it by myself. I cut a hole in the wall for the air conditioners. I got rid of an infestation of rats. I got rid of an infestation of bats. I put grills on the window. I had a shotgun in there because people were always trying to get in and steal things.

It was a friendly place. By the way, when the water comes running down the hill it would flood the consulate. So, frequently, me and my staff with our pants all rolled up, no socks on, with water up to here, getting the people out who were going to get their immigrant visas on that day. Why? Because the plane left at 5:30 and here are these people. We used to buy donuts and coffee and serve then to the staff. I had a hell of a time. I really had a good time. My three ladies who worked for me were from different parts of the north coast of Honduras, but it was a small society. You know, if they didn't know somebody you had to be careful. Those ladies were my best intel unit.

The other thing about Honduras at the time, the telephones were lousy. You had to take the phone off the hook and wait half an hour for a dial tone. Then if you dialed the wrong number, and it was easy to do because the central system didn't work worth a damn, you had to start again; but the telegraph system worked extraordinarily well. That telegraph system could reach anywhere in Honduras within an hour. It was just incredible. I got most of my information about dead Americans by telegram. I jumped in a car and am driving off and collect these people and so on. I had a very good time because I did everything. I did the passports; I did the whole shooting match. I enjoyed it. I traveled all over the place. On the weekends I used to go and open up these little health units, the John F. Kennedy Health Units. We had a lot of Peace Corps. It was a wonderful time.

Q: Now, looking at some of the work you were doing, you mentioned visas?

FRECHETTE: I did visas and passports.

Q: I take it that visas were not a, I mean it was not a great flow towards the United States.

FRECHETTE: There was, and there was a tremendous amount of fraud. Seventy-five percent of our applicants were frauds. Why? First of all the Hondurans themselves are not often too careful with the truth, but we also had a lot of people from the Middle East, and particularly what is now often in the news. They'd been moving into Central America as they did in Africa for a long time, but the big deal was to come in and go out to some little town and buy a Honduran passport and then come in and ask for a visa. The whole intent was to disappear in the United States. That is why these three ladies were so useful. If a guy came in and he didn't speak a word of Spanish, but his Honduran passport, which had just been issued, said he'd been born 25 years before, we knew we had a live one. Fraud was the big thing, 75% fraud.

We had another adventure, too and that was in 1965 the law changed for immigrant visas. In those days all the translations for the visa forms were done up in Mexico. Mexican Spanish is very different from Honduran Spanish or Chilean Spanish or Argentine Spanish. So, I took it upon myself. I wrote to the visa office and I said I'll do a translation myself and we'll start to use it and you guys can use it if you wish. So, we did. On the 20th of December 1965 we were ready to interview people under the new law and we did. I felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment in having done that. My staff felt very good. I remember we were mentioned in the newsletter or something as the first Spanish speaking post to begin using the new law simply because we had the forms translated.

It was an interesting post, too, for Americans. Americans don't need passports to go to Central America, and so you got an astonishing array of people. Some of them very nice, but others pretty marginal. I remember one guy who worked in Philadelphia at the Veterans Hospital. He worked in the washroom. Every summer he'd take his earnings and he'd go to Central America, didn't need a passport. The poor guy was mentally disturbed. Inevitably after about three weeks he'd lost all his money and we had to repatriate the guy, that kind of thing. I had a crazy American that I had to go and fish off one of the islands and persuade him to come back home because he was mentally disturbed, too. Those are experiences I think that are tremendously valuable, and they stay with you. There's a great sense of pride of having pulled off something that difficult.

Q: How about Americans in trouble with the police and all that?

FRECHETTE: We had a few. The police were tough there in Honduras. There had been a coup two or three years before I arrived, and the police had been dissolved. There was a special unit of the army called the CES, special security force, and they were tough as nails. Yes, Americans used to get in trouble. But by and large we had fewer arrests than

you have of Americans up in Mexico. I talked to officers who worked both those beats. Hondurans are very sweet people and they love foreigners. I recently headed an observer delegation to the Honduran elections November 25 of 2001, and I must say the way they greeted us international observers was very much reminiscent of the way they used to treat me in Honduras. There's always a smile, always an acceptance of a foreigner. There were great characters down there, too. Machine Gun Kelley, who had been a crook in New Orleans, lived in Honduras for some years. He was a specialist with a machine gun as you can imagine, basically a Thompson submachine gun. He participated in many of the revolutions, flying around in a plane. He would fly over the enemy troops and spray them with the Tommy gun.

There was a time when Honduras had no money of its own, no coinage, no nothing. So, the Hondurans used coins from all over the place. Consequently the fruit operation would send out these mule trains with boxes on the backs of mules full of coins from all over the place to pay the workers. How they kept all these different coinages separate and how the guy knew what the value was, I don't know, but the result was as you can imagine, the Hondurans said, well, this is pretty good. We'll start robbing these trains, whereupon the fruit company did one better. They began to bring gunslingers down from Texas, These guys were pretty good with a gun, and pretty soon nobody messed with them. I met several of those people. By the time I met them they were old men. Many of them had married Honduran women and were living in little tiny villages. You know, some of them were very sad. One guy had amoebas and they'd infected his brain. He was just insane, but I made sure he got his social security check. It was a small one. The lady that he married took very good care of him. There was a lot of human interest in a place like Honduras.

Q: What about the United Fruit Company? Now it's gone in a way, but it used to be hailed by the left as exploitation and all that. What was your impression of it?

FRECHETTE: My father worked for the fruit company from 1930 to 1932 in Colombia, and he told me stories of the fruit company, it was literally an independent nation. You could enter and leave countries on a fruit company boat without a passport, without a visa and that was the way it worked. In Honduras the activities both of Standard Fruit and United Fruit generated an awful lot of negative reaction by communists, and other people who weren't communists in the labor movement. Opposition to both of those companies did strengthen the labor movement in Honduras. I remember the first consul under whom I served had been a labor officer, Tom Killoran was his name. He later ran a cropper with Kissinger in Angola when he said, you know, maybe these lefties aren't so bad. Maybe we should let them run the place. That was the end of his career. But his father had been a guy who was a plumber up in Boston. He went to bed with a bowler hat. Tom Killoran was a real character, but loved these labor people, and when Tom Killoran left the post there must have been 300 cars and buses drove past the consulate to pay homage to this guy who was so sympathetic to them. We had big labor programs there. The American Institute for Free Labor Development, was an operation of the AFL-CIO. They had a big place there for training labor guys from all over Central America. I can't tell you how many times I stood out there at the graduation ceremonies for people from all five Central

American countries listening to all five national anthems which all sounded exactly alike.

Having said all of that, the fruit company did bring a lot of advancements to Honduras. They brought sanitation; they brought graded roads. These people ran their bananas into New Orleans. New Orleans was very tolerant. The fruit company established a policy that any child of any level employee could go to New Orleans to study in the schools of New Orleans. These were public schools. The New Orleans authorities allowed these little Honduran kids who paid no taxes or anything else to go to those schools. I had a secretary, Millie was her name, who was the best damn bilingual secretary I ever had in my career, and her father was a guy who cut bananas. Barbara and I went down when she got married. We met the father. They lived in a little tiny hut on stilts, by the fruit company. He had wanted his daughter to stay in the States and so he packed up this little girl and sent her off on a United Fruit ship up to New Orleans. She was taken care of by some Honduran family and she spoke unaccented, perfect English, could take dictation, write, speak, everything, and in Spanish, too. The fruit company did a lot of things that really set people's teeth on edge and did provoke a lot of riots and anti-U.S. demonstrations, but there were some things that they did that I thought were remarkable.

Q: Now did the fruit company look upon you, with your consul as a labor man, as being not on their side or not?

FRECHETTE: Well, I got the sense that they thought Tom was, but Tom came from the labor movement. His father had been in the labor movement. I think they thought that Tom was a little too enthusiastic about that. I never detected any particular hostility. Those companies were tough. They dealt very harshly with employees who'd gotten out of line.

Q: What was the political situation in Honduras when you were there?

FRECHETTE: It was dreadful. I mean there had been coups. There was a president, I can't remember his name now, but he was essentially a dictator, it was a military government. The reason I went down to this election on November 25, was because this was only the 12th year in which Honduras had had continuous democratic elected governments. Always before there had been some exceptional situation, some military man, some ideal had taken over. It was not a great story.

Q: Now, what about the embassy? What were your relations with the embassy?

FRECHETTE: The embassy was up in Tegucigalpa, and occasionally the political officers and the economic officer would fly down. In those days the road trip from San Pedro to Tegucigalpa was eight hours and were very dangerous. Today, you can drive there in about four hours. So the consulate in San Pedro Sula was closed. There always was excellent air transportation in that part of the world. We were sort of the poor cousins. There was a certain jealousy because we issued far more visas than they did at the embassy.

I don't think the post was very well supervised by the embassy. I'll give you an example. The guy who followed Tom Killoran, I won't mention his name but he's retired now from the Foreign Service, obviously was in over his head. He could not handle that job, but he'd been brought in because the ambassador, Ambassador Jova who is now dead, a nice fellow, had had a very tough time in Chile as DCM with a Kennedy political appointee ambassador. A Kennedy appointee whose name I can't remember right how had treated John Jova like dirt, and this officer was very nice to John and John felt a kinship. He felt that this guy had shown him some human warmth when he really felt very down. Ralph Duncan was the guy's name. So, he was assigned there and he was totally incapable. He didn't know how to do anything. It was very clear that he felt very ill at ease with me because I did know my stuff and I did do my stuff. I remember I got a promotion and I went into him and I said, "Well, "x" in another post I could call myself a consul now. I'm a grade 5 officer, but here I understand I will continue as the vice consul." He saw this as a tremendous attempt sort of to get the same rank as him. So, the next thing you know in those days the EER, I forget what it was called then.

Q: Efficiency report.

FRECHETTE: Yes. It had a secret portion in it. Well in the secret portion he said that I was a terribly ambitious guy who was undercutting him. He never did anything, what's to undercut? I mean he never did a thing. He drank a lot, too. So, you know, I didn't get to see the secret part, but there were echoes of it in the rest and he brought it in and he said, "The ambassador sent you this and I've got to go out of town so I won't have time to discuss it with you." I said, "Yes, but the regulations say we have to." So, I called the ambassador. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, this has just happened, this is unacceptable to me. I'd like to go up and talk it over with you and the DCM. I think there is something dreadfully wrong here." He said, "Fine, come up next Monday." That weekend I had to go out to inaugurate some little health center. Coming back from the health center, we'd drunk a lot of local cane liquor, my PAO was fast asleep and his assistant was fast asleep and I was driving the car. I had to keep my head out the window to stay awake, you know, the wind. All of a sudden this huge hornet lit on my lip and bit it, stung it, and so I showed up to talk to John Jova who with an upper lip that looked like a golf ball. Anyway, I said, "This is ridiculous. I don't know what's in the secret part, but this portion is simply not true, and I request that you send down the DCM to check it out. This is full of blatant lies. Why are you doing this thing to me? You don't even know me." Well, the next thing I knew I went back to post and my supervisor said, "The Ambassador has told me that I should write a new efficiency report on you and you know my health isn't very good. My heart palpitates. So, perhaps if I didn't do a good job, you'll understand." The DCM was Gene Wilkowski, who retired and now lives in Italy I think; he's still alive. Anyway, that was a very unpleasant experience.

Q: Yes, that certainly would be.

FRECHETTE: After that John Jova was super solicitous with me. He was always very kind to me. He realized that a dreadful thing happened. Until he retired he would always go out of his way to say hello, and also to Barbara. He felt bad. I'm not sure that Gene

Wilkowski gave a damn, but he did.

Q: Well, then in '67 is it?

FRECHETTE: Yes.

Q: How did you get to Fort Lamy? It looked like everybody was, I mean, following you around or something. Were you doing any guiding there?

FRECHETTE: No, no, none at all. No, I didn't even talk to personnel. All of a sudden a telegram came in, and remember in those days there were one-time pads. We were working off tropical radio. We sent all our cables out through tropical radio and got all the cables in. I dreaded those darn classified cables because there was usually some circular message saying something has happened. It would take me hours to read the damn thing. I was surprised by the African assignment. Of course I entered the Service speaking very good French. So, off we went with our kids. Barbara and I took Steven to Honduras when he was four months old and our daughter was about 13 months old. It was Barbara's first time in a foreign country and she couldn't believe the dirt and the desolation of Honduras. I remember we went into our hotel and she said, "Go by me a bottle of Clorox." That was the first thing I did. I walked out of that hotel to get her some Clorox and I ran into a guy that I'd gone to school with in Chile in a school called the Grange. He worked for a British bank that had a branch there. Anyway, she washed that whole room. It was a tremendous experience going there. You know, when it was through, we really liked it. We had a good time and the people were nice to us, and it was a very relaxed kind of thing. So, when N'djamena came along, frankly we weren't unhappy. It was a big adventure.

We went across to France on the "United States", one of the last times the "United States" went. We took a train from Le Havre to Paris, and in Paris of course we got off all this luggage and two little kids. All the taxis were too small, they couldn't take us. It was two taxis. I said, well, no, my wife doesn't speak any French. She'd never been to FSI at all. All of a sudden a guy came over to us and he drove a truck. He said, normally I drive vegetables, but I'll be happy to take you to your hotel. So, we jammed all the Frechettes into the front seat with this driver and he was the friendliest guy you ever saw. He put all our luggage in the back of his truck. He took us to the hotel. I still remember it and it's still there by the way. He said, "Look you know, you guys are fun. I'll be happy to come and take you to the airport." I said, "Great, be here at 4:00 pm five days from now." By God, there he was. It was a marvelous introduction to France.

Q: Oh, wonderful.

FRECHETTE: Yes, it was terrific. Then of course the first shock was when we went to eat at a restaurant and there was some guy with a dog on the seat and the dog was eating off of the hotel or the restaurant crockery. It was amazing. That ceased in France, you know, the public health officials finally figured out that that was not a good thing. The other thing about France was that in those days if I made the slightest error in my French,

they'd correct me. Later on you could see the change. Many more French people spoke English and there was a real appreciation of the tourists. I mean today it's almost amazing, the French are so kind and helpful to tourists. In '68 when we went through there on our way to N'djamena, it was a very different kettle of fish.

Q: Well, this was high de Gaulle, wasn't it?

FRECHETTE: That's right.

Q: You were in N'djamena from '67 to '69 or so?

FRECHETTE: Let's see. Well, we know it was two years. We went home at the end of '67 up to Seattle and Spokane where our parents live, and then we went out by ship in January of '68. We left there in December of '69. I was then assigned to UCLA to study Latin American affairs.

Q: Chad, 1968, when you arrived, what was the situation there?

FRECHETTE: Well, a president called Francois Tombalbaye was very definitely in power. We knew that the Libyans covered this part of Chad, but they had not begun the insurgency. There were deep divisions between the Muslims in the north and the nomads and the Bantus in the south. These people were all Christians, both Catholics and Baptists. Down here there was a terrific dental place, a dental facility run by American Baptist missionaries. People used to come from all of this region in Africa to have their teeth worked on here. It was close to Libya, so we took some trips up to the north by car, right up into the Sahara. The border area had some mountains called the Tibesti, and there is a great volcano there. If you look at Equatorial Guinea there's a volcano; the next volcano is in Cameroon. There are two or three and then there's one up in Chad and that's it. There's a line of volcanoes going up almost up to the Egyptian border. Chad was also on the borders of the Sudan, and so there was a place where the French had defeated the local ruler, and these were not just little teeny guys. The ruler at one time had been able to put 60,000 horses into the field. Sixty thousand. Big centers of Islamic learning.

They had these schools where they used to teach them the Koran. So many Muslim Chadians went up there to study. There was a lot of slavery. There were Chadian citizens working as slaves in Libya, Saudi Arabia. The Saudis would hit them over the head with a stick and they'd wake up and they were in chains. Ten thousand Chadians were slaves in Saudi Arabia when I was there. There was some unrest. There were some rebels. The French were there in full force. They had paratroopers and Foreign Legion there. They were wonderful, colorful people. We made very good friends in the French community and it was because my boss, Sheldon Vance, who was ambassador and the French ambassador concluded that it didn't do very well for the two of them to get together too much, so they would deal through me and another guy from the French embassy. He's still a friend of ours. He retired from the French Foreign Service and lives in Paris, and we visit him every time we go to Paris. That made it a very wonderful thing because we got in with the French community and perfected my French. Barbara learned French and

we went to all these Corsican parties; the French serving in that part of Africa were largely Corsican.

Q: Corsican, yes.

FRECHETTE: We met some incredible people. Very sad stories. I remember a guy called Gorvanik, his father had obviously come from the north of France and he had gone to Vietnam and married a Vietnamese. He was an army officer. Gorvanik was born in Vietnam. He was an intelligence officer. He had served later in Algeria. He had felt that the communists had taken Algeria away from the French. Then he went back to Vietnam and served there and felt that the French had lost Vietnam, to the communists. There he was in Chad working as an intel officer of the Chadian army, but really for the French. He was a guy who really worked for us. He was the only guy I believe that was recruited by the DIA. I don't think there was any other place in Africa where the DIA was allowed to recruit. Of course it was perfectly obvious he worked for us. Virtually everything he had on his table in his home was from the United States. I don't know who we thought we were kidding, but he gave us very valuable information on what was going on. Later on it was so sad, when the Libyans invaded, Gorvanik stayed on because he was attached to the Chadian forces. The French all pulled out. Gorvanik, a French officer, attached, stayed on and he had his head cut off and his mother was shot to death and his wife had her throat cut. There were some great stories, some great stories, but we loved it, the romance of the place. You may have read a book called the <u>Roots of Heaven</u>.

Q: Yes.

FRECHETTE: Okay. The <u>Roots of Heaven</u> took place in N'djamena.

Q: About elephants?

FRECHETTE: That's right. The main character was a guy called Morel who loved elephants. Well, Morel was modeled on a colonel who was a French guy who'd come down and became a big hunter in Chad and created a couple of big preserves that we visited. On one of these trips he had some very wealthy Swiss guy come down to go on safari with him who had a very beautiful wife. Well, the wife fell in love with the colonel immediately and never went back to Switzerland. So, there's tremendous romance about the place and these characters. It was again, a magical experience. We had the best of memories of this place.

Q: What about work, I mean what was our interest there?

FRECHETTE: Commercial interest. We were trying to sell more things. We were also trying to find out what was going on. You remember in those days you had Bokassa in the Central African Republic. You had our friend Mobutu, and they were all plotting against one another. We were always reporting what was going on in the region. It was an area of some instability. We were sort of an early warning post about what was going on

down there. We were fighting a battle that later, as ambassador to Cameroon when I was there, we were still fighting which was to get American products into an area that was totally dominated by the French.

Q: In other words a private hunting preserve for French commercial interests.

FRECHETTE: That's right, that's what you mean, well that's exactly right.

Q: Were we trying to break that down?

FRECHETTE: We were trying to. We were trying to sell some products. Clearly in Cameroon that was my big issue. I brought in investment into Cameroon.

Q: We're talking bout Chad now?

FRECHETTE: But it was the same sort of thing. We were trying in our own protean way to encourage Americans to come in to Chad to look around to see if there were opportunities to sell things. The French had it locked up tight.

Q: Yes. How about at that point, were the Soviets or the Red Chinese or North Koreans messing around in that area?

FRECHETTE: There was a Russian embassy and it was very chilly and there was a Red Chinese embassy there, very small. We never saw those guys. We didn't know what they were doing. My guess is they did nothing. There was a Chinese nationalist embassy there and they frequently had the diplomatic corps to dinner. It was a nice break from the French and African cuisine. We had an airplane. We had a DC-3. We traveled around seeing what was going on. There were some people who had risen up against the government. It was not a serious thing yet. The Muslim influence was very hard to deal with in Chad, even though the south of Chad was as I said largely Catholic and Baptist. I can recall very well when in 1969 the Apollo landed on the moon and USIA very quickly got us a film with the landing on the moon. We traveled around Chad, Ambassador Vance and I and the USIA guy, showing this film all over the place. We showed this in the public theater. Well, we showed this thing and the people were just taken aback. They just sat there silently and they didn't just drift away, they just sort of disappeared. A little boy came up and he said, the préfet requests your presence. So, off we went to see the préfet. The préfet said, "You know, that's all balder dash because the Koran says there are 13 heavens between the earth and the moon and your rocket went through none of them, so there's obviously some cooked up thing." It was interesting because the people in that region used to describe the Sputnik as a very long Russian rifle, and it was a bullet fired into the sky. We had a lot of trouble convincing many people including educated Chadians that we'd actually gotten to the moon. I remember we had some guys over, some ministers, who were educated in France. One of them turned around and said, "This can't be true. There are no landing fields on the moon." Anyway.

Q: There was nothing like elections or anything like that though?

FRECHETTE: Well, there were elections, but you know, those were the early days. They weren't too serious. Tombalbaye was later overthrown. In fact he was buried up to his neck in sand, and then he was covered with stuff that would attract the ants and he was left out in the full sunlight. He went crazy and eventually the ants killed him. It was a pretty tough place, but extremely picturesque. We had a lot of Peace Corps volunteers there. We had Lake Chad. Excellent beer, dollar beer made by Heineken. Great stuff. I drank it in Cameroon. Everything was an adventure. We were trying to introduce the Africans to what the United States and our democracy was like, and so I must say many of our encounters were the most delightful ones because these were people who had no idea about us. There were other things that were charming as well. You know, you'd go see a minister and the minister would have sandals on, he'd take off his sandals and pretty soon he'd be playing with the toes of his feet. If you went to see a minister he'd take you by the hand as you walked.

Q: Yes?

FRECHETTE: On a personal level, it was the virus capital of the world. The State Department told us that there are more viruses floating around in Chad than anywhere else on earth. Our kids got very, very ill. They almost died from identified high fevers. The place would often get completely covered with locusts. They'd be locusts swarming maybe 200 miles long. It would darken the sky. We had the wife of one of the sergeants who flew the plane who was driving home with her window down. The locusts invaded her car and the poor woman had to be sent home for mental treatment. She just couldn't stand the idea of these things crawling all over her.

It was a place of remarkable contrasts. In the summer the earth was as hard as steel with great huge cracks in it. As soon as the rain came, within two or three days there would be green grass. There would be lungfish that would come out of the mud and great big frogs that had aestivated and they were good to eat. Hard to beat a place like Chad. It was just picturesque. I traveled through central Chad briefly at night with nomads in a camel train. It was 145 degrees at certain times of the year. You had to take these great big salt pills. In the hot season you'd soon be covered with a layer of salt from perspiration. Just a big adventure. We had an AID program. We had the Peace Corps. We were trying in our own way to get penetration for American goods and just reported on what was happening.

Q: What was the Peace Corps doing?

FRECHETTE: They were doing development programs, up in Lake Chad. They were trying to teach the people not to go walking in the water because you get disease. They were trying to teach the villagers how to grow different things. A lot of enthusiasm. The Peace Corps director was a guy called Charlie Stedman, and he was an FSO. I don't know if you remember him. There was a period where FSOs were asked if they wanted to be Peace Corps directors and Charlie Stedman was found. We had one big luxury in N'djamena. We had three American doctors. One with the Peace Corps, one with AID and one another one sort of loosely attached between the two, so even though we had

terrible fevers, we did have good American care. The food was always an adventure. Anything that crawled was edible in Chad and we ate it. We traveled a lot. Sheldon Vance was fun as an ambassador. He allowed us to travel with him. As the junior officer I carried the gifts and all that stuff. It was a great opportunity for us.

Q: Libya was always over the horizon wasn't it?

FRECHETTE: Absolutely. We knew that they were casting eyes at us because the Libyan influence in northern Chad had been there for hundreds of years. They coveted Chad. Indeed, they had their map that showed that Libya went much farther down in there than the French maps. They spent something like 15 years fighting over Chad. A very difficult war it was, too. These incredible stories. We had the wife of one of the two pilots; I won't mention the name. She was from California. She was a Hispanic and she fell in love with a French intelligence officer, and it was a big rumor; but eventually her husband was transferred back to the States. This French intelligence officer went, when Chad was invaded, was sent up to negotiate by the French. They took the guy and they stripped him and they staked him down in the sun and he died there in the sun. Just like Beau Geste or something like that. The French were furious. Whenever they captured Libyans it was curtains. A lot of revenge in the French attitude toward the Libyans for several years after that because of this guy. A very nice guy, very sort of mild intelligence officer. So, you know, Chad is a place that you can see a great story.

Q: Having been in these difficult posts, but having a great time, what were you thinking of doing Foreign Service wise?

FRECHETTE: Well, I had said to them I've enjoyed Chad, it's been wonderful, but now I want to get on with being a political officer in Latin America. My response was a year of graduate work on Latin America. Unfortunately I didn't hear about this until fairly late. I tried to get into Harvard and Columbia, but they already had a guy from the Foreign Service, so I ended up going to UCLA. If you can believe it, we flew from Paris to Seattle to see my folks, and then we flew down to Los Angeles, and no support from an embassy, nothing, find a house, all that sort of stuff. We spent a terrific year in Los Angeles.

Q: This would be?

FRECHETTE: 1970.

Q: '70 to '71?

FRECHETTE: Yes, I finished in December '70 and we drove across the country from Los Angeles. In '71 I got my masters. They didn't want you to get a masters, but I did. I'd done my thesis on Peru and I drove across the country, and it was a great experience. We arrived in Washington and they said congratulations, you're now the Peru desk officer. I stayed on that job for four years.

Q: Now, in Los Angeles, at UCLA, this was, the Vietnam War was still going on, the protests and all that. Talk about the campus there and what you saw.

FRECHETTE: UCLA is not Berkeley. But it was less conservative than USC, which was in the same town. The campus was just alive with anti-war sentiment and anti-establishment sentiment, and I kept telling Terry Todman who had been an ambassador of ours in Chad, and Sheldon Vance about the counter culture. I said, these are the things that are happening. I wrote sort of dispatches to them to let them understand what Barbara and I were going through. The Hispanics were all rising up and the truth was, there was a rising on campus. The students occupied the thing and I joined just to see what it was like. I sat with them and we had big debates about what to do. I came away with the impression that their cause was muddy. They had a lot of enthusiasm and they were able to take the campus. Ronald Reagan was then governor and he sent in the police. They were highly ineffectual and they ended up chasing the students around buildings. It was a mess, but I did get some interesting insights into what they were thinking about in opposition to the war. I felt the Hispanics were very muddy about what they were trying to achieve. In a way it was a fascinating experience. It was almost like being a political officer in another country. My reaction to it was to write to friends in the Foreign Service and send them these little dispatches. Like today we saw this, or this is happening, and that sort of thing.

Q: How did you find the Latin American studies program?

FRECHETTE: It was very vigorous. Remember in those days there was the national, what was it, the national education act? There was a law that had come in around Kennedy's time because the belief was that we needed foreign language specialists. So, schools were thriving all over the United States producing area specialists, teaching foreign language. Plenty of government money. National Defense Education Act was what it was called. There was a thriving campus and there were some very good professors there, and I enjoyed it. I learned all kinds of stuff that I didn't know before. History, anthropology and languages, etc. It was a year very well worth it. That's where I discovered how little I knew about Latin America even though I had been brought up and born there.

Q: Were you looking at Peru or were you just looking at Latin America?

FRECHETTE: I was looking at Latin America in general, but I needed a thesis topic and Peru was interesting because at the time there had been a leftist military coup, one of the few in Latin America. This was an interesting phenomenon. There was a guy who later entered the State Department and worked there for years. He's now the assistant secretary general of the OAS. He had done a lot of work on the Peruvian military when he was getting his Ph.D., I guess. I read a lot of his stuff. He very kindly let me have his stuff, and I wrote this thesis on the Peruvian military government and sort of predicted what they would do. I was wrong on some things and right on others. Then I got this fantastic assignment to the Peru desk where for two years I was genuinely a desk officer. Then the last two years the desk officer job was really a cover for some highly secret negotiations

that Nixon had launched because the Peruvians had expropriated a bunch of properties. We didn't want to apply the Hickenlooper amendment because we knew that if we applied it we'd never get the thing sorted out.

Q: You might explain what the Hickenlooper amendment was.

FRECHETTE: The Hickenlooper amendment provided that if a government expropriated American property without compensation then we'd cut off aid. Like all sanctions legislation it was more effective in the threat than in the application. The other side circled the wagons and you were in big trouble. Nixon, however, was absolutely convinced that we could work this out. The military had taken over in '68, this was 1970 and then in '72. By '72, four years into their government, the military realized that having not paid compensation they weren't going to get a penny from the United States and many of the doors at the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank would be closed to them because we had influence. Slowly this idea germinated that maybe there would be some way to do it. It was cooked up as a very secret thing and I was called upstairs and I was told that I would be attached to this negotiating group led by a former FSO called Jim Green who by then was working for Manny Hanny (Manufacturers Hanover Trust). It would be me and a guy called Dave Gantz who worked for years in the legal department (L) in the State Department. We used to go down once a month and negotiate. Jim Green was a marvelous negotiator. We negotiated for two years and we got $150 million, and we applied the law from 1895, which allowed in certain cases for the U.S. government to do the distribution of the proceeds of a settlement. We were able to pay off eleven American companies and settle that problem. I hoped frankly that this was the end of a grim episode in U.S.-Peruvian relations, but no. Two years later the Peruvians expropriated Marcona, another U.S. owned mine, and they were right back in the soup. This time the learning curve was much shorter. It was negotiated back.

Q: How were Peruvian American relations? The year was 1971 I guess when you took the desk?

FRECHETTE: Yes. They were poor. First of all we knew that those military guys, many of them, were under communist influence or at least had communist ideas. It was an odd relationship, leftist military trying all sorts of things to redo and redress all the problems in Peruvian society. Their term in office was a total disaster. They ruined the economy. Almost all of their efforts such as land reform came a cropper and had to be undone, but it was the beginning of about 30 years in which the Peruvians lived through one terrible government after another. Just awful.

Q: Prior to that how had Peru been governed?

FRECHETTE: Well, alternatively, by democratically elected presidents, but also by strong men. The democratic history of Peru is not great, just like the democratic history of Cuba is non-existent. There never really has been any period in which Cuba has been what you could call a democracy. The relations were very bad. The Peruvians are very

stubborn and proud people. My line, having done a thesis, was always we had to deal with the military, it was an institution. I think I made an impact in the Department with some of the papers that went up even to the seventh floor.

Q: Peru also had this problem with the Ecuadorian border. How was that going?

FRECHETTE: That's resolved now. They had a war a few years ago, and then the guarantor countries of the United States, Chile and I forget what the other one is, stepped in and the thing is settled. It's been wiped off the slate. The Peru-Ecuador dispute is no more. The whole area has been calmed enormously.

Q: But back to the time you were there, this initial time, was that ticking, the Peru-Ecuadorian thing?

FRECHETTE: No. The big thing was the influence of the Soviets. Remember part of this was our fault. Back in about '67, the Peruvians said we'd like to have the F-5. You may recall the F-5 was a plane designed to be sold to developing countries.

Q: It was a relatively short-range fighter plane.

FRECHETTE: But it was fine. It was simple, they could maintain it and they could fly it.

Q: A good plane.

FRECHETTE: Sure. We used it for years, but you know in those days we had this policy of sort of maintaining the balance of power and so on which I've always thought was rubbish. We said, no, we'll offend the Chileans.

Q: Well, we didn't want jets at that point. Life had moved on by that time.

FRECHETTE: So, we said no, we won't sell them to you. So, they said, okay, fine, we'll buy Mirages. That was the first mistake the U.S. made. After that Mirages went into virtually every air force in the region except Chile and Venezuela, and the French of course sold the planes. You know you go and kick the tires and that's the plane you get. We always sell a plane with a huge package of spares and so on, it makes it more expensive, but they've got a plane they can maintain over a while. The Mirage was infinitely more sophisticated than the F-5. The Peruvians have a problem. Many Peruvians don't speak Spanish for much of their life and then they enter the air force. Then they get tied to electronics and they work on this sophisticated plane for maybe six months, and then they retire from the air force and immediately go off to repair TV sets and make twice the money in Lima. Through that mistake we introduced the Mirage into Latin America. Later when the Peruvians said they wanted tanks because the Chileans were going to attack, we said, don't give up Russian tanks. That began another infiltration of foreign powers into the region. We seemed to have an infinite capacity to do ourselves harm by saying no at the wrong time. The issue was the Soviets. What are we going to do? It was the big problem.

Q: Yes. How did you find the Peruvians as negotiators?

FRECHETTE: This was really extraordinary. We negotiated, Jim Green and I and Dave Gance, and there was another lawyer who joined us briefly. Let me tell you the rules. We'd fly down in the afternoon, fly all night, and then in the morning I would always stay with the ambassador. We'd shave and change. The others would shave and change in a hotel and we'd go over to the ambassador and give him a minimal briefing. The ambassador knew these talks were going on, but he was sworn to secrecy. Then we'd negotiate all day.

I remember the very first time we went down there. We got to the place where we were to negotiate and the Peruvians weren't there. We waited for an hour. It was the Prime Minister's office. Jim Green said, "Well, see you around the campus. We're going back to the States." We left for the embassy. In about an hour there was a general at the door saying, "Oh, the president's ready to meet with you." Jim Green said, "No dice. My arrangement with you guys is this. We're ready to meet at 9:00 and we'll talk until we take off on our plane, but none of this stuff that you show up when you feel like it," and we left. By God, they were as good as gold after that. Never once did they fail.

My job was to provide substance of the negotiations. I knew the politics and economics of Peru. I spoke Spanish. I was the interpreter and I also wrote up an account. The negotiations went hot and heavy all day long with the entire cabinet. There was nobody else there but generals and admirals shouting at us, just shouting at us, telling us how much they hated the United States and how unfair we were. We went through that for maybe six months, just shouting and screaming and then gradually we gained their confidence and we got to talking. At the end of two years we reached an agreement. Jim Green was a remarkable negotiator. I still remember he did something that was extraordinary. He said to us one time, "The next time I've got them, and you'll see I'm going to do something to prove to you that I've got these guys, and to them, too." Jim Green worked for Manny Hanny. Manny Hanny, its distinguishing characteristic was it was run by an Irishman, not only Irishmen, but Irishmen who played golf. The head man was McGillicuddy and Jim Green was of Irish descent.

Q: Manny Hanny being what?

FRECHETTE: Manufacturer's Hanover Trust. We got on the plane with him, and he had all these boxes that looked like ties all wrapped up and he said, "You wait." After a day of negotiating he invited the entire cabinet to dine secretly with us in a restaurant that had a large private dining room. They arrived in the back and we were having our drinks and laughing, and by then it was much less tense. Jim Green said, "Well, gentlemen, you know, I think we're at a very crucial point. I think we've reached a point now where we can start defining how we're going to do this. I believe that you people have become capitalists." Generals and admirals sort of bristled a little bit. Then he opened up these ties and they were a dark green with kelly green dollar signs on them. They were Manufacturer's Hanover, and do you know these generals and admirals smiled. They

were like little boys and girls. They sort of took off their black military ties. They all put on these ties and we all had dinner with them wearing these Manny Hanny ties. It was the most extraordinary thing. That created the bond and from there we went on to success. A remarkable negotiator.

Q: The negotiations were essentially between the Peruvian government and American businessmen?

FRECHETTE: No, the U.S. government. We espoused the claims, and under the 1895 law, first of all we had to get the agreement of the companies that we espouse the claims. Then we told them, and the distribution is ours. Here is the law, 1895, because they knew damn well that if it were left to the more normal channels some of them would get nothing and they might never get anything. Our biggest task was to prove to the Peruvians that it was really in their interest to pay compensation. They wailed and yelled that this wasn't right, these American companies are bloodsuckers and they're bleeding us. That ended after about a year.

The second thing was they wanted to tell us these companies, they're SOBs, they get ten cents on the dollar. He said, no, the distribution is ours. We agree on an amount and then we'll distribute it. No, that's not possible. We spent about six months on that issue. Finally they gave ground on that. Those were the main issues, gaining trust and many lectures by Jim Green on how economics worked. These guys didn't have a clue, and it showed in the way they messed up the economy of the country.

Q: How were the mining facilities, was it telecommunications, too? You were dealing with what?

FRECHETTE: These were the international petroleum companies, some fish packing plants and some official plants of some other factions. It was nothing high tech there.

Q: How were they running after the Peruvians had taken them over?

FRECHETTE: Some didn't run at all. They didn't know how to run them. The international petroleum company wasn't making any money for them. They didn't know how to do it. That was part of the urgency I guess.

Q: Was there a feeling that they wanted to bring expert managers back in?

FRECHETTE: Well, they never quite explained that to us. Eventually they did find some Peruvians who knew how to run it, but this was after the settlement. Then of course there was money available. The IDB and others would lend them money, and it was a much better situation.

Q: Now, you finished this and we're talking about '74?

FRECHETTE: Yes.

Q: '74. I think this is a good place to stop now. I'd like to put at the end 1974, you've been on the Peruvian desk for four years dealing with negotiations. Where to?

FRECHETTE: Brazil.

Q: Brazil. We'll pick this up next time when you're off to Brazil. Great.

FRECHETTE: We'd come home, and I arrived in Washington about 3:00 p.m. and I would get a secretary. I had a secretary from California who was pretty good at Spanish. I dictated for about six hours to her everything that had happened. She'd type and type. About midnight we'd prepare three copies and I'd take one copy to Kissinger, one to Connolly, who is Secretary of the Treasury, and one to Pete Peterson. None to my assistant secretary and none to the director. This was really a hush-hush. It was done under tremendous pressure, but we did very well.

Q: Good. Okay, next time we're going to pick this up in 1974 when you're off to Brazil.

***

Today is February 5, 2002. Myles, in '74, you went to Brazil. How long were you in Brazil that time?

FRECHETTE: That time, two years.

Q: Two years. So, '74 to '76.

FRECHETTE: '76, right.

Q: As you saw it, what was the state of Brazil at that time, politically and economically?

FRECHETTE: First of all, if I may do a little background. I went to Rio, which had been the embassy, but by the time I got there was a consulate general. My job was human rights and church-state relations, heading the political section. It was just a two-man section. The military were in power. They had come into power in 1964. They were to stay in power for 25 years, so I got there just about ten years afterwards. They had a very powerful intelligence service called the SNI which killed people, threatened people. Two specifically of the people that I was working with in terms of human rights were assassinated by the national intelligence service. I couldn't prove it, but I believe so. Human rights was a very complicated thing. A very large colony of Jews in Rio and of course Brazil is sort of an anti-Semitic place so I had to keep close touch with those. The Catholic Church at that time had some liberation theology guys in the church. Many of the bishops and archbishops of Brazil were, shall we say, co-existing with the military, but just barely. The military in general felt that the church was a nest of dangerous leftists. So, that was kind of an exciting time.

Q: I would think so. Just a bit. Who was our ambassador when you were there?

FRECHETTE: That first time was a fellow called John Hugh Crimmins, who had been my boss in Cuban Affairs. I admired him very much, but there were problems in the relationships between the constituent posts and Brasilia. You know, Brasilia is in the middle of nowhere. If you're an officer doing congress and if you're the ambassador it's a heaven because Brasilia was small and it's still small compared to other Brazilian cities. So, if you're the ambassador and you want to see any minister, well heck it's a ten minute drive from the embassy. The embassy looks like a very pedestrian building. It looks like a junior high school in Montgomery County as opposed to one of the counties in Northern Virginia, totally undistinguished. Too many people, and when there are too many people, morale is low, you can tell. You'd walk by the rows of offices and all these people reading newspapers. People don't have enough to do, but extremely jealous of the prerogatives of the embassy. We were obliged at that time, and later when I returned to Brazil, to send all the reporting first to the embassy.

Well, the first thing that happened was the people in the political section would take a look at it and they would treat it as though it was some kind of a dispatch sent by mail. It didn't matter if it got to Washington three months from then or not. We'd have hot stuff in these cables, very hot stuff that we had picked up at considerable risk sometimes, but certainly a lot of work and it would sit perhaps for a week in the political section until some political officer decided that he'd look at it. It would wend its way in a very sleepy manner, to the chief of the political section and the DCM and then the ambassador. Sometimes you could wait three and even four weeks for a cable to be sent on to Washington. Sometimes the embassy would say, well it doesn't comport with what we feel and I'd say, well, just put a disclaimer at the end. The embassy sees things differently, but get that constituent post reported. Later on before I left the Service I wanted to get to Brazil, among other things to really fix up the whole relationship with the constituent posts because it continues to be a very demoralizing thing for the people at the constituent posts. The imposition by the embassy of, sometimes through neglect, censoring your stuff, and not getting your stuff forwarded because some officer in the political section in Brasilia doesn't think that what you reported was right. Very bad.

Q: I would think particularly when you have what amounts to this little enclave in Brasilia and you have probably the most dynamic city in the southern hemisphere, Sao Paulo.

FRECHETTE: Well, I was later principal officer in Sao Paulo, and it was worse.

Q: Then you have Rio, which is a cultural, I mean a major metropolis, too. These two things and then you've got this thing a thousand miles away or something.

FRECHETTE: Yes. The other thing was that being relegated to constituent posts, the officers who went to Rio to head the office were very frequently very mediocre. I mean very mediocre. I had two guys back to back in Rio. One of them, I won't say the name, was eventually selected out, but he was going through a mid-life crisis. He had his hair

done once a week in a hair dressing shop with a lot of spray and he had girlfriends and one thing and another. He was a jerk. Fortunately he was an Econ type, so he didn't mess much with me, but you couldn't go to him for any kind of leadership or any kind of real analysis or help really, because he didn't know. He was so preoccupied.

Q: Who was the consul general when you were there?

FRECHETTE: There was a fellow, do you really want me to give you the name of the fellow I just described. His name was Miller, Bill Miller.

Q: Yes. So, he was the consul general?

FRECHETTE: He was the consul general. Then he was followed by a guy whose name I can't think of, but I'll remember before we finish. He was a Far East expert. He'd been a China watcher, but one of those guys who never served in China. All of a sudden he went through sort of a mid-life crisis and he got a divorce. He got assigned and then he married the wife of a general, who was used to a very different treatment. Of course he was no help either. The job however, was fascinating. The human rights thing was absolutely fantastic.

Q: Before we get into that, I just wanted to try and pick up things. I've had people talk about Rio. A number of people have gone through there including Alec Watson who I've been interviewing and was saying that there's something about Rio that an awful lot of the people there, the Americans, sort of picked up the Rio habit, what do you call it?

FRECHETTE: Karaoke.

Q: Karaoke. You know, getting mistresses and doing things, really going in a way native, but not native in a positive sense, sort of in a negative sense. This is over a period of time.

FRECHETTE: But these two men, Miller and the other guy, I can't think of his name, had begun the mid-life crisis before they got to Rio. Rio just accented it, very attractive women. Brazilian society is very sexual. It's all over the place, and of course you've got carnival and you've got homosexualism and you've got transvestites, and you see them all. At carnival some of the biggest groups are made up of transvestites. I can remember with our little son and our daughter, just little kids walking along the street during carnival one evening and my son said, boy those are pretty women. As they walked by us every one of them was a man who had a deep voice. My son still remembers that. Here he is in his '30s, but the shock of that. We went to the beach everyday.

Rio is a city in decline. You know, you go to see the two or three museums, the Carmen Miranda Museum and a few others, but then you do what all the Brazilians do. You go to the beach and you sit there and you enjoy the sun, but you don't go in the water because it's full of sewage, but you lie on the sand and you sort of look around. We went with the family and the kids liked that sort of thing. Good Rio food of different kinds, and you generally have a good time, but it is a very sybaritic place. I used to say as a joke, but not

really as a joke because I believe you could probably prove this, that if you took two men and two women and put them in a room or a house over the weekend everybody would have had sex with everybody by Monday morning because they're very loose, you know, homosexual, whatever, it's very loose. I think that affects many of the men because of course the young women in the consulate, people you meet on the outside, it's all sort of an open invitation. If you come from our ethic of working hard, it's tough to resist.

So, Alec is absolutely right. There are a lot of people, including people who got to be ambassador, who divested themselves of their American wife and then married a Brazilian. Of course, for the Brazilians an American husband was terrific. First of all they were reasonably decent to their wives, gave them money, listened to the wives, took care of them. Many Brazilian men beat up their wives and cheat on them. An American comes along, and to a Brazilian woman looks like something quite ideal. He's going to take care of her and not going to play around on her in general. I mean this does happen in the States, but. It was a happy confluence, you know, the Americans sort of swimming in these warm sybaritic waters and these Brazilian girls strolling around for guys. It happened. Sao Paulo was different although there were some cases of it, too.

Q: Well, let's talk about your two sides. Let's talk about the church first. Are you Catholic by the way?

FRECHETTE: Sure.

Q: Did that sort of open doors or did it make a hell of a lot of difference?

FRECHETTE: No, to tell you the truth. There were only two posts where being a Catholic made a difference. Cameroon when I was ambassador and Colombia when I was ambassador. In both cases because they had never had Catholic American ambassadors before. Barbara and I go to church every Sunday and all that kind of stuff. It made an impact, but not in Rio. I went around and I saw all the bishops, because Rio is a big city with a number of bishops there. I traveled within the consular district to meet some of the bishops. I talked to them about the problems they were having with the armed forces, etc.; stuff that you couldn't get out of the newspapers and one thing and another. The intelligence service pretty soon began to track me. They began to follow me around town and tapped my phone. They could see I made no secret of the fact that I worked on human rights and church-state relations. Those were red lights for those guys, and they made life very miserable for me. The church was generally friendly, but the church was full of the most diverse guys. There was a bishop who was an extremely conservative guy, and then you had one who was very left-wing, and there were others who were really liberation theology, which was the extreme left wing. Don't forget that in Rio an American ambassador had been kidnapped a few years before, Burke Elbrick, yes. They made a terrible movie out of it. I think frankly, I hope you're not a friend of his, I think he misbehaved afterwards. I think he dishonored the Foreign Service in the way he behaved. Kidnapping was fairly new. Today American ambassadors, certainly I got lectures on how to deal if I were kidnapped. Maybe poor old Burke, who was I guess largely a Europeanist, was just shocked.

Q: I knew him. He was my ambassador in Yugoslavia and it was toward the end of his career and I think that he did very well as a junior officer during World War II in getting Americans out of Poland under very difficult conditions. I think this just came completely out of the blue.

FRECHETTE: But some of these people I think were just rather foolish. I mean their views of economics were just strictly out of left field and had nothing to do with the real world. I still happen to believe that the Catholic Church economics need some help. I was fortunate to get two audiences with the Pope when I was ambassador to Cameroon. I told him that in one of the audiences. He looked a little pained, but we were talking Portuguese as a matter of fact because he does speak good Portuguese. I remember once I was interviewed on background and I said, well, what is your view of [inaudible] and I still remember because of the shocked look on his face. I said, well, I think he's a silly old shit if you'll pardon the French, because I did. The guy was just looking for ways to not necessarily advance their cause, but to make trouble.

Q: Was he sort of an icon of the left at that time?

FRECHETTE: Yes and still to some extent he's sort of a great hero. We had two brothers who were bishops and they really did work very hard on human rights. I'll tell you what the military did to them. They were Brazilians from the south who had entered the church and did a very good job. What the military did to them was to publish pictures of them in bed naked with a whole bunch of little boys. They were very good at photo montages. They were excellent. They had the latest equipment and they used to do this stuff very well. You know, they played hard ball. Another time I had a guy in the national assembly, but he was from my district, so he was fair game. He's still in politics in Brazil. He's a Presbyterian minister in addition to being a politician. I remember I invited him to the house. I invited him to my apartment for lunch so people wouldn't see us in restaurants, because it was a little dicey to be seen with somebody from the embassy or the Americans. I remember the maid came in and said there's a call for the congressman. He went to the phone and he came back and he was sort of shaken and he said, it was the military who was just advising me that my wife is now in bed with another man. What they did was a photo montage, knowing that he was a preacher, of him coming out of the most famous brothel in Rio, but it was really only his head had been mounted on the body of somebody else. That's the kind of thing they did to people who were too important for them really to rub out.

I had a lady who was a Brazilian who married a guy called Angel who was an American, and she had a son. She came to me and said, you know my son was killed by the air force. I finally discovered him. Somebody has finally told me how it happened. The son was an American citizen or at least had rights to acquire American citizenship, but he was killed before he had moved to the States. Because of that the embassy said, go ahead, work with her. What they did to this young man, was the air force arrested him. They chained him to the back of a jeep and they put his mouth on the exhaust and then dragged him around gravel so that they literally stripped all the skin off the front of his body and

the exhaust killed him. Then they buried him in a hole somewhere. The body has never been found. There was a witness, a sergeant who was so sickened by this that he eventually told Mrs. Angel. I tried to help Mrs. Angel and we had the story and so on. I was developing it and I was talking to other human rights activists. Rio is full of overpasses of super highways. People go very fast on them. On one of those curves she hit the brakes and the brakes didn't respond and she was killed. When the accident was investigated somebody had in fact cut the brake lines. I believe it was the military. They had been after her and after me. They called me up on numerous occasions at home and at the office and would call me a son of a bitch, and say lay off talking to lefties and stuff like that. You got the sense that you were getting under their skin.

Q: By this time it would have been the Ford administration, but Kissinger was still.

FRECHETTE: Well, Carter, no?

Q: No, Carter came in in '77.

FRECHETTE: '77, that's right.

Q: I mean, here's an American citizen or at least somebody who had claim to it. Here's an American citizen that was killed.

FRECHETTE: But years before, remember. He was killed in '64 when the military took office, took power.

Q: So, it's too late to do much about it I guess.

FRECHETTE: Yes, except investigate it and get the truth out.

Q: How did you find your reports were being treated, say both at the embassy and then going into Washington?

FRECHETTE: I never heard boo from Washington. The embassy, [inaudible] who is a Catholic, too and believed very strongly in human rights and he was very good in defense of that. He didn't do very well in terms of getting the reports up to Washington on time. He didn't do very well in terms of his suspicion of constituent posts trying to steal the thunder of the embassy, but he defended us. There was a guy called Rich Brown, you may have done Rich Brown. Rich Brown retired a couple of years ago. He ran into some American missionary who had gotten into trouble, and they put this guy in jail. Rich very courageously, it was a one-man post, went in and demanded his release. There was a guy who was a foreign minister then in Brazil who was a sort of a nefarious guy, very unpopular with us because he was really a creep and a most disagreeable kind of a guy, but he was a good friend of Henry Kissinger. The guy got on the phone with Kissinger and sort of said it's time for these consuls to stop messing around in our internal affairs. Kissinger tended to agree with that. The word came down to Ambassador Crimmins to tell the consul, and particularly Rich Brown, to knock it off. For Rich, of course, that was

the wrong thing to say and he went back with a big blast to the Department and the word quickly got back to Brazil. Rich Brown had a decent career, but it was an interesting time. Now John Hugh Crimmins was a man of deep principal and when Carter came in and sent an advance team down to visit, John Hugh Crimmins sent a cable back to the Department saying that he had never met a more arrogant bunch than this advance team, whereupon Carter immediately fired him. He left the Foreign Service for speaking his mind against the arrogance of the advance team. Advance teams are arrogant, and his mistake was in putting it down in black and white.

With the church it was a mixed bag and I tried to reflect to Washington the range of views in the Catholic Church. I also had good relations with the Jewish community, who were having their own troubles at the time, and I think I helped them out, too. If nothing else, they knew that Washington was getting the story of what was happening to them. As far as the military sort of being the dreadful knuckle draggers that they were, there were no question. We related all the incidents that occurred to me personally in addition to these things that happened to people with whom I was in contact. It gave an element of real excitement and a sense that this was something that was important in U.S.-Brazilian relations.

So, I enjoyed the post in Rio. If those things had not been there I think Rio would have been sort of a dull place.

Q: You're describing a church that seems to be somewhat different in Brazil than you get in some other places. Correct me if I'm wrong, but one usually has the feeling that the hierarchy, the bishops, are relatively conservative and the younger priests are more likely to get off the range and go off on liberation theology and things of this nature. I take it it's quite a mixed bag?

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes, a very mixed bag. I might say, it's not too different in Colombia, the same sort of thing. You have some bishops who vary. The church in general was in favor of the guerillas in Colombia and I'll come back to Colombia at a later time, but there was a mixed bag, and there was a mixed bag in Brazil. I must say that some of my colleagues including Rich Brown were trying to portray the Catholic Church as liberation theology and that was all. As a Catholic if nothing else I felt that it was important for Washington to realize that there are all kinds of pressures and threats going through the Catholic Church.

Q: Because people are going to be reading this some years from now, could you explain, as you saw it at the time, what was liberation theology essentially?

FRECHETTE: Well, liberation theology was basically the espousal of the number of leftist causes by the church, saying that these were the things that were afflicting society, and the economic model of capitalists was all wrong. Some of them even went so far as to say that in order to obtain the freedom of the masses, violence was necessary. That's a very cartoon-like portrayal of liberation theology, but essentially one could say that in broad strokes, these people felt that the liberation of the masses depended on more than

political parties and normal political activity. It extended into things that we would call today, in the Bush administration, terror, guerrilla warfare, and so on.

Q: Who was the secret intelligence services picking on? Are these sort of our enemies, the communists?

FRECHETTE: Anybody who complained about the military who ran Brazil. In Brazil there was a mixed bag. Journalists for example, were a favorite target of the SNI (Servico Nacional de Informacoes, National Intelligence Service of Brazil). I remember that in Sao Paulo a Brazilian Jewish journalist was captured, and then he was discovered hanged believe it or not from a window inside his room, and they want you to believe that he tied a rope around the window and then lowered himself so that his bottom couldn't hit the floor and stuck out his legs and that he had so much willpower that he had hanged himself that way. I am told that that's physically virtually impossible, but they presented this to the world. Here's the picture of this guy. He killed himself in his cell. The SNI was of course chasing communists everywhere, and they were looking for them everywhere, and they did defeat the guerrillas in Brazil. There's absolutely no question about that. At the time when they first came to power, as you know the perception of the United States was that the left was extremely powerful. So, to some extent many Brazilians felt that the SNI was a product of U.S. training, which was nonsense.

By the way the other thing I did in Rio was to learn Portuguese because I never took Portuguese. I learned it in three months just basically walking around, like a child does. This is the Brazilian speak, and then I would repeat it. My written Portuguese is not as strong as my written Spanish, but in this, how shall I put it? I used to go to a lot of public meetings because I felt it was important to explain what U.S. policy was. I remember my first meeting I went to I was talking about human rights and my use of Portuguese wasn't right and I noticed that after one particular word that I used a lot of ladies got up in the audience and left. Well, it turned out that I had taken a word in Spanish and Brazilianized it thinking that it meant the same thing, but the problem is that between Brazilian Portuguese or Portuguese and Spanish, only 80% cognates. That other 20% sometimes means something very different. So, I offended the heck of all the ladies because I was trying to speak in Portuguese. I went to one thing and I remember some young fervent student got up and he said, "And you guys in the CIA" remember this was also the period when we were doing public safety programs. We were training the police in many places. and in Uruguay that led to the killing of Dan Mitrione. And he said, "You guys have trained the secret service here to do torture." He mentioned a kind of torture in which basically they tied your wrists and your ankles and they hung them over a tree, and it became eventually extremely painful. All of your joints felt this terrible pain and they just hung there. I said, "You know, this is what's wrong with you people. You don't understand your own history. You're always trying to blame others for the things that are happening to you. If you read colonial history, you'll discover that this kind of torture was one of the things that the Portuguese used to punish wayward slaves." Now, in Brazil as in the United States they branded the slaves, and when a slave escaped they would cut them and brand them a particular way so that they were very easy to describe for the future. This was a colonial Portuguese torture. I made fun of it in my public rebuttal. I

said, "This sounds like poor Brazilians who are so innocent that only if Americans teach them how to torture, can they do torture. It's simply an absurdity. This is several hundred years old." I felt very strongly that this kind of criticism of the United States had to be refuted in public, which made for a tremendous incentive for me to learn Portuguese and learn it well and quickly.

Q: How did you find the universities?

FRECHETTE: The universities were very dicey. In general we were told at the time, and it was right, that trying to get close to the universities was frankly an exercise in futility. The feeling against the United States was so strong that unless you were some kind of a superman or superwoman, you weren't going to get anywhere very fast. I must say I generally took that view. I met academics, bodily. I met students, but in fact the concept of the inviolability of the university is very strong in Latin America. Police don't go on the campuses in many countries. It was the belief of our security people at the time that to go on to a campus even in Brazil might expose you to maybe kidnapping or certainly getting roughed up. I didn't mess around with it. What you found was if you got out and did your job on human rights, the Brazilians would seek you out because they felt that you were simpatico and serious about your work. It's like a reporter who is very strong on something. Pretty soon the guys hear about it in the underworld or the other world, and they come back to you and say, you know, I've got stuff you'd like to know.

Q: You talked about relations with the embassy. Once it becomes known that you're picking up things about human rights and you have a regime that is being brutal to the people who are disaffected from this military regime, people will come to you. You're making these reports; they get up to Brasilia. Now Brasilia, probably nothing much is happening because these were all public servants who are sitting around talking to each other and sort of a incestuous community.

FRECHETTE: And jealous of the access that the constituent posts had to real life things because Brasilia was an isolated community.

Q: Yes, and also, they'd be saying, well, I don't hear that. I had a little of this when I was in Greece. I was the consul general in Athens, and people came in and said this happened and that happened. The CIA would say, well, according to our sources, nothing like this happened. Well, their sources were the guys who were doing the beating up. But, I would think this would have led people to stop sending in all this stuff about what the police, or the secret police are doing.

FRECHETTE: No, it went in. Kissinger did not suppress it. He paid no attention to it. He really thought that pushing the Brazilians on human rights was really interfering with the main task, which was to get Brazil back in the main stream. It had been off to the left, you know, and the military had brought it back. Gee whiz, these views of Kissinger he applied all over the world. I had a colleague whose career was ruined in Angola because he said we ought to be listening more to the left. Kissinger read that and said well, that guy's out, and in fact Tom Killoran ended his career sort of in disgrace. He was a labor

guy primarily. There was the jealousy, too, of the embassy. Those guys were sitting up in this place. It was sort of like a hot house and they didn't have access to these people who were in the real world doing the things that really mattered in Brazil. I'm not saying that being a congressman doesn't really matter, but I mean human rights and all these things. They were sort of jealous so they sent them on the slowest boat they could to Washington. I might say later when I went to Sao Paulo many years later, the same thing was still going on.

Q: Sort of endemic. What about events that were happening in Chile at the time? By the time you got there had Pinochet been overthrown?

FRECHETTE: Yes.

Q: What were we getting there?

FRECHETTE: What happened was that all of the countries of the region were dominated by military regimes. You had the military in Uruguay, you had the military in Paraguay, you had the military in Argentina. These guys actually established a sharing of information about dangerous leftist cult Operation Condor. Operation Condor has now come to light. There's no secret. So, there was a community of anti-communists. Bolivia too, I might add.

Q: You're pointing really to Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina.

FRECHETTE: And Uruguay, too.

Q: And Uruguay. Yes.

FRECHETTE: These were all governed by military people who believed that all the opposition was communist, and some of them were, no question about that. They shared information and tried to track these people. A lot of people disappeared in that time, and the legacy is still with us in Chile. I wrote a chapter about Pinochet and the international repercussions of what he did. In Argentina you still have the mothers of the Plaza de Maya who are still militating to know what happened to their kids. We hear of terrible things that happened. The women for example who were tortured by the police, if they were pregnant and they gave birth, the child was taken away and often given to childless military and police couples. I mean they did the most terrible things. They used to take people up in planes, fly them out over the sea, chuck them out the plane door. These guys were pretty tough.

Q: Were you getting any people from the United States or Europe who were coming who were trying to expose this government, and in a way show the United States was in bed with the wrong people and all that?

FRECHETTE: I didn't meet with them very much. I mean they wouldn't come around the consulate, as you can understand. We represented the U.S. government. There were

European guys there. I did meet a number of British journalists, but they weren't really very much into that. They were criticizing it the same way I was. There were French and Germans who came around, but they never came close to the embassy or the consulate because they thought that we were right in league with these guys. They thought we were egging them on. We did have Americans who came down occasionally and of course we received them, as we should have at the consulate. They didn't think much of U.S. policy, some of them, and they told us all about it.

Q: Was Brazil very high in profile in the United States at the time?

FRECHETTE: Nowhere in Latin America is ever very high profile in the United States unless some dreadful thing is happening. Argentina and the failure, the coups in Brazil, that sort of thing, Mexico with some terrible economic slowdown. Yes, that would get into the headlines, but Latin America never is something that holds constant interest in Washington. Of course the U.S. has strategic interests all over the world, some of them far more persuasive than Latin America. So, we're always competing, those of us who worked in Latin America, for recognition that things are going on in Latin America that affect U.S. interests, too.

Q: How was the economy at that time, you were, '74 to '76?

FRECHETTE: Well, at the time it was beginning to pick up. You know, leftist economic thought had in effect ruined the economy of Brazil, as it did in a number of other countries including Chile. What happened in Brazil, as what happened in Chile, was unique. There was an alliance between the private sector and the military. The military knew they didn't know enough about economics to buy stock. The training, for instance, is not like in the United States. If you're an officer in the navy or the army here, you go to West Point or whatever. You have a pretty decent education, but the training given to officers in Brazil, all over Latin America, is hardly what we would call a university education. Certainly nothing on economics, and it is still the case that economics is unknown for most military officers in Latin America. They knew that they had to have some allies, and the private sector said we know how to get this economy going. You keep the lefties down. Remember the leftists were kidnapping people and assassinating people in business. I mean these weren't sort of flower power guys like I met at UCLA in 1970, not at all. They invigorated the economy of Brazil. By the time they left, after 25 years, the economy of Brazil was much stronger. They had done very well. The alliance between the military and the private sector of Chile, look what its produced as well. Now, in the other countries, that never happened. The economy sort of continued to falter up until the 1990s, when it began to pick up.

Q: Well, then you left there in '76?

FRECHETTE: Right.

Q: Whither?

FRECHETTE: I went to Caracas. Head of the political section.

Q: You were in Caracas?

FRECHETTE: '76 to '79. I had three ambassadors all in a row. I was chargé much of the time. Caracas was supposed to be the democratic ideal. Everybody thought that what existed in Caracas was really a strong democracy with strong political parties. A fact that I discovered when I got there was that each of these political parties was corrupt, and that corruption eventually led to the bankruptcy of the political parties in Venezuela.

Q: Okay, well, we'll pick this up next time from '76 to '79 when you're off to be head of the political section in Caracas. Great.

FRECHETTE: All right

Q: Let's go to the Rio time.

FRECHETTE: Yes. During my time in Rio, suddenly Secretary of State Kissinger came to visit Brazil. It was the first time that I had seen the imperial visit. There were 500 people with the Secretary of State. There were several airplanes, and you know, I still can't remember my principal officer's name. I will and I'll supply it to you later when you give me the draft. He didn't know how to handle this. So, I said, I'll take charge of it. I'll run the whole thing and I did. I stayed up for 30 hours straight running the thing, making sure the cars, and all the movements, and one thing or another. You know, Henry Kissinger was sort of, very interesting. He loved to have in his top-secret briefing stuff on Jill St. John or Rachel Welch.

Q: Sexy movie stars of the B category.

FRECHETTE: Aphrodisiac. That's what he used to say, and so he maintained these relations totally platonic. I mean are you kidding me, Jill St. John, Rachel Welch with this guy? But, Rachel Welch was in town doing a show and so he timed his visit precisely so that they could have a very public dinner together. Remember, this was at the time when Henry Kissinger was ending up in a lot of very embarrassing stories. You remember the time that he was in Italy, he loved soccer and they played the Italian national anthem and then he turned to whoever he was with and said very loudly so that it was recorded by a reporter. He said, "Could you take a country seriously that had that for a national anthem?" Then he was also picking his nose, and for some reason or another, he could not quit picking his nose, and so some paparazzi up at the UN had these huge lenses and there was this picture I remember in Rio. There was this big magazine, the biggest magazine, with a full-page picture of Henry Kissinger with three knuckles up one nostril digging around doing gold mining, and then he ate it. Then he ate it, and you can believe it because the photographer kept clicking. Kissinger couldn't even see him. But worse here was code word intelligence, which he was reading, and had all the code word stuff on the top and you could read every word. I mean this guy's camera resolution was so great that you were reading stuff that was in his "top-secret umbra." At the time this

was the term. At the bottom there were little paragraphs on Jill St. John and Rachel Welch. He did a lot of great things and I've got stories. I think I told you the story of meeting with Henry Kissinger and the Peruvian foreign minister one time.

Q: This was before. I think you did.

FRECHETTE: Yes, and the story about how he insisted on having near stenographic transcripts, and because I spoke Spanish and English I took it all down. He had this sense of humor and the poor old foreign minister of Peru had none whatever. So, Kissinger would throw out these one liners and my transcript would show: Peruvian foreign minister, question mark. Peruvian foreign minister: Huh? They suppressed everything I had written. It never ended up in the files. That was a story for real. When he came down, I stayed on duty for almost 30 hours. Afterwards Barbara and I went to the beach with the kids because I was exhausted. I had had a wedding band made by an Indian up in British Columbia. It was carved with northwest motifs. It was made of silver. I took that off and I took my wallet and I wrapped them up and I put them under my pants and I buried my pants in the sand and used that as a pillow. I fell asleep. I was just exhausted. Barbara fell victim to one of the oldest scams in the game. A guy came over to her and said, "Here are my car keys. Would you watch them for a moment please while I go in the water?" She said, "Sure." While she was talking to him there was another guy digging out my wallet and my ring disappeared. Gee whiz I'd had that carved, it was unique. I used every device possible including the police to offer a reward for the ring, but that's Henry Kissinger's legacy for us. We lost the wedding band, not much money, didn't have much money anyway. Fortunately, we later found the wallet about 50 yards away, even my belt buried in the sand. That's the story.

Q: Okay, well, then we'll pick this up in '76 when you're off to Venezuela where you were chief of the political section from '76 to '79? Great.

***

Today is February 21, 2002. You have something to add?

FRECHETTE: Yes, you had asked me the name of the second principal officer in Rio and his name was John Dexter, a China hand. The first one I had was Bill Miller, the second one was John Dexter, neither of them gave any sort of leadership to the post.

Q: Yes, John Dexter if I recall, as with a lot of China hands, ended up in Latin America to get them out of the way because of the McCarthy times. Okay. You're off to Venezuela in 1976 and you were the head of the political section. In the first place, could you tell me who was the ambassador and how he operated, and the we'll go into the situation.

FRECHETTE: Well, I had three actually. There was Harry Shlaudeman who asked for me to go, and no sooner was I on my way then he got transferred up to Washington as assistant secretary. He was followed by Pete Vaky, who was a wonderful ambassador and still a close personal friend. Then he was followed by Bill Luers, who then went as

ambassador to Czechoslovakia, and then retired and was the fundraiser for the Metropolitan Museum of New York. He still lives in New York and I think he's head of the UN Association, a very active guy.

Q: A lot of high powered, really high caliber people there.

FRECHETTE: Absolutely. He had been political counselor in Venezuela, Bill Luers, and he wrote a book that was really excellent. It was about the influence of the communist party in Venezuela, and it came out "In problems of Communism" first. It was not a book, but it was a big article.

Anyway, how was the embassy run? The embassy was run on the premise that Venezuela was one of the most democratic countries in Latin America. The big dictator had been thrown out in 1958, and the two major parties were feeling their oats, and everybody pointed to them and said, "See, they have people rising through the party. They have good people. This is going to strengthen democracy in Venezuela." That was one of the big fallacies of our policy at that time. What did we discover very shortly after I got there? That was that there was great corruption within both political parties. Both had stolen from the national treasury, but they said, it's for a good cause, it's to build up the party. If we build up the party we have good bureaucrats in the party, and they rise up and that will strengthen it. It wasn't. I mean corruption is corruption, and little by little they stole more. As we know, less than ten years ago, the major political parties in Venezuela had lost all relevance and all that was left was a bunch of little teeny parties, some on the extreme left, some sort of ad hoc. Today you have Chavez as president, and he's a former coup leader in 1992.

So, I was there at a time when the U.S. was saying Venezuela was a great democracy, and some of the Venezuelans were saying the same thing, but the seeds were clearly visible. They'd report that to Washington at the time. It took a long time for Washington to begin to get concerned. It was just, that was conventional wisdom. Venezuela, a big democracy.

Now, I was very busy. I was also chargé a good bit of the time. I was also acting DCM a good bit of the time. I have a section; it was the largest section that I had ever run. It had seven people including a labor attaché. We split up the pie. We broke it up so that each guy got different segments of the parties at different levels, but it was a nice mix so that nobody was sort of stuck with the commies or the socialists or whatever. It was a mix. We divided up for work.

When I got there, there had been a fellow there called Virgil Randolph. He is a great character in one of the great love stories in the Foreign Service. Everybody sort of picked whatever they wanted to and the result was bedlam and very poor production. So, with my assistance, which a couple of the officers really didn't like, but the rest did like because it gave them a piece of the action, we went about reporting. There were elections coming up. Carlos Andres Perez Rodriguez was president. The Copei party had Luis Herrera Campins and he won. He looked like a walrus. He was an interesting guy.

This was at the time when we were trying to prove Cuban involvement all over Africa. Frank Carlucci came down, who was the deputy director of CIA. Because we wanted all these countries to pressure Cuba, and we wanted to show the Venezuelans the baseball diamonds in Africa, because nobody else builds baseball diamonds except the Cubans. We gave them baseball and they take it all over the world. Wherever they have been they play baseball. Of course, Carlucci spoke no Spanish. He spoke in Portuguese. He had served in Angola. That was where his big fame came. We went into see the President, and it was a typical presidential office, or the big man's office in Venezuela, with this one table completely covered in phones and another table completely covered in phones. Behind the president's desk was one of those Swedish phones, a red one. You picked it up and you'd dial it, remember those?

Q: Oh, yes.

FRECHETTE: Anyway, one desk, which was all the phones, was since the phone system was so rotten in Venezuela they had to have redundancy. So, one table was just redundancy so the president could get people. The other one was phones, direct lines to each of the governors. Each one had a label. Touch here and you'd pick it up, and it would ring on the governor's desk. Then there was the red one. Carlucci said, "What's the red one?" I said, "Well, Mr. Director, I think it's either his wife, just for his wife, or for his lover." He said, "Oh, no. It's red; it's not the red phone for condition red?" I said, "No, believe me. This is personal." So, we were there and of course I had to do the briefing because I spoke Spanish. Carlucci spoke in English, and we showed him all the pictures. All of a sudden, the phone, red phone rang. At first the President just ignored it. Eventually it kept ringing, and you know how it is in many countries in Latin America and in Europe, they let the phone ring 12 or 15 times, and they won't pick up until the seventh ring. That was still the custom in Venezuela, and still is. Finally his eyes, you could see he was concerned. His eyes were sort of darting around his head. Finally, he said, "Excuse me." He went to the phone and he picked it up and the woman started screaming. We could hear her 15 feet away, blah, blah, blah. He looked and of course he was embarrassed and he turned his back to us and he listened and he didn't say a word. Then finally when she got finished, and I assume it was the girlfriend, he said, "Sorry, wrong number." He turned to us with the biggest grin you've ever seen in your life. Carlucci couldn't believe it and I to this day it's a great story. We continued with the briefing, the Venezuelans did absolutely nothing about the Cubans in Africa, but it's an interesting story.

Q: Since the abortive attempt at Castro, the land, the supplies and troops and all, when was that, that was in?

FRECHETTE: Oh, gosh, that was in the late '60s. They discovered this huge cash of arms buried on a beach. Carlos Andres Perez was then the minister of the interior. The first elected president said, get rid of those guerrillas. So Carlos Andres Perez brought in a bunch of anti-communist Cubans. These were tough dudes. They did, they killed most of them. Those who were left ended up in prison. A few may have escaped, but

essentially Carlos Andes Perez was the hammer and he completely eliminated the guerrillas. Of course the discovery of the arms cache put Castro even farther behind the eight ball. Later on when I was working on Cuba this was one of the signal events of Castro's willingness to risk everything to promote guerrilla warfare. So Carlos Andres Perez finished his first term as president while I was there. Later he was reelected and as you know, he was impeached for corruption and apparently it was true. I didn't believe it. I felt that Carlos Andres Perez allowed his friends to steal, but he didn't; but I was wrong.

Q: There is often the dilemma in the Foreign Service, you've got a country you're trying to get support for and all that, and you've got corruption. As soon as you start saying this country is corrupt, this means the word leaks out and it turns Congress off. Something happens if you report a lot on corruption.

FRECHETTE: That's true.

Q: Was this a factor?

FRECHETTE: It was not in the case of Pete Vaky. Pete Vaky was a great professional, and he calls them like he sees them. In fact, there are memos by Pete Vaky that have been declassified in the Pinochet case which show that clearly Pete Vaky as assistant secretary was writing the right stuff. He was aware, and he was doing it correctly. Bill Luers was much more of a rah rah man, and of course he had cut his political teeth as political counselor there. Some of the people he knew very well were the left. He just didn't want any talk about the corruption, and frankly it led to some friction between him and me because I kept saying to him, we owe it to the Department to tell them what's happening. This isn't going to last much longer. Well, it lasted longer than I thought, because I left in '79 and it didn't break down until the early '90s. Even in those days it was very clear what was happening. He just didn't want to do it. He was very much of an, apologist is too strong a word. He knew exactly what you've said, and he said, you keep saying that and pretty soon we're going to be the skunk at the party. We never got there in my time, but it did later.

Q: It is a dilemma because it's like an efficiency report. You could write wonderful things, but you just mention one small fact that you know, he wasn't very good at representation or something and wham. The person is low ranked. I mean people focus on the negative.

FRECHETTE: Of course, because among other things, most efficiency reports are so anodyne and bland. So, anything negative would be a big thing just jumps as inflated.

Q: Well, '76 to '79, what were American interests in Venezuela?

FRECHETTE: Strengthening democracy, fighting with the Cubans, and trying to get the Latin Americans to be more forthright. Now, to be very frank, the AD party was sort of wishy-washy on the Cubans, but the other party, the Christian Democrats, were always very critical of the Cubans. It was also a period when we were very careful about U.S.

intervention. Nixon, as vice president, had had his car assaulted in Venezuela, they broke the glass. Walters, who was riding with him, had his face cut.

Ambassador Teodoro Moscoso from Puerto Rico appointed y President Kennedy, first of all the Venezuelans didn't want him because they thought as a Puerto Rican he was a second class citizen. When they finally got it, he went one day, ignoring all the advice of his embassy, and drove onto the campus. You know in those days the campus in Caracas was holy ground. The army couldn't penetrate it and neither could the Americans. Of course they burned his car as I recall. It was a period of anti-Americanism just under the skin in Venezuela. It's very easy to stoke that up. Those were our interests. We were interested in the elections obviously. We were interested in oil, but those were golden days when they were making a lot of money out of oil, and we were saying to them use the money wisely. Help the poor people. They weren't interested in us at all.

Q: Also, President Carter had come in in '77, but it was also a time of long fuel lines in the United States. I mean there was an embargo on.

FRECHETTE: Well, Venezuela is a member of OPEC, and they just play along.

Q: Yes. How did we find Venezuela as an OPEC member?

FRECHETTE: They went along, they did participate; other countries did not. Mexico was not an OPEC member, but went sometimes to the councils and that sort of thing, but they weren't that open. It was an issue, there's no question about it.

It's interesting some of the biggest issues that took place in my time were the Russians and espionage. We were very preoccupied. There was a huge Russian embassy. I remember one time when I was chargé we had a volleyball game with the Soviet chargé. He was the KGB resident, and we had the cable, and of course we had maintained surveillance of that embassy. We thought we knew everybody who was in there. We knew that we probably didn't know all the file clerks, and the code clerks were like nuns. They always had to go out together and very seldom left the embassy. Well, these guys got out of a van from the Soviet embassy and they were huge. We'd never seen them. Of course they trounced us. Afterwards we had hot dogs and beer and they brought Vodka and cigarettes. These cigarettes smell like camel dung burning. Anyway, we had this thing. First time of my life in a drinking contest with a Russian. Man, that was terrible, because we sat at the bar, and I knew that the Russians drank milk and eat butter and stuff to coat their stomach. I hadn't done, that so I ate a lot of hot dogs thinking that the grease from that might do it. We drank and we drank, and I could feel really the worst case of drunkenness I'd ever had. Eventually, and to my great relief, the Russian stepped away from the bar and fell like a log, bam on the floor. The Soviets came and picked him up and they were gone, that was it. They'd lost. Then I put my hand off the bar and I could hardly stand. I made my way to the bathroom and my glasses fell off, I broke a lens. We had a dinner that evening and I threw up everything and I was just sick as a dog. A guy from the CIA, a Soviet watcher, and another guy picked me up and they put me in the trunk of their car, and they took me home in the trunk of the car so the Russians couldn't

see it. They were convinced the Russians had some motive to see what had happened to me. I arrived at home and they called my wife down and she came out and looked at me and said, "Is he dead?" She said I looked totally dead, I was green. They said, "No, no." I kept saying to her, "I'm sorry, I did the best I could for my country." What a story. Then I went upstairs, they carried me upstairs. Barbara put me in bed and she said, "We're going to dinner tonight at 7:30." This was 4:00. She began to pour coffee. She brought the children in, our son and daughter, as an object lesson and said, "Look at daddy." I kept saying I did the best I could for my country. My kids still remember that. We went to dinner and my stomach felt like it was full of ground glass. I had one lens missing, so I had another pair of glasses. Anyway, that's the story from the period.

We also had two defectors. We had a Russian who showed up one day. It was sunny. The procedure of the station chief went to see him and he looked like a genuine guy. Then I told Ambassador Vaky and he said you've got to go to see the foreign minister, a very nice guy. He was working in his office. The ambassador's residence was up on a hill and I drove this great big armored Cadillac down the hill. I'd never done it before. I was scared to death that I was going to lose control and drive into somebody's house.

Q: The brakes are not the best either.

FRECHETTE: No. Prince Charles, you know, when he visited Caracas one time, was allowed to drive the ambassador's Jaguar and promptly crashed right through the front wall of the ambassador's residence. Anyway, we got there. The foreign minister was very suspicious. He said, "Okay, we'll allow you to remove the guy, but we need a lot of information." We knew that he was suspicious. Anyway, we shipped him off, and later on in the States it was determined that he had a huge cancer in his brain, and he literally went mad. They finally shipped him home to Russia with this tumor.

Sometime after the Russian guy, I went to a book fair, and this tall thin fellow sort of sidled up to me and sort of said hello and struck up a conversation about Poles in the United States. Were there Poles in the United States? I said, sure, lots of them. He said, did they speak Polish in the U.S. I said, a lot, and there are some cities, like Chicago and Pittsburgh and others, where there are Polish language newspapers and so on. He began to call me up frequently and suggest that we have a cup of coffee. I began to suspect that maybe what he wanted to do was defect. One day he came clean. He said that he was not a communist, and that he was now under tremendous pressure from his ambassador who, despite the name Sobieski, which I gather is the Polish royal line, was a hardline communist and basically wanted to ship him home. He said he was afraid of this, and could he come to the States. I said, well, sure. I was sure that the thing could be arranged. Then he said that he wanted to come by himself. I said, look, you've really got to think that over. If you leave your wife and daughter here, they will take them home, and they will do unpleasant things to them and to the other members of your family, your brothers and sisters and whoever, and they'll make you go back. I said, you've got to really break away the whole family unit. Well, he didn't much like the idea. It looked to me like the thing was all over. Then one day he called me up, and I had been expecting this.

Q: Let me interrupt here, Myles. When this thing started to develop, did you check this out one with your station chief and sort of go back to Washington? I'm trying to get a feel for how the process is.

FRECHETTE: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, yes. The reason for the story is because the procedures for walk-ins were of course to hand them over to the station, that's the standard drill. Well, we checked him out and it turned out that the guy was not an intel officer, he was really exactly what he said, a true diplomat, and the agency was not interested in him. So, then I said to the ambassador, well, what happens? I mean this guy wants to go to the States, what do we do? He consulted with the Department and the Department said, we'll bring him up on our own. We won't use the station. We will do a State Department thing. So, we had planned it out. I had a place to put him and his wife in our security officer suite and we were prepared to do it on our own. Then nothing happened. There was silence. Well, one day, it was a Saturday, I got a call about 11:00 and the guy said they are forcing me to take the 3:00 plane. He said, what do I do? I said, well, get your wife and daughter and pack your bags and wait in the lobby of your apartment house. He said, but I'm being watched from across the street by the security. I said, just stay out of sight, but in your lobby. Precisely at 2:00 there will be two taxis pull up in front of your building and just walk out, don't run, just walk out, put your bags in there and get in. He said, what's going to happen? I said, well, you'll find out. Actually I hadn't talked to anybody, but once we were through, and within about 45 minutes of the rendezvous, I went and gathered two taxis and I said, this is where you go, this is the address, etc. There will be a man and woman and a girl come out and you bring them here to the American Embassy. Of course the ambassador was informed and the station and everything, we were all set. Sure enough, they came around the corner and we put them up there. Off we went, the ambassador and I, to talk to the foreign minister. This time the minister was really suspicious, and he said, "I'm not going to take any kind of statement. I want a handwritten note from this guy that he really wants to defect." He was really giving us a tough time until we produced that, and then he said, the Polish ambassador wants to see him. We said, fine he can come over here and meet him. The Polish ambassador came in, a nice looking guy, and he said, I'm going to talk to him in Polish, and I said no you can't. I don't speak Polish, so you're going to have to speak in Spanish. For about a half an hour there was this absolutely surreal screaming match between the Polish ambassador and this guy about why he should not defect. Very grave threats were made, exactly what I had told him. You know your family is going to suffer, blah, blah. Anyway, the end of the story, the Polish ambassador went away, we went back to the foreign ministry. They said, okay, you can have him. We said, we're going to need your help because we believe that the Polish ambassador and all his staff will be at the airport and will try to rush the guy and surround him. Then you'll have a diplomatic incident on your hands. So, by God, before the flight about 20 cars showed up with the police, and we put these people in the middle of this caravan, and we went down. Sure enough, Ambassador Sobieski was there with all the males in his embassy and they did in fact try to rush, but the police held them back and we put the guy on the plane and off he went.

Later on I got a call from the State Department saying that the guy left his briefcase with

his passport, can you find it? Can you imagine? So, I spent three weeks, but I did finally find it. What I did was I walked around at night to the different cab stands and I said, has anybody heard of a tall, thin man who left this thing, and by God, one night one taxi driver said, yes. He said, a friend of mine has this and he put it in a place where we put lost and found, and there it was. This guy lives in this area now. His wife for a while was an interpreter or taught Polish at FSI and he had some kind of a job. He wrote up, I'm told, the bios of several hundred Polish diplomats, real Polish diplomats, and was very helpful. We paid him a stipend each month.

Q: I'm almost surprised that the CIA, it sounds almost parochial, in other words, they only do intelligence people, which strikes me as being very nearsighted because it's like, you know, one of us could get very good information if we went over to the other side, and we're not intelligence officers.

FRECHETTE: No, that's right, but I think what they were focusing on is what the other side is doing in country A and what the other side is doing against you, counter intel, I think that's very important for them. But anyway, that was one of the exciting stories from the time. Then the rest of it was getting to know the political officers. I've explained on the earlier tape how I broke up the works so that everybody in the section had some work in different parties. They aren't all specialists in the socialists for example.

I had been given two assignments by the ambassador, and I think I told you about one of them in the first tape. I was asked to arrange for the extradition of a guy who was in Venezuela. He bought himself a Venezuelan passport and he was responsible for the failure of the Franklin National Bank up in New York, $30 million, with a guy called Michele Sindona. I got the U.S. Attorney from New York. We went and we hired the best damn criminal lawyer in Venezuela. A guy called Mendoza. He got him for us. Eventually we got Michele Sindona and Sindona died in prison. It was a very successful thing.

The other thing I was given as an assignment by the ambassador when I got there, even though I was head of the political section, was to find a guy called William Niehaus who'd been kidnapped by the guerillas before I'd even arrived at post. I'd been there three years. I spent the three years checking every single lead, and do you know about a week before I was due to leave post, Niehaus escaped from his captures. He was held in the south, these flat plains, and one day they left him uncuffed. He just wandered away and by luck ran into a patrol of the government. I said to the ambassador, "Well, you gave me those tasks and here you are." Very happy. The truth is Niehaus got away on his own. But Niehaus, his whole life fell apart. He was from Toledo. He was from Owens Illinois. He got a divorce. He left Owens Illinois, the glass company. He felt that they had not done enough to save him, which was not true. They had offered a big reward. In fact they had dropped off packets of money in several places, which was consumed by the guerrillas or whoever was acting in their name, and never any recognition made of it. I went to Toledo once to give a speech and I looked up Mr. Niehaus and I was really touched because the guy was just a mess. He was just a pathetic fellow, he'd lost his job, and he'd lost his family. I had never realized how devastating being away from other

people in the middle of the bush for four years can be. It just destroyed him. It was so sad. I went to see the guy, we had met of course in Venezuela, and I went to him and said, I'm in Toledo giving a speech, and I just wanted to say hello. He kind of shuffled off very slowly. I regretted doing that because I was so touched and so saddened by seeing this poor man.

Q: You said something, and I think it's interesting, and that is about spreading out the wealth in the political section. One of the problems in a political or economic section is that the junior officers are often given sort of uninteresting jobs. I mean, you know, to do the drudge work, which in a way is learning the trade, but at the same time to spark their interests. I mean at an early age the juices are really running. Have you found this in your career?

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes, no question about it, and I applied that later in Cameroon. I applied it later in Sao Paulo when I was principal officer and of course in Colombia. No, that's exactly what the situation was. This whole thing came about from representation. I called in everybody. I had a big section, the first time in my life I had had eight people working for me. I said, look this is what we get in representation. I'm going to ask the ambassador to triple that and I'm going to divide it among every one of you. Every one of you is going to have a pile of money, but to get that you must give me a pile of reports, and this is how I think we should split up the thing. My number two, the poor fellow died later of a tumor, Glen Munroe was his name, in the interim between my predecessor and me, he had picked basically the most interesting guys and he sort of let the others pick, but you know what that does. I mean basically there was no rhyme or reason, there was no targeting. There was no production schedule, nothing. It worked very well, although I must say that my deputy did resent it because it meant that he couldn't have all the juicy ones, and some of the juicy ones went to me because they were senior, but I went across the board. It worked very well. It was a very successful strategy. You know, it was interesting because occasionally people would come in and say, you know, I really haven't done my quota for the month of going to see people. I said, well, you've got money, money is not the issue. Dividing it up proved to be very successful.

Q: Tell me, just to get a feel for the nuts and bolts of this, when you say money, what are you talking about? Did you find that in the business, you know, a family, a regular dinner or did lunches or breakfasts pay off more?

FRECHETTE: No. Venezuela is a place where people are extremely informal and what I soon discovered very early on, Barbara did, we invited a bunch of people for dinner and two of 12 showed up. Venezuelans are very straightforward. I remember one of the guys who didn't show up for the dinner called me up and said, you know, I'm terribly sorry. We were on our way to your home for dinner and then my wife said, this is the last night that such and such a movie is playing. So, we went to the movie. He never thought to call me, nothing. I said, piffle. I said we'll try one more time. Barbara and I tried with the same results. I went back to the section and to the ambassador and I said, look, this doesn't work and all the other officers told me the same thing. You could not count on Venezuelans coming to your home. So, we shifted to restaurants, which was very good

because among other things Caracas still has the best restaurants in all of South America. They're a little moth-eaten these days because the economy is down, but you could get anything you wanted except maybe Korean food. But you could get anything Europe, because there were a lot of Europeans there, and Chinese and Spanish and all the rest of it, and it worked very well.

I remember one time my labor officer, he's retired now, he was a new one and didn't speak Spanish very well. He had replaced Dan Turnquist; Jim Leader was his name. He said, "I'm going to take a few labor leaders to lunch." I was absolutely amazed. That afternoon he came back about 3:30 in the afternoon and he was just as white as a sheet. He said, "The lunch bill was $8,000." I said, "What?" He said, "Yes, they showed up with 20 people." I said, "But you told me you were taking two or three of them." He said, "Well, they took advantage of me. They claimed that I had invited 20 people. My Spanish wasn't good enough." I said, "Well, what are we going to do about that?" Well, the ambassador finally very nicely managed to get the money, but you can imagine. Never had anything like that in my life, but his Spanish wasn't strong enough. He was a nice guy, and he was drunk to boot when he came back. He was leaving in two days. As I recall I said to him, "Well, Jim, you know, I'll get the embassy to cover that, but you sit right down and write the memcon because tomorrow you'll be packing your house." He sat there until all hours and we were pouring coffee and went to wake him up. It was a funny experience.

Q: Speaking of this, the nuts and bolts, did you find that particularly the junior officers knew what they were doing or did they require a certain amount of care and feeding?

FRECHETTE: A certain amount of care and feeding, a certain amount, but not a lot. I mean their instincts were fine. For the new ones, we sort of had some sessions in which we talked about how it's done and so on and so forth. I made all sorts of suggestions, you know, take a list of questions, don't just think about them when you're in the middle. Make a list. What are your objects in this meeting? What are you trying to find out? Try to memorize it so it doesn't look too obvious, but if you must have it out there, have it out and say to them, you know, I'm trying to cover a lot of stuff and I don't want to waste your time. I've had good relations with those guys. They're almost all retired now. They felt that it was very helpful to go through, just nuts and bolts, simple little things.

Q: Well, this is it, it's easy to expect people just to know what to do. You left Venezuela when?

FRECHETTE: I left Venezuela in October of '79 and came to Washington and became the coordinator of Cuban Affairs. My first assignment had been Cuban Affairs. I was the junior birdman and this time I came back as essentially the office director. The coordinator of Cuban Affairs was created in Kennedy's time, and it was really kind of a super office director because he had a responsibility or she, there had been some women who had the job. It was their responsibility to coordinate the work of all agencies with respect to Cuba. I mean obviously not the nuts and bolts of how the CIA and the FBI does their work, but to make sure that we were all sort of singing off the same song sheet.

Sometimes it's very difficult, and I'll tell you a story here about this experience.

Q: Well, October of '79, when did you leave?

FRECHETTE: 1982.

Q: '82. Okay, what was the situation, in the first place, where did Cuban Affairs fit, into ARA or was it more than ARA?

FRECHETTE: No, it was always a part of ARA, but it was more muscular than other office directorships. It was always very sensitive because of course the Cuba policy was always dictated very much from above. I told you the story of when I was just a junior birdman that we were not ever told about the missile withdrawal from Turkey as being part of a deal. In fact I wrote hundreds of letters to congressmen sort of saying there is no deal here, etc.

Q: But now in '79 how stood things in Cuba?

FRECHETTE: In '79 Carter had established the Interests Section in Havana. Terry Todman was the assistant secretary. He had gone to Havana. We had taken a new tack. We had opened the Interests Section. I think Lyle Lane had been the first head of it, with Wayne Smith as his number two. I came in in '79. I guess it was '77 when the Interests Section was started up, and then Wayne who was the head of it, and a guy called Glassman, Jon Glassman, was his number two. Jon Glassman was an extremely right-wing guy who, after being ambassador to Paraguay, in effect was sort of selected out because he had over-spoken himself in Paraguay. He now works for a defense contractor up in Baltimore.

Carter was a weak president with respect to Cuba, and Fidel was a guy who senses weakness. Fidel respects tough guys, but he is himself a bully, and he took advantage of Carter. So, when I took over the office I found that many of the arrangements that had been made for the Interests Section were being violated constantly by the Cubans. I'll give you some examples. You know, we had a little plane that we chartered to take in supplies to the Interests Section because at first things were pretty grim. Since then the Interests Section has been completely redone and so on. It's been modernized, but in those days we were still working with the old Interests Section and things were fairly primitive. So, we sent in office supplies, and occasionally stuff that the people needed. What we began to detect was occasionally there would be boxes that didn't belong to the U.S. government, but they were addressed to the Interests Section. They were then loaded aboard this plane, and in Cuba, it was the Cubans who unloaded it and these boxes disappeared. What they were actually doing was they were using our flights to buy prohibited goods because of the embargo in the Miami area. They had confederates and they would stick them aboard. The first time I went to the assistant secretary and then to Peter Tarnoff and I said, "Look, we set up some procedures and the Cubans are just violating these left and right, and the Cuban American community is aware of it. I just want you to be aware of it, and I want your authorization to start taking some counter

measures so that we don't get pushed around by the Cubans. We'll do exactly what we said; they must do exactly what they said." They said, okay. We began to tighten up. It was not easy because of course the Cubans remonstrated all the time and said why are you doing this. We said because the arrangement was the following.

The other problem that we had down there was the personnel office, and I don't know why this is, did not understand that Cuba was a restricted area or a denied area just like Poland or Romania. I mean these guys were commies. They'd been trained by the KGB and the Germans and everybody else. They were constantly throwing young women at the men in the section and they were constantly throwing young men to the women in the section. I won't mention any names, but one of the guys who was there in a fairly senior position actually fathered a child. Several of the officers I personally believe were compromised, and we had to remove them because you know, they sort of ended up on candid camera in bed with Cubans. The damn personnel office would not understand that. Finally when one guy, fairly senior, had been removed they went around and sent there a guy who had served in Romania who had been removed for exactly the same thing. He was just kind of a swordsman. They had to remove him, too. I went to the assistant secretary, and I went to the head of security, and I said, you've got to understand, this is the big league. We're not dealing with Nicaragua. This is the place where these guys are very good and very well trained.

I think I told you that I used to lecture to the counter intelligence people both at the FBI and the CIA on the Cuban target. You know, what are they like, what are the things that you can talk to them about, how do they react to certain things. They have a wonderful sense of humor. I lectured two or three years on this topic. They are extremely tough. Let me tell you that one time the guys at the CIA told me that they had one fellow that they thought was an agent of theirs, but they couldn't quite understand why he'd done something. So, they put him on the polygraph and he gave them one story. They said, it doesn't sound quite right. They put him on the polygraph again and he gave them a totally different story. Then a third story. In other words, this guy had three cover stories, and the polygraph never showed that the guy was lying. He was so used to lying that there was no electrical activity. This was because if you wanted to live in Cuba, you had the official line and you had reality. You had to lie all the time, so my own sense is that people just became inured and used to it, and it was so easy to lie. After I left the CIA had thought that they had a nice network going in Cuba, and it turned out that every single one of those guys was really working for the counter intel in Cuba, and they wrapped up the whole thing.

I'll tell you the story because it's extraordinary. The chief of station, who was a woman then, got a call from this guy to meet in the woods somewhere to leave a dead drop. You know, in a denied area. I'm giving you some trade craft now, usually the meets are not set up until ten or 15 minutes earlier so that the security people can't be there waiting for you. Do you know that this person made contact by phone with the person she was going to pick up stuff. In the time it took her to get out of Havana to go to this wooded area, the Cubans had set up cameras up in the trees, and there she was on candid camera. You could see her getting out of her car and going down into this sort of a gully and reaching

down under a bridge and getting the dead drop and getting back into her car. Then the Cubans just released the tape to the media. I remember George Gedda of AP calling me up and he said, "Myles, what do you think of this?" I said, "Well, I'm not in Cuba now, George." He said, "Yes, but take a look at this." He gave me the tape and it was awful. We got taken for a ride. So, the Cubans, one should respect them very much. They are extremely capable at this whole business. I don't know if they've had any success since then. We did have some agents at the beginning, just after Castro came in, and some of these people did sabotage and some of them were involved even in the plots to kill Castro. I was too junior an officer to be in the know, but I do know from veterans over at the CIA that we had them and that they'd been okay at the beginning, but with the passage of time, the regime was able to catch us every time.

Q: Obviously relations weren't great when you came there in '69.

FRECHETTE: '79.

Q: '79. What were the Cubans doing at that time that we looked at, that we were concerned about?

FRECHETTE: Well, you had the whole question of their activities in Africa. It was very worrisome to us. The Cubans had managed, from being a little teeny island to try to raise guerrilla warfare in Africa, a big failure, in Latin America, also failures and Che is captured and dies in Bolivia as a result of this; to a situation where the Cuban army is really a good army and can stand up to the South African army, and they were in Ethiopia and they were in Angola. They were kind of all over the place. They were projecting power for the Russians. It was a very worrisome scenario. The Reagan people were just coming in or were about to come in. The feeling on the part of the Republicans was that the whole Carter opening had been misused, had been mishandled by the Carter administration, and the Cubans were taking advantage of this. There was no question that that was the case.

Q: Well, prior to that, when you came there in October '79, what were you getting from others who were dealing with this who were saying, "My God, this Carter group really has given away the store," or "This isn't working out. It makes sense to have, say, an Interests Section, but we have to tighten up and do it better." You were sort of getting the professional corridor talk.

FRECHETTE: Yes, sure. Well, let's put it this way. The intelligence all told me that this had been very badly mishandled and they gave me chapter and verse on how the Cubans were taking advantage of the Carter administration. Wayne Smith, who was by then the head of the Interests Section, sort of admitted that some of these things were happening, but he felt that it was okay so that we could move on toward a more normal relations. The idea was to advance through little steps on both sides toward a more normal relationship. Prior to that the Czechs had represented the Cuban interest here in Washington, and the Swiss had represented our interests there. There was a general sense -- with the exception of Wayne and maybe Peter Tarnoff and the secretary, although I didn't speak to the

secretary, Cyrus Vance, about this until later -- that in effect, the thing had gone wrong. I had alerted them to that, and I was slowly trying to get the Cubans to live by the rules.

Then some Cubans went to the Peruvian embassy to seek asylum, and Fidel says, well, if they all want to go, let them go. All of a sudden you had 10,000 people all over that Peruvian embassy, and the question then was how to get them out. Then Fidel let the Cuban American community know that they could come and get their relatives out. This was a very frightening thing. Warren Christopher was deputy secretary and Cyrus Vance was secretary. I was asked to arrange a meeting with the Cuban American community. I got in touch with all the main leaders of the community, a very fractious group I must say; always cutting each other's throats with stories. This was before Jorge Bass and the Cuban American National Foundation had sort of become the primo inter pares, never the total undisputed leader, but the primo inter pares and had developed a relationship with the Reagan administration. I told Mr. Christopher, "This is a mistake. I know what you're trying to do, but you're going to find that this meeting develops into bedlam because each of these guys is not interested in finding a solution to this problem. They want to look like the most active anti-Castro guy." Everything happened exactly as I said. I know the Cubans very well. I had good relations with them. I speak Spanish. I knew how they were going to react, the Cuban American community, because I spoke Spanish. I was frequently interviewed on the radio in the Cuban American community. They did not like the Carter policy one bit and were always trying to get me to sort of exceed the speed limit, to say we ought to be doing this, and I always studiously avoided that. Well, the meeting was a disaster.

Q: Who was at it?

FRECHETTE: Well, Christopher was the representative of the administration, although Cyrus Vance came in briefly. He tried to tell them what we were trying to do, and the Cuban Americans just became aggressive and shouted him down and were pushing and shoving. It was just bedlam. Eventually Christopher just walked out, there was nothing to be done. Then President Carter said something on the radio. He said, "Well, you know, we welcome all Cubans who want to come to the United States under the law." But the 'under the law' phrase was just totally lost on the Cuban American community. They ignored the 'under the law' and they began taking ships to Cuba, and the Cubans said you can have a half a dozen relatives, but you've got to fill your boat with people. They got in 125,000 through several months of these little boats. The Cuban American community had become used to -- I think I made this point in an earlier episode here -- to the fact that the laws did not apply to them as they applied to others. They just took terrible advantage of this.

Then we had this monstrous situation in Miami when these people were there. The already resident Cuban Americans mistrusted the Marielistas, they said these are all the scum of the communist system. The people in Miami wanted money to help take care of these people. In the days when I had first worked on Cuba, there was a lot of money for resettlement programs, and we even had a program for bringing in kids from Cuba under the aegis of the church, and they were raised in the United States. Some of them never

saw their parents again. The parents stayed behind in Cuba.

It was a chaotic thing and I must tell you that it began in May and it ended in September. I was very close to a breakdown of some kind when it ended in September. I worked 18 hours a day, seven days a week.

Q: Did you have the feeling that your leaders, being the Secretary of State, the president, others who were doing this, didn't know what the hell they were doing?

FRECHETTE: That's exactly right. It was chaotic at the White House. You had first of all President Carter who as you know was famous for switching positions. He'd think about it and switch positions. Then you had a further breakdown. You had the national Security Council head who had a totally different view of how to deal with Cuba from Bob Pastor, who was the director of Latin America, and they were totally at odds with one another. So, you'd go to a meeting in the morning at the White House on Cuba and they'd agree on something. By noon, the White House had changed its mind and sometimes by evening it had changed its mind yet again. It was a very trying time with the White House. Sometimes Bob Pastor winning a battle, sometimes others winning a battle, sometimes the president himself injecting himself into this. It continued in that chaotic way until the end. Eventually Fidel had gotten rid of most of the pressure, and they cut it off. Good for us that they did, too.

Q: Did you feel that, particularly you say the White House, but also the people who understood Latin America, Cuba and all, they were almost, including yourself, almost brushed aside while political decisions were being made?

FRECHETTE: Absolutely, no question about it. I mean most of us with the exception of Wayne and Terry Todman, who had helped establish the Interests Section, although he drew away from it as he could see it was so terrible. You know, Terry was not an assistant secretary for long. He was sent off to be an ambassador somewhere. His assistant secretaryship was not a happy one. I don't know the details, but he's a hero and a friend of mine. He's never wanted to talk about it much, but it was a very tough situation. There was no respect.

Let me tell you a story. October of '79 I get called over to the National Security Council and I meet with Bob Pastor. They say Fidel Castro is coming to the UN, and we want him addressed and received like any other head of state. I said, fine, I'll go up to New York and coordinate with immigration, agriculture, secret service, all the people who have to do with the arrival. I went up there and I had a meeting with them, and it was very funny because you know the regional directors of customs and immigration have a lot of power in their system. They were all Irish with the exception of the guy who was head of the Secret Service. Even the FBI guy was Irish and sort of florid face and corpulent, and they sort of sat around. We talked and I said I have instructions right from the White House. The president even came out and shook my had after the instructions had been given to me. We want this to happen. They all sort of harrumphed and said okay. But it was a disaster. I got a call on the day that Fidel had landed. It was the secret service guy who

was not Irish. He said, we've got a situation here. The FAA has made Fidel's plane land right in a place where they can be hit by bazookas from the edge of Kennedy, and they won't move them. I said thank you for the call. We just raised hell. I called the head of the FAA and I said you've got to move this. They finally moved the plane to a safer place. See, we'd agreed what was a safe place, but the FAA had its own foreign policy. Then they discovered everybody else had their own foreign policy. The agriculture guys had never forgotten that Fidel Castro had taken chickens to that hotel in Harlem in 1959. So, they went through the plane looking for animals. The INS guys would not sort of take the visa forms from somebody at the door. They insisted everybody fill them out including Fidel in their presence. The Customs guys made sure that they went through the bags. It was a disaster. Fidel with good reason excoriated the U.S. government in the general assembly the very next day. Of course I got called over to the White House, and I got read the riot act. I told him I wouldn't be long for that job if something like that happened again. I told them the truth. I thought this was all squared away, but in fact each of these guys had their own foreign policy agenda. Carter was to discover that over and over again. Most everybody in the bureaucracy was much harder line toward Cuba than the State Department. They were always trying to sock it to them.

One of the big elements of my job was to make sure that people did what they were told. I mean a lot of follow through and so on. Today it sounds like a funny story. At the time I thought I was going to get fired.

Q: Tell me with Wayne Smith, he sort of became Mr. Cuba, and he's written books and he teaches and all that. What was sort of the feeling when you saw his reports? You took them with a grain of salt or?

FRECHETTE: I did. I thought that basically Wayne was pro-Cuba. I had met Wayne in '63 when I first began working in Cuba, and even then Wayne was against our policy. He felt that the U.S. had been troglodytic with respect to Cuba. At the time I didn't take it too seriously because, what the heck, he'd been a junior officer in Havana. I could easily see him having that attitude. With the passage of time and when I saw him in the Interests Section I became very concerned, because I felt that he was not telling us everything he knew about Cuba. He's a very intelligent man, and his reports were always interesting. I still remember and I quote frequently myself. He said, you know, as Stalin himself said, the truth is what sticks to the paper. That's a true quote from Stalin. I've used it many times in speeches. It's great. He knew Russian history, and he knew the history of the revolution. Indeed he made his entire career Cuba. He retired from the Foreign Service. It was sort of unfortunate for me because Wayne was the head of the section and he said, "Look Myles, can you see if I can be extended here one year and then I'll retire?" I went to see Tom Enders, who is dead now. Tom was a Republican although he was a career Foreign Service officer. He said, "I don't like that blankety blank Wayne. I don't like his reporting, and you don't like it either. Why should I leave him there another year?" I said, "Look, the guy's a professional and he may be slanting some of this stuff, but essentially we are getting a version from there, and he knows Cuba very well. I recommend you leave him there one last year and then he'll retire." Well, I was supposed to succeed Wayne down there, but during that last year Wayne was just really out of control. What I

was told was that Wayne used to go into the Interests Section on Saturdays and copy down EXDIS and NODIS cables on yellow legal pad. When he left he took all that stuff with him. The classified cables were locked in their safe, but he took a lot of that stuff with him when he left, as though it was his personal papers. I found I debated Wayne several times afterwards in Germany and other places after he'd retired. His version of what had happened in Cuba was always just a little slanted toward the Cubans. I could usually best him in debate because I stuck to the facts. It was very, very sad. Wayne went on and he taught a course on Cuba. I don't think he does the course on Cuba any longer, but Wayne has been one of those who has felt that we have misplayed our policy with Cuba all along. My own sense is that on occasion we have indeed misplayed it, but that essentially Wayne's vision of what Cuba is doesn't comport with reality. I don't understand why Wayne took such a position when the facts seemed to tell me something totally different. My own sense is that he became sort of actively pro-Castro.

Q: What was your reading at that time, you were working on this for three years, on Castro?

FRECHETTE: Well, I came to the conclusion that Castro hated the United States, that Castro was the revolution. In other words there was no separating how Castro felt from the foreign policy of Cuba. Castro was never going to normalize with the Untied States unless the United States did on his terms, and I still believe that. Most academics today agree with that, that there's no hope of any change whatever in Cuba until Castro passes from the scene.

This situation led me into a very difficult and one of the darkest times in my career, I must say, and I'll be happy to tell you about it. When the Reagan people came in.

Q: This would be January of '81?

FRECHETTE: That's right. The Cuban American National Foundation began to beat the drums. The guy who had worked on Cuba for Carter could not work for Reagan. A number of people went to this Mr. Mas and said, you don't understand, Myles is a career diplomat. He is a guy who does what the administration tells him. He's not inventing policy, he does what he's told, so it is perfectly possible for Myles to work under Carter and then work under Reagan, but the drumbeats continued. They wanted some symbolism. Very frequently when people are very much on the fringes ideologically, symbolism will do. Finally they went to Tom Enders and said, you know, you've got to fire Myles Frechette, get rid of him. Tom Enders of course went to Larry Eagleburger and Ken Dam who was then deputy secretary and said, look, this is a perfectly good guy. He has been loyal to both presidents. He's exactly what you want in an FSO, and I don't want to fire him. But they said, the White House wants something done, wants him out of there so that Jorge Mas will shut up, and they want to show some deference to the Cuban American National Foundation. So, Tom Enders said, I need a deputy assistant secretary. How would you like to be my deputy? So, I never got to Cuba. The one thing I really wanted to do was to go and serve on the island. That sort of was just taken from me, and I went up to be the deputy assistant secretary for Tom Enders.

Well, then, the you know what hit the fan because Jorge Mas felt that he'd been hornswoggled by Tom Enders. He said, you know, he told me he was going to get rid of the guy. I thought he was going to fire him, but instead he promotes him. This got to the White House and at that moment the White House decided that no more deputy assistant secretaries could be named without the clearance of the White House. Then the question was to get rid of me. I have written an article called 'Nothing Personal'. I'll give you a copy of it. I've had it in this briefcase for a long time. I'll give it to you when I'm through, about my experiences. What I discovered was that every conservative Republican began to attack me and call me names. I was on talk shows. I went to the Department and I said, "You've got to defend me. I did my duty here. What's the problem?" There was also a case in which, very bad luck for me, a Cuban had stowed away -- this was in Carter's time -- had come over to the States. We had entered into an agreement with the Cubans that we would return people who had either seized planes or had come across illegally. This was part of the Carter plan. There was strong pressure from the INS to return this guy. Unfortunately it was the very day that the Air Florida plane crashed on the bridge, and there was literally nobody in the Department. There were very few officers around, senior ones; there was snow all over the ground. The INS gave its approval for this guy to be turned back. I said, you can't do that. There's going to be hell to pay with the Cuban American community. They said, no, those are the guidelines set by the president, etc. I went to the refugee office, and the action officer was there, and I said, "Look, I know that that's what the procedure was, but I'm telling you that if this guy is returned, there is going to be hell to pay." He was not too bright and he gave his approval. The approval didn't have to come from ARA, it had to come from the refugee office, and the guy was returned. Well, the storm, there was a firestorm in little Havana, in Miami. That fueled the business to get rid of Frechette, although everybody in the Department felt that I had done exactly right. I had gone up the chain of command, but really, Tom Enders was not there and I couldn't reach him. I tried, but the decision wasn't mine. It was the decision of the refugee people.

Well, in any event, the attacks on me were terrible. I went to the Department. I went to the director general. I said, "You're going to have to defend me here. I've done my job. I did it conscientiously. I did it right, and you're letting these guys call me everything from a pinko, and they want to get rid of me." The Department basically would not defend me. They just wouldn't do it. So, I've written this article called 'Nothing Personal' which I've published in the Foreign Service Journal some years later to show that basically if you're an FSO and you get caught in a situation like that, you better defend yourself because the Department won't. That's the bottom line of my story. In the end I was defended by Larry Eagleburger and by Ken Dam and by Tom Enders. They went to the president actually, Ronald Reagan. They said, this is a good guy. He's done his job. Don't believe those stories. We've got to do something. Reagan, bless his heart, said he was going to send me to Cameroon as ambassador. That's how I got the embassy in Cameroon. But there was another side to the deal, that for as long as he was president I was not to come back to Latin America. This extended into the Bush years, too, so for ten years basically I was sort of out of consideration for being an ambassador or a deputy assistant secretary or assistant secretary, all of the things which I felt that my performance and my

knowledge entitled me to be considered, at least, for those posts.

Q: You're mentioning something that I've heard again and again and that is when the Reagan administration took over in '81, it was a particularly nasty time in ARA, not other places, but in Latin America. The Helms crew down in Central America, Helms was sending his personal foreign policy people. I mean up and down the corridors you had what was his name, I want to say it was Boswell or somebody.

FRECHETTE: Bill Bowdler.

Q: Bowdler.

FRECHETTE: It was the assistant secretary, and he got called the night before the transfer. I think it was the 19th in the evening, because the 20th was the transfer of power. He got called by David Newsom, who was under secretary for political affairs, and he said the administration wants you gone by daylight. Just take your stuff and get out. Bill Bowdler was in a state of shock. I didn't know what had happened, but he packed his stuff that night and left. He left a very bitter and broken man. He resigned from the Foreign Service after that. He went to live in Tidewater Virginia, where his wife, who was the daughter of a Baptist missionary, had inherited the pastor's house. Bill was a guy who collected a lot of art, and they lived down there, but he was a broken man. He wouldn't even return to Washington for a couple of years.

Q: I've never been able to interview him.

FRECHETTE: He just feels that he was stabbed in the back by everything. Bill was the son of British missionaries, born in Argentina. Bill came to the States to study and then the war broke out. He enlisted in the army and he got his citizenship that way. You'd never tell that Bill was not born American, because his English was perfect, he'd lived here for so many years. Peggy is from the Tidewater country. They treated him like dirt.

Q: What did this do to the people who are on the firing line, to have this happen?

FRECHETTE: I'll tell you what it did. It eviscerated ARA, many good officers who were in ARA, then moved on to other bureaus. What the Reagan people did, Elliott Abrams and the others, was they began to bring lawyers into the deputy assistant secretaries. Mike Kozak, who is now ambassador in Belarus, a very good guy, and several others whose names I can't recall right off the bat, but there were a whole of bunch of these guys who came over, because lawyers do whatever they're told to do. They're used to, in effect, making the case whether you believe it or not.

Q: As opposed to reporting as they see it.

FRECHETTE: Well, not so much that. They were largely helping the assistant secretary run the bureau. They didn't see anything wrong. I'm not criticizing Mike Kozak or some of the others. When you finally give me the edited version I'll be able to give you the

names of some of the others who came in. Essentially that was the policy as they saw it, and they defended it. They did a good job; there was nothing wrong. Each of these guys went on to other embassies and one thing and another, but it eviscerated the career people at ARA. If you look at ARA today there are not very many really extraordinary officers there. I put that down to not to purge so much but the message that was delivered to ARA when the Reagan people came in, that in effect it was the lying. You couldn't even express personally a divergence with the lying because if you did you might just basically get fired from your job and sent somewhere else. In my particular case Mr. Mas and the Cuban Americans actually thought the State Department was going to fire me. When they were told that there were no grounds for firing me, but that I could be moved up, they were vastly disturbed, but that's the way it was. I must tell you, during the Reagan years I pushed for Radio Marti, did lobbying up on the hill. I happen to believe that Radio Marti was a useful thing, because it beamed into Cuba the truth, the same thing as we did in Eastern Europe with the Russians, and it worked out. TV Marti has always been a bust because it can be jammed.

Q: It never worked, and it's become sort of a boondoggle. A very expensive boondoggle.

FRECHETTE: Of course, but symbolic and important to the Cuban American community and some very conservative members of congress, but everybody agrees it doesn't have any kind of listenership. Radio Marti did do what we said because when the Cubans saw that Radio Marti was going on the air and could be listened to, they themselves softened their own official position because they knew that it wasn't going to compete with Radio Marti.

So, in effect we did open up a little bit in Cuba, but that was what happened to Bill Bowdler and then what happened to me. I'm here because a lot of nice people later said, you know, Myles Frechette doesn't deserve that. Carla Hills who was then head of USTR rescued me. I came back from Sao Paulo, where I was consul general, to be head of USTR for Latin America and do President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas initiative. If she hadn't rescued me, who knows where my career might have ended? It was an agreement in the Reagan years, and later in Bush, that in effect I was not going to be given an embassy. I wasn't going to go up on the Hill for confirmation.

Q: You talked about the Cuban Americans, but did you run afoul of Helms and his staff particularly?

FRECHETTE: No. For my hearings on Cameroon, they said the Helms people are going to come out and oppose you. In fact the hearing took place, I can't remember now who the senators were who talked to me about Cameroon. I mean it was nothing controversial about Cameroon, and then they said you've got to wait. They made me wait and the rest of us wait for an hour, and eventually Helms didn't come because there was nothing to it. Everybody knew that despite the fact that the Cuban Americans had been thrown a bone by having me get out of ARA, in effect there was nothing to the argument that they had. I was not soft on Cuba. If you talk to Wayne Smith he'll tell you that I'm a very hardline anti-Castro. I don't know if that's true that I'm anti, but I've always considered myself

very realistic about Castro. The fact is, my views on Castro and what he represents and his ability to change his policy haven't changed much in all the years that I've been following Cuba, because I think essentially I had it right and I still do.

Q: When you were there and sort of looking at this, did you see anything that we could have done that would have changed the Cuban-American relationship, or was this something caused by Castro and there it was, and elemental force, and there's not much point in really trying to do much?

FRECHETTE: It's very difficult to really come up and tell you that we could have done something. The fact is that Castro had this view of the United States. He was after all a hero to the Latins, you know, he stood up to the U.S., not once, but many times, and survived. I don't think we could have done anything, however, Castro is a guy who despises weakness and takes advantage of it. He's very respectful of tough guys. Castro over many years has always believed that when a new president came in he could make an overture to the new president. He always used to say, well, but you know, Nixon went to China. For many years he did that. I remember when we were negotiating secretly with the Cubans to return some of the criminally insane from Muriel. This was at the end of the Carter administration. Remember Reagan was coming in. You had all those guys kidnapped in Iran, and Carter was hopeful that we could get the Cubans to take back the criminally insane at least. We had negotiations. I remember and we held them right in downtown, right in Georgetown at Frank Loy's house. Frank Loy was under secretary for global affairs under Clinton at the end. Nice guy, Frank. We negotiated there secretly with the Cubans, and we were moving along. It seemed to me we were making some progress, and then all of a sudden, I think it was on the 17th of January, the guy who was leading the Cuban team said: I've got to return to Havana for instructions. We thought that was very strange, because they had an Interests Section. He could get instructions by telegraph and they had ciphers and everything. He went back and I predicted to people, I said, they don't want to do it.

He came back and said that the maximum leader thinks that he can strike a deal with Ronald Reagan. We said, you're out of your mind. He's the last man who's going to make any kind of a deal with you. Make a deal with Carter, you can get rid of this extremely damaging and hurtful thing that you have done, because you know, keeping those criminally insane cost the taxpayers between $10,000 and $25,000 a year to keep them in prison. Some of those guys are still in prison; we're still seeking to get the Cubans to take them back. We can't let them out because they're murderers and so on and psychotic. There they are sitting in U.S. prisons because the Cubans won't take them back. They said, no, that's the decision. As soon as Reagan came in, the word went out. No dice with Castro. You had Alexander Haig as Secretary of State say we're going to go to the source. It intimidated the hell out of Castro. Castro thought, my God, he's going to invade. If I'm not careful Reagan will push that red button and all hell will break loose. So, during the Reagan years Fidel Castro hunkered down and took it easy. It shows you that an American president who is tough and decided can in fact moderate Fidel's behavior. A weak president brings out all the bully tendencies in Fidel.

The only president that Fidel has not made an overture to has been George Bush, Jr. He's finally learned that with the Republicans it just isn't going to go anywhere. This is the first president that I'm aware of that Fidel didn't send somebody around to say would you like to make a deal?

Q: Were we looking at the what was going on in Cuba itself, because obviously the population there is getting younger, and over the years we watched communism disappear practically from what was the communist bloc. I remember talking to people about this time in the late '70s, early '80s, who served in Poland and said they were convinced that there were probably maybe three perhaps four convinced communists in Poland at that time. I mean, you know, it was no longer a religion. Did you have any feel what was going on in Cuba?

FRECHETTE: Well, there was no give on the part of Fidel. He was then and he still is surrounded by a coterie of very bright, capable guys who have basically been brought up in his shadow. They've been in one way or another associated with Fidel first in very junior positions and then risen. They have produced a gang of very bright guys, most of whom I believe when Fidel dies will suddenly go into their homes and come out with a T-shirt that says social democrat, and they will become the politicians. Why? Because they're the only guys who know how to do politics. There are no other parties. These are the guys who are going to do it, just like Eastern Europe, but as long as Fidel is alive, they were right on the line. I never thought there was any hope, and I think history has proven me right. There never was any hope. I'm not disputing the opening of the Interests Section, but I think the expectations on the part of Carter were all wrong, and he did it all wrong by being sort of too soft with Fidel all the time. We should have been much more businesslike and said, look, this is your part of the deal, this is our part of the deal, and we'll stick to it. Fidel respects that, you know, he may not like it, but he respects that, because he doesn't like you if you're weak either. There's contempt there. There's only one solution for Cuba, the biological one. Fidel will die, his brother will assume power. His brother won't last long, because he's got all of the charisma of this coffee cup, and then one of these young men with the social democrat T-shirt will take over. Then we can start breaking down the system. I don't think many Cuban Americans will go back to Cuba.

Q: Oh, no, I've watched this. In every country you have people who come and they become 110% American, yet they always think they'll go back and be welcomed as heroes. They're not.

FRECHETTE: Sure. What they may do, the Cuban Americans may invest in Cuba and help that way. The old ones will go back and they'll say this isn't the Cuba I left, and they'll come back to the States. The young ones say, gee, Cuba isn't my country. I'm an American. So, it's a little bit like the White Russians. Remember the White Russians? They hung around Paris for 15 years after the revolution and in the end they all got absorbed into France. They were never going to go back.

Q: Yes, they were driving taxis.

FRECHETTE: Sure, or running restaurants or whatever.

Q: You know it's got to go, but did at that time were there any, were you aware, was the CIA or anybody, were people talking about games against Castro or not? Was this pretty well discarded?

FRECHETTE: No. Well, I mean in my time as coordinator, they thought they had this big apparatus that they had managed to recruit. After I left they learned through the TV episode that they had been just basically suckered, know by the Cubans. I have no idea what the CIA is doing now. I would continue trying to recruit, but don't have high expectations.

The Cubans are great raconteurs; it's part of their culture. Perhaps it comes from Spain; perhaps it comes from people living on an island with not an awful lot to do unless you have money. Fidel turned that instinct to gossip, to tell stories on your neighbors, and created a system called the Committees for Defense of the Revolution. Everybody informed on everybody. Kids informed on their parents and so on. He used this natural tendency of the Cubans to tell stories and sort of spy on each other to create a system in which it was worth your life to be a conspirator. There have been few conspiracies in Cuba because let me tell you, people who spoke about conspiracies generally had to be absolutely certain the other person really felt that way. Many is the time they discovered that the person they thought was a trusted confederate was in fact working for the state, and they went to prison or even, in the early days, the high wall. They'd put you up against the wall and shoot you full of holes. The system of control in Cuba is still very accurate. So, it's worth your life, quite literally, to complain too much about the regime. This is not to mean that people have not conspired, but they had done so knowing very carefully with whom they're speaking. The Cubans reflect this in a series of movies. The Cubans make excellent movies. The Death of a Bureaucrat is one.

Q: Moving bodies.

FRECHETTE: Yes, you know, the Cubans have got that right, and they tell you all about telling stories on each other and so on and so forth. So it's not me telling you, the Cubans recognize this themselves. Fidel has used his knowledge of the Cuban character to create a truly totalitarian society.

Q: Back to something, you were talking about, the conflict in the NSC under Carter between Bob Pastor and Brzezinski.

FRECHETTE: Brzezinski, yes.

Q: Now, Brzezinski is well known. What was the role of Bob Pastor? What was his background?

FRECHETTE: A lot of people don't like Bob Pastor. He can be very nasty and he can be

very dishonest. I'll leave it that way. I personally feel that you really can't trust Bob Pastor very far. He was very active in always insisting that we do things his way and could be very nasty if you didn't do it his way. He was a guy who was sort of left of center. He was a good friend of Torrijos; pushed Carter to enter into the Panama Canal thing, which by the way I think was the right way to go. We had to do it. It was the right thing to do.

Q: It's like bases in the Philippines. You had to give it up.

FRECHETTE: It was the right thing to do. Bob Pastor feels that he understands these people who are a little bit to the left of center, far better than others, and he was one of the big champions of opening up with Cuba even in spite of all the evidence that I took him, and others took him. He would not change. I later ran into Bob Pastor, just to tell you a story, when I was ambassador to Colombia. He came down and he said, "I've come down from the Carter center to talk about peace talks." I said, "Peace talks with the guerrillas? It's not going to happen because the guerrillas are not going to talk with Ernesto Samper Pizano the president. They're just not going to do it. So, you're not going to have peace talks. I'm not against peace talks, but it's not going to happen with Ernesto Samper." Well, he argued and argued and I gave him the story and I was absolutely right. Shortly after that the guerrillas said Samper is a crook and a narco and we're not going to talk to him. Bob Pastor came back and met with Tom Pickering. He said, "Myles Frechette is against peace. He opposes peace talks." Not the case at all. Then Pete Romero called me up and said, "What's the matter? I understand you're against peace." I said, "Wait a minute, when I get up to Washington I want to tell Tom Pickering exactly what I said and you, too, but just so you know, I'm not against peace, I just don't believe there's any possibility at this time." Now how prophetic. Here we are, several years later, and now everybody knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that the guerrillas never really wanted to talk peace, not even with those who bent over backward to be accommodating. That's Bob, you know, he takes advantage.

Q: What's his background?

FRECHETTE: An academic. Nice guy, actually, in some ways. He's married to Bob McNamara's daughter, one of the daughters. I guess there are several. He was going to be ambassador to Panama, in the Clinton years. When I was going to Colombia he was in the same ambassadorial class, and the right wing knocked him out. This was Clinton; Clinton was sort of a realpolitik kind of guy. If he saw that things were too tough he wouldn't go, so poor old Bob was left hanging for a while and eventually gets approved for his appointment. A very capable guy, but he can be very nasty. He can be very dishonest, and he basically tries to ride roughshod. Bill Bowdler hated working with him and said, "I'm not going to work with this guy." Pete Vaky said, "Not with that guy." He quickly resigned as assistant secretary because you're talking about a guy who is a snake. I mean he will not deal with you as an honest person. He'll cut your throat because he has the same contempt for the career service as the right wingers do. It's amazing.

Q: Did you see a problem, well with Wayne Smith there, but otherwise with young

officers going in? You know when you go into a country, you always have the feeling, Cuba, you ought to be able to work with this country. This can affect you.

FRECHETTE: I did not get that sense, no. I was only on the job from '79 to '82 really.

Q: Well, you lasted quite a bit of time under Reagan then didn't you?

FRECHETTE: Well, yes, because you know, essentially I went to be ambassador to Cameroon in '83. Actually I left the Cuba desk in '81. I'd been there '79, '80, '81, almost three years. Then I went upstairs to be deputy assistant secretary. Then when the White House said Myles Frechette can't be a deputy assistant secretary, Tom made me his special assistant, and one of the things I had to do was to go down and give him my assessment as to whether the Contras were going to win a military victory. After I met with the Contra leaders and the CIA trainers.

Q: This is in Nicaragua.

FRECHETTE: Yes, and Honduras. I met with them. I came back and I said, "All I can get from the CIA and from the Contras is that if you will just let their numbers grow 10,000 or 20,000 they might be able to win. My assessment to you is no military victory is possible, but we ought to use the Contras as a bargaining chip and eventually negotiate." That was my end, but that was not pleasing to the administration either, and that was a very close thing between me and Tom Enders, who is now dead. Then I was named as ambassador to Cameroon. Later on I had feelers from Elliott Abrams to come back and be a deputy assistant secretary under him, because apparently he knew I wasn't soft on Castro. I was so badly hurt from the experience, on which I write, that I said, here I'm an ambassador, I like Africa, and I like Cameroon. I can do some good. All that will happen to me there is that the right wing will come out and start to attack me again. In fact I was even asked to go over to the NSC and be their Latin American guy. I said, no thank you. One can be eaten alive by the piranhas only once. I don't want to go through that again. I knew perfectly well that if I got back those right wingers would start saying, where is this, and you will see. I think there's a cookie pusher.

Q: There's an article called 'Nothing Personal' from the <u>Foreign Service Journal</u> from, I don't have the date.

FRECHETTE: It's on there.

Q: August 1993. But did you see...

FRECHETTE: I didn't see young officers going there and being carried away. You know, all you have to do is serve in Cuba to realize that a lot of the sort of good will crowd think you can work it out with Castro. You've got to see Cuba for what it is to realize that that is simply not realistic. So, the young officers generally came back very firmly anti-Castro.

Q: Did you have any other thing that happened in Nicaragua and El Salvador, when the glitterati out of Hollywood and other places, the show business types, the left wing chattering class, cocktail revolutionaries came down to Cuba playing their guitars and hoping, well dissipated, and moved over to Nicaragua, at all?

FRECHETTE: We always had a certain number of members of congress, Senator Kennedy is one, who has made many trips. My criticism of Senator Kennedy is that I don't believe that it makes sense for him to go down and talk to Castro and have Castro give him one political prisoner. I think we ought to be insisting that they release all the political prisoners. I don't believe in this. You have to go down and you have to humiliate yourself with Castro and sort of agree with him on certain points. Then he'll give you one political prisoner, sort of like a trained mouse or something like that, and you take him back and you say, isn't this wonderful? I don't think it's wonderful. I've never thought it was wonderful to do that. I've always thought that Senator Kennedy, who I respect very much, ought to say, blankety blank release all the political prisoners. But you know, to get somebody out, people will do this. In my time it was mainly members of congress who use it often to poke at the administration occasionally, to get a person out. In later years, of course, it's the business community that's been pressing for normalization with Cuba, particularly since the Russian subsidy of $6 to $8 million disappeared. Cuba is a disaster. It's had a drought.

They don't have much food. We managed to sell food for the first time for cash. It's the business community that says there's not much business in Cuba, but if we keep the embargo up the Europeans and the Canadians and the Mexicans are going to get in there, and we're going to end up, when Castro finally dies, with nothing. The leavings. That's the pressure today. It's basically agricultural issues. Its members of congress who represent agricultural states that want to open up Cuba. I think it will be opened up, because essentially Cuba today represents no danger. In Reagan's time when the Russians were still there, and they still had the Lourdes signals intel facility with some 10,000 Russians there, they could read all our classified mail. They got a lot of information about what we were doing in terms of preparedness for war and whatever. They were very dangerous. It was at that time the Cuban armed forces were so powerful that the highly classified estimate was in the Pentagon that we would lose many, many planes, I mean hundreds of planes, maybe thousands of planes, in attacking Cuba, and hundreds of thousands of troops if we invaded. Reagan read that estimate and said, you know, that's not important enough. Today with the Soviet support gone it would still be very costly to invade Cuba, but nothing like in Reagan's time.

Q: But it represents no threat particularly?

FRECHETTE: No, but you do have several things. I mean the guy still is a dictator. He still oppresses people's human rights. He has been basically cast out by the rest of the hemisphere. The rest of the hemisphere is moving toward democracy, there's a guy who doesn't believe in it. Essentially there's no way to change it until the guy dies. What's the point, in many ways? I'm certain that when Fidel dies the policy will disappear. You even have two laws, the Helms-Burton law and the Democracy Act, which set our policy

toward Cuba into law. You don't have that with any other country in the world. There's been a lot of yelling about the new assistant secretary for Inter-American, or Western Hemisphere Affairs, thinking that he's going to take a very hard line on Cuba. In fact the wiggle room available to the U.S., because of those two laws, is so small that it's irrelevant. I mean you could have the biggest liberal in the world running the Western Hemisphere, but because of those two laws, which are law of the land, there isn't much wiggle room with Castro.

Q: I might add that I did an interview with Tony Gillespie where he was talking about how Tom Enders found, when the orders came not to have any DAS, deputy assistant secretaries, without approval, he started the policy of saying, okay, I'm going to have special assistants. He just did away with the deputy assistant program.

FRECHETTE: No, that's not exactly true, because he had Craig Johnstone, who was a deputy assistant secretary for Central America. Craig is certainly no left leaning guy. Tony, himself, was sort of the administrative assistant or executive assistant to Tom Enders, but that's different. That's not a deputy assistant secretary position. That's the guy who makes the paper flow. It's sort of the bureau equivalent of the executive secretary. Tony was excellent. He did a wonderful job. He was also dragooned in as special ambassador to Grenada when we invaded Grenada. It's not true. I was to the best of my knowledge the only special assistant he had because of this veto power of the White House. He did it essentially for me, and after that they did have deputies, but they were all given the blessing by the White House. I don't think Tony is right there.

Q: Did you get any feel for the staff of Senator Helms at this time? Could you talk a little bit about it?

FRECHETTE: Yes. They played hardball of course, and they were always accusing people who worked on Cuban Affairs as being too soft. The fact is today I'm fairly friendly with some people who worked for Helms, and they say they knew all along that I was not soft on Castro, but that was playing politics and going against the administration, and particularly going after the career services. Senator Helms' view of the career service is not very complimentary.

Q: Then you went on to Cameroon. Do you think this might be a good place to stop?

FRECHETTE: I think it's a great place to stop because I've got to get going.

Q: All right, fine, we'll stop here.

FRECHETTE: But if you have any questions we can return maybe to the Cuba thing, because I think there's a great deal to what happened in the Reagan years, and we still haven't recovered from it. We still have some of the brightest guys moved off from other bureaus who just didn't want to put up with that stuff, which was too bad.

Q: Okay, well, then unless something comes up, and if you think of anything or I think of

anything, we'll pick this up in 1983 when you went to Cameroon.

FRECHETTE: Okay.

***

Today is April 25, 2002. Mr. Frechette's 66th birthday. Myles, you did mention something about ARA at that time is now, what is it?

FRECHETTE: WHA.

Q: In other words, the Western Hemisphere Affairs, suffered tremendously from the Reagan takeover. Were you aware of a movement sort of out of it, or let's avoid this place, or something like this?

FRECHETTE: Well, I can tell you sort of the obverse of that. What happened when the Reagan people came in, and I must say this caught me by surprise, and it's true today as it was then, there are people on both ends of the ideological spectrum who believe that personnel is policy.

Q: We're talking about somebody from the left under Clinton and on the right under Bush II?

FRECHETTE: Bush II. That even though you're hemmed in by other legislation and other forces, that person will steer, no matter what the contrary winds are, in a direction that's useful; and that even if that person is unable to shift the course, the fact that you have that person there is good for your troops, that is, those who cheer you on. So, let me give you some examples of what happened to me and what kinds of people were brought into the Department, into WHA, then called ARA, to illustrate this.

One good example was I was working for Tom Enders, who was then assistant secretary. Tom Enders was a Republican, but I think a moderate one, who used to refer to the hard right in the Republican Party as the wingers. Now, Enders was forced to take into the Department a General Summers, who is still alive, a guy from Arizona, a retired general, very conservative. I saw him the other day as a matter of a fact at a conference. He's a little doddery now. A number of other people, too, whose names I cannot remember. These were people who were true believers. The party believed that they were particularly very conservative. Then you had Richard Burt, who was a thoroughly unpleasant and dishonest guy, who was a New York Times correspondent who was head of political-military if I'm not mistaken. Richard Burt later ascended into a sort of heaven by marrying a very rich lady and is now a gentleman of leisure. In those days he was a reporter. The question was Cuba policy. I talked about that a little bit before, you know, Alexander Haig talking about going to the source when they had absolutely no intention of invading Cuba. It made Fidel very nervous, and Fidel basically kept a very low profile because of that during the Reagan administration. There are some other things that I think are probably still classified that I cannot discuss that were done to make Fidel doubly

nervous, but anyway.

I was chugging along, writing Cuba papers and so on, and then the Cuban American National Foundation put pressure on George Shultz and the White House saying we're got to have a new policy on Cuba. You promised us, we voted for you, etc. I remember this guy Bud McFarlane, who was counselor of the Department. A decision was made to write a new paper. Tom Enders said, well, you know, we've got Cuban Affairs, we'll write the paper. The answer from Reagan and Burt was, no, absolutely, not. He's a pro-Castro guy, which of course was an absurdity, absolutely untrue. Enders went up there and said to Shultz, this is ridiculous. I am responsible for the region and I simply insist that we produce the paper. I don't mind if the others are involved, but let's do it together here. Let's not do crazy stuff. So, reluctantly, Shultz called McFarlane and McFarlane had me go in there in a meeting with Burt and a guy called Jon Glassman who has since left the Service. He was very right wing FSO who later served in Cuba and later stepped in the horse puckey in Paraguay, and was basically told to leave the Service, there would be no more assignments for him. He now works for, I think, Northrop up in Baltimore. The other guy was Richard Haas. Richard Haas, as you know, is now director of policy planning. It was interesting at the time Richard Haas was much more conservative, but over the years he's become much blander and he is now head of policy planning after a stint at Brookings.

In any event, you know, it was hair raising to me and totally surprising, but that person and Burt could hardly stand to be in the same room with me. Every time they addressed me it was vitriolic and insulting and demeaning. Yes, you pro-Castro guys, you've had it long enough. Just absolutely incredible. For the first two or three insults by both of these guys, since they were senior to me in the Service, I kept quiet. Finally I said, enough of this stuff. Who the hell do you think you guys are, you know? I'm not soft on Castro, get off it, give me an example. Of course, there weren't any. It was just an ideological pose or a posture or whatever. Well, to make a long story short, after a lot of absolutely gratuitous insults on my political leanings and pro-Castro and all this sort of stuff, we agreed that we would write a paper together and present it to McFarlane to give to Shultz, who would then give it to the president the next day. All right, but not before partings sallies with lots of vitriol and hatred in their voices and in their faces. They were menacing and they sort of stood up and stuck their noses up. I thought to myself, what the hell is happening. Now I realize it was just kabuki. They were doing it for each other, or just to feel good or something. I don't know. I think there's a good deal of that among people like Mr. Rumsfeld today. There's a great deal of kabuki. They know good and damn well the president cannot do what they propose because in effect the president has to govern, and the president wants to be reelected. Some of these guys actually represented points of view in which they were prepared to go down in flames. What was more important, ideological purity or governing, arriving at a solution that could lead the country forward? Then they said Glassman and Haas will work with you on the paper. I got together with Glassman and Haas, whose contempt was visible, and they were sort of chortling among themselves, and we agreed on what we would do. I would set the stage as to where we had been with Castro. I'm telling you this in great detail because it was a shock and it was kind of a witch-hunt.

I returned to the postures and the hostility and the shouting and the posturing by Richard Burt. Richard Burt is now living in the lap of luxury, I think in New York. McFarlane sat there very circumspect. I knew that his sympathies lay with the other two guys, but he was much more careful. I also thought of other Foreign Service officers. This was not the first time in my career in which people sort of shouted at me, and the Service let me do it. I told you the story when I was first in Cuba and the guy from the House Committee on American Activities, was sort of telling me that I was doing a great disservice to the administration by now revealing what I really knew of all those missiles in Cuba. There was no such information, as we now know. There were no such missiles in Cuba. After they were removed in '63, they were gone. But my boss, John Crimmins, allowed me to go in there and get insulted and intimidated by this guy. I must say despite my great admiration for John, I still don't understand it. Then Tom Enders. Tom Enders didn't want to go into that maelstrom either. He let me go in there and take all this damn abuse. Let me tell you what they did. It was childish. I wrote my draft in the afternoon and we were supposed to get together at 6:00. I went at 6:00, neither of them was in the office, they had gone home. Their lights were out, it was just extraordinary. This is usually the case. You know what the State Department is like; the lights are on much beyond 6:00 pm. They both just disappeared, and I couldn't reach them. I called their homes, no they weren't home. Where they were was probably up in Burt's office drafting away. So, I called Tom and I said, you know, we've been hornswoggled here. There never was any intention to work with us. Here's my draft, and I'm going to leave it with you. I'm sorry about this, but I really thought that they were serious, obviously not the case.

The next morning of course McFarlane got a piece of paper which was the usual thing, the evil empire and the Cubans and the Soviets, and a lot of that was true, but it was sort of putting up a framework indicating the Cubans were the epicenter of the evil empire and its activities. They recalled everything that had happened in Ethiopia, and how the Cubans had got in there and bloodied the nose of the South Africans in Angola and everything else. It was a silly paper because it was largely an ideological posture. In the end it didn't propose, forgive the French, a God dam thing that was really different. In the end the proof is that the Reagan people for all that posturing did not really want to invade Cuba, not at all. They were very reasonable. I remember seeing the highly classified documents from the Department of Defense saying we're going to lose how many hundred planes and how many hundreds of thousands of troops. Not worth it. Of course they didn't want to tell the Cuban Americans that, so they had Alexander Haig playing kabuki, too. We're going to go to the source. I must say with all that, I must recognize that they scared the hell out of Fidel. In a way it worked, but this kind of thing, this kind of hatred that was visible on the faces was very scary, and of course it was transmitted and carried forward in ARA after Tom Enders, who was moved aside essentially because Shultz thought he wasn't right wing enough, moved off to Spain as ambassador.

Of course, that's where poor Tom had his terrible event, where he apparently had an affair with somebody, and his wife discovered it in some sort of letter from him to his girlfriend about a pair of panties she had left in his briefcase. A big stink. Anyway, poor Tom, after that he got a melanoma in his lungs and died within weeks. He was one of the

great FSOs, just absolutely fantastic. Then you've got Elliott Abrams, who is very ideological and a very decent man in many ways, very strong on human rights. If you look for him to sort of tilt in the way of what Ambassador Jeane.

Q: Kirkpatrick?

FRECHETTE: Yes, used to call MRAG. You know what an MRAG was? That was a moderately repressive authoritarian government. She said, you know, there's a big difference in dictatorships. You can have a leftist dictatorship, but you can have an MRAG and an MRAG is positive, a move in the right direction, which of course is true. Elliott Abrams is a guy who really tells it like it is on human rights. He's inflexible in either direction, even though he got into big trouble over getting money from the Sultan of Brunei, Iran Contra and all that sort of stuff. But, whom did they bring in, they brought in Michael Kozak, and I'll think of his name when you give me the draft. Another lawyer, that was the kind of guy they brought into the bureau, and basically the career guys who had done their service throughout their career in Latin America, the message was very clear. Nobody said you need not apply, but some of them did go off. I'm afraid I don't have names for you now, but I will try to recall some. The fact is they staffed it up, the deputies area, with people who were used to building a case for their client if you will. That, I think, has done tremendous damage because what it said to you was essentially, don't tell it like it is, tell it like we want to describe it.

There was an episode just yesterday, for example. The House International Relations Committee prepared a report on some hearings on the connections between the Colombians and the IRA, and the guy who ran this, a guy called John Mackey. He used to be a policeman up in New York, and he used to work for Ben Gilman on Colombia, and he did some rotten things to me when I was ambassador to Colombia. But eventually he came to a parting of the ways with Ben Gilman and now he works for Henry Hagg. Jerry Adams said I'm not going to go because this is my testimony and this hearing will just be used to undercut the peace process in Northern Ireland, and number two, to build support for a Colombia policy when perhaps less support is needed. To Mackey's surprise a lot of Republican congressmen as well as Democrats live in states where a lot of Irish people said, you know, I don't believe a word of it. He got caught between two big currents, the peace in Ireland group and the Colombia thing. That's the kind of thing that still goes on, the sort of presentation of bogus exaggerated papers, the Colombia policy as I've seen it since I've left. Colombia has been through several stages. First it was the Marxists were going to take over, and nobody believed that. Then it was this and then it was that, we can go into that when we get into Colombia. It's kind of a joke. The Department, what do you do? You've got an administration, you're an assistant secretary, and you're named by the president, you're supposed to support that. It's worth your life as it was; as it literally cost Tom Enders his job to say wait a minute, some of this stuff just doesn't make any sense. There's no, we don't have anything to bear this out. Why did it happen in ARA? Because ARA is not really very important to the United States. That's the truth, it's never been terribly important except during World War II when we wanted to deny the Nazis access to the resources.

Q: Even there, I mean, the supply lines were so tenuous.

FRECHETTE: Well, still in all, every little bit helped, I mean we were fighting for our lives, at least that was the perception, and if you look back on World War II history, things were not too great at certain times. Nazi wolf packs operating right within our territorial waters in the Gulf Coast and all up and down the East Coast, and sinking ships. We didn't know what the outcome was. We were scared and so on and so forth. In any event, this kind of thing that happened in ARA I think has lead to a situation where now, and I mean no disrespect to the officers, it's not a very distinguished core of senior people. I mean you take a look at people who have been sent up, an ambassador to Chile who was going to go to Nicaragua and then got unhorsed because of some problem in his background, and some of the others who were going to some of the other places. We're talking about Lilliputians, we're not talking about anybody who can sort of sit up in front of a congressman and say, look, congressman, here is what we know, and this is what's been happening, and this is what I think ought to happen. I think it's terrible.

Q: So we'll move to the Cameroons. How did this come about? Just get you the hell out, or?

FRECHETTE: Yes, to tell you the truth. When the Cuban American National Foundation told Tom Enders to get me out of Cuba he first made me a deputy assistant secretary. That infuriated them and they went to the White House. Then the White House said from now on all deputy assistant secretaries must be approved by the White House, and so then the question was what to do with Myles Frechette. There were some good and honest people in the Department. There was Eagleburger, there was Tom Enders and there was Ken Dam although he was a political appointee and is now at Treasury. They literally went to the president and they said, you know, this guy doesn't deserve this. He's done a hell of a job on Cuba. Okay, Cuban American National Foundation doesn't agree with it and that's fine, we understand you want some other guy that appears more tough. In the end they didn't get one.

Q: Who took your place?

FRECHETTE: You know, I can't recall, but it was kind of a fiasco. I mean the Cuban Americans sort of said, well, Frechette's gone, but then nothing happened. Basically the White House said to them, as they have recently under Bush II, just keep your mouth shut, okay? You got what you want, we put in Cuban Americans and that's it, back off. We've got a country to run here and we're not going to invade Cuba and that's that. That's what happened recently under Bush II. I mean they had sort of a stern meeting at the White House to sort of say, we've given you your guys, that's it. Anyway, that's all there was. In a sense, just to show you how symbolic all this is, then it goes back to that article that we published in the Foreign Service Journal. The victory of the Cuban Americans was having dislodged me. Big deal. It was pathetic. It really is. Of course they wanted me fired, but they learned the grim truth that there was no reason to fire me under the rules of the State Department. So, even President Reagan, who you might have thought would have agreed with some of this red-hot lava from lower Florida, said, wait a

minute. Let's do something good for the guy. I want him to have an embassy. So, the Department came to me and they said you can have your embassy and once more, but it can't be in Latin America. What's more within limits you can pick it. So, I looked at several places in Africa. They were not in the south of Africa. I looked at them and some of these were countries with no natural resources at all, no food, no nothing, and I sort of looked at Cameroon. I thought here is a country with a good agriculture sector that can feed its own people, they can export, we've got an aid program, we've got a Peace Corps program, these are things I can do. You've got the first president elected since the first generation of leadership. Cameroon looked like a good place to me for all of those reasons. I said, well, can you get me Cameroon. I don't know how it goes, the pigeon flying off to the White House, but the answer came back, yes, to Cameroon, to the discomfiture of the AF bureau who had its own candidate, but that was that. A presidential decision, and off I went and I had a hell of a time. I had a wonderful time.

Q: You were there from '83 to '87?

FRECHETTE: Yes, four years.

Q: A long time. Tell me.

FRECHETTE: I was extended by President Reagan personally, again to the discomfiture of Frank Wisner who was with me at the meeting. When I finished my three years I was working with President Paul Biya. He and I were great pals. He had some proclivities for human rights violations, but we were doing very well with our aid programs. I had shifted the mover, I had gotten rid of a lot of useless programs, I built up the aid program, and I built up the Peace Corps. We were doing very well and I was having a wonderful time. Then I kept saying, how about President Biya coming to the White House? I mean here's a guy who is doing things right and has a real possibility, and nothing was happening. So, eventually I was in town on consultations and I asked to see the Secretary, but the Secretary was busy, but he said go see the other guy, an assistant, Charlie something or other.

Q: Hill?

FRECHETTE: Charlie Hill. He was very kind. He was very understanding. I said for all these reasons you've got to do something. He said, I'll tell you what, the Secretary is going to the front line states and on the way back I will recommend he stop at Cameroon. I'll be God damned if he didn't. Shultz was just the greatest guy who I could recall. I had never worked closely with the Secretary of State. He basically agreed that he would go in and talk to President Biya alone, leaving Hank Cohen who was the assistant secretary, and a whole bunch of straphangers who had come on this huge plane. I mean this was a huge plane with people from every agency imaginable except possibly the battlefield monuments commission. I mean everybody was there. Obviously I could tell that Hank and others were really disturbed because they had wanted to be in on this meeting with President Biya, but I was the interpreter and that was it. Out of this came a visit to Washington February of 1986. It was a great success thanks to Secretary Shultz. The

secretary of defense had agreed to receive him, and he agreed also to my recommendation, but since the French always greet African heads of state, you know, marching on the Champs Elysees and black cars. Why didn't we have the colonial troops and a small group of guys greet him at the Pentagon, which happened, and it was a huge success. I mean the TV footage that went back and so on. For several years after that the Pentagon did that with the African heads of state, great stuff. Anyway, it was a great visit and Shultz was marvelous. Afterwards we had dinner at the State Department, and he took him up to the Lincoln Memorial. It was colder than hell. It was colder than the President had ever been in his life, although he had studied in Paris. This was cold. It was a great, great visit.

Then the next day, Rawhide, the president, Rawhide was his code name with the Secret Service, met with President Reagan, and they went off in a corner and they chit chatted. They had an interpreter who was hired from the State Department. I walked down a respectful distance behind the president, left and then President Reagan turned around and said, "You know, he says you're the best ambassador he's ever had. He really likes you. I want you to stay another year." Frank Wisner was just dumbstruck. He was just sort of like that. "Will you go back for me?" Well, what do you say to that? "Sure, thank you Mr. President." There was hell to pay. I mean not only had I gone to AF imposed by the White House, but Allan Wendt who was supposed to be the next guy following, was discomforted, and he eventually never did get to Africa. He got a post in Europe with an ambassadorial title.

Q: Slovenia, wasn't it?

FRECHETTE: I'm not sure. In any event, back I went and I found it a very disorienting job to go back to Cameroon for another year.

Q: Well, let's go back. In the first place, before you went out, one, what about your reception in AF? I mean this.

FRECHETTE: With the exception of what was his name, Bishop? Jim Bishop could not conceal his discomfiture; however, the assistant secretary, what was his name, he was an academic from Georgetown? He was very much involved with the front line states and worked on Angola and so on. He was an academic guy.

Q: Chet Crocker.

FRECHETTE: Yes, Chet Crocker was wonderful, no problem. In fact later, he asked me to go to Angola and I agreed, but it just didn't work out. I forget what happened, because I speak Portuguese, and Angola was important. He liked what I had done. But Jim Bishop just could not conceal his discomfiture and I said, well, you know Jim, I speak French, practically bilingual, and I'm sure that Cameroon is not so difficult. I've served in Chad and grumble, grumble. Then picking my DCM, he had his favorite and I didn't pick that guy simply because I couldn't stand him. Why would you pick a guy that you just can't stand to be your DCM? I mean, that's why you get to pick your guys. Jim Bishop played

an interesting role. Chet Crocker cared about the front line states and nothing else in Africa. I don't mean to say this in a pejorative way. The front line states were his priority, he worked for years.

Q: That was always the big game.

FRECHETTE: It was the big game, and you've got to hand it to him. Here was a guy outside the State Department who really believed this could be done, and he pulled it off, too. Many of the State Department guys in AF never though he could do it, but the guy just kept chipping away and chipping away and he was not a fool. He could defend his positions and he did so very carefully. I still know Chet Crocker. He's invited me to Georgetown and so on, but you know, I found that I followed Hume Horan, and I found that Hume didn't give a tinker's damn about Cameroon. Hume used his time in Cameroon to learn German. Of course Cameroon at the time didn't offer much. We had these aid programs. Hume wasn't interested in those things. I took a look at the aid program, and they got 113 projects, and it was $13 million. The result was we had absolutely no clout because some of them were $25,000 or $100,000, and I said that's got to end. We'll consolidate these and put them in something where we have some say. What is it we're doing here anyway? I mean 113 projects, that's silly. We're all over the map. We're just basically funding little things that different ministers want. So, I changed that over to something like ten programs, and then we grew the aid program to $39 million. We were very focused on the agricultural college and a couple of other small projects, and that was it, but we had real clout.

Then I embarked on a very big effort to get American businessmen in there to bid on contracts and to do investments. I did get one company before it was sold to the French to come in and invest in bananas. We beat out the French several times on telecommunications contracts, and the French always won them back by buying off the ministers. In one particular case I asked for help from the CIA when we discovered that what the French had done was they'd find some retired sergeant and they gave him an apartment on the Champs Elysees. Well, the sergeant didn't want to live there, didn't have the money to maintain it. He in fact was a front for the minister of industry in Cameroon who was in fact the real owner, and turned the whole thing upside down. There were problems in Cameroon obviously tensions between the English speakers and the French speakers. I will never forget some of the encounters I had with the English speakers and the French speakers because it is really remarkable. When the French and the British came in 1917 to take over Cameroon from the Germans, they divided it as sort of a big cake cutter. They ran it in English and in French. That became the official language even though in my time in Cameroon, German was still a very popular language. There were German drinking clubs, German singing clubs, and I remember that in 1984 it was the centenary of the German takeover of Cameroon. They came in in 1884. I'll be damned if the government of Cameroon didn't decide to celebrate the centenary. I went to see President Biya and said this is crazy, its colonialism. He said, oh, no, they brought everything to this country. They made the railroad from Douala to Yaounde. They created the capital in Yaounde, which was above malaria. He said Cameroonians always admired the Germans because when the Germans say something they do it.

They're not fliberty giberty guys like the French and the British who say they're going to do things and don't do it. Extraordinary.

I went to the see the West German ambassador. I said, what's happening here, it's crazy. He was beside himself. He said, I can't believe it, colonialism. This was a guy who spent most of his time in Cameroon coaching Cameroonian soccer teams because he was a great soccer player. Well, then it got even worse. The East German ambassador went in to see the foreign minister and he said, well, wait a minute here; we're Germans, too. We want to participate. Well, the East Germans and the West Germans, but the truth is they had a hell of a celebration. It was an interesting thing to see these attitudes. Human rights was a problem. The occultation of the English speaking Cameroonians and the French speaking Cameroonians was remarkable. You had tribal groups that had been split, partially English, partially French, and when they were among themselves they appeared to be the same people and they spoke the same tribal language. 240 tribal languages in Cameroon. But when they spoke English these guys sounded very much like Britishers. They were all feisty and they wanted to debate in their parliament and they were very straightforward, and the guys who spoke French were much more discrete. I remember some heads of the large groups of English speakers said, Mr. Ambassador, we Anglo Saxons have to stick together here, you know we expect you to defend our interests. We're getting swamped by these frogs, as they called their French speaking colony and tribal brothers. Of course I had to explain that I was not the ambassador to the English speaking Cameroonians, but to all Cameroonians. I wanted to help everybody. Anyway, those were some of the memories that I have from Cameroon, but we did very well in the agricultural area.

Q: Let's talk about the government there first. What was the government like when you arrived?

FRECHETTE: It was, how shall I say, run sort of like the French. You'd have protocol, very stiff, you know, everybody had a secretary general. It was all congested with protocol and procedure and people and so on. I quickly tried to break through that to make relationships with the ministers, which was possible. Of course we had a coup and out of the coup I became a great friend of the president.

The ministers. The ministers were by and large well educated, and there were a few English speakers. There were even a few women. One was head of education, and the joke among the English speaking Cameroonians, was "Tank you, Tank you", it was a joke on her name, but she was a big woman and very bright. She had been educated in France. The minister of health was an English trained doctor and a kind of guy that you would go to for assistance. A fine guy. But there were also some well educated but hacks, and people who were deeply corrupted. There was one guy who was very powerful in the party, who was the foreign minister, whose name was William Aurélien Eteki Mboumoua, a very wise guy with plenty of experience, but he was an alcoholic. I can recall going with my first DCM to see him one time, and we had some approach to make, and we sat down there and the minister received us. It was 11:00 am and lunch was about 1:00. We sat down in his office and he's obviously had at least one bottle of champagne

before he received us. In the middle of one conversation he was sitting there talking to us and pretty soon his eyes closed and he just rolled over onto his side on the couch, fast asleep. Bill and I sort of looked at each other. What the hell do you do? So, we sat there for about, I'd say, three minutes. He was snoring away. He was having a wonderful time. I walked out and closed the door very quietly, and I said, here's my card, when the minister can receive me I'd like to come up again and present my demarche. Well, I no sooner got back to the embassy and there was a very flustered call on the phone sort of saying that he'd been feeling poorly and that he'd had a fainting spell. Nothing of the kind. He was just in a drunken stupor. Smart guy, but I think the thing that really struck me about the ministers was the tremendous corruption and the influence of the French through that corruption. My first experience, my first reaction, was to say competent ministers, well educated, but an ineffective government because of the corruption.

Q: On the corruption, where was the corruption coming from?

FRECHETTE: The French largely. I mean they would pay these guys off to influence decisions, toward some French companies or to influence decisions along the way that Paris thought best about Yaounde. They paid these guys off. It became very clear to me that this was a prosperous, in pejorative terms, African country, and the French wanted all the loot they could get out of the place. I mean they weren't stripping the place, but if there was anything to be done, anything to be gained, any contract, they wanted it.

Q: This came from the government?

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes. You remember you had the French still running Africa, and then eventually you got the son of the president.

Q: Mitterrand's son.

FRECHETTE: Yes, Mitterrand's son, yes, who has now been convicted now I guess.

Q: Well, he's been in and out.

FRECHETTE: Anyway, that was very discouraging, but then things changed for me. In April of 1984, I hadn't been even there a year, there was a coup. The palace guards who were all from the north, Muslims from the north, revolted against the regime. The president was living in this fantastic pleasure palace, designed by a Moroccan Jew it turns out, but built by a French contractor. It was a grand palace, I mean huge, for a place like Cameroon. It seemed totally inappropriate. There was a bunker, and the coup attempt took off, and the president took his wife and son down in the bunker and locked himself in. The palace guard couldn't get in there no matter what, and then of course the army was able to rally and begin to attack them. So, the coup lasted about a day and a half. Of course I left Barbara at the house and I collected all the women, there were some women who were single women, some women whose husbands were out of the country, at the residence. Barbara took care of them. There was sort of a communal kitchen. People slept in the residence. I felt that was safer to have them. I and a few key people stayed at the

embassy and small groups, loyal government troops, sort of circled around us and exchanged a few shots, but we were not really in any great danger. When it was over the shooting had died down, and it was pretty clear that the coup was over. I thought to myself I've got to talk to President Biya. He had once given me his private number, and I just dialed it. A voice came on and I said, this is Ambassador Frechette and I'd like to speak to the president. There was a sort of astonishment on the other end and a silence. Then the president came on. I said Mr. President, congratulations, this is Myles Frechette, etc. I'm delighted you survived. I'd like to come and see you. He said, oh, I'm delighted. I'll chill some champagne. So, off I went to the presidential palace and we had a four hour conversation. I was the first ambassador to see him. He gave me a full account of the whole thing, and I tried to keep it all in my mind. We drank champagne like it was going out of style. The palace was all dark because they had destroyed the distribution center where the power came in.

Q: Generator?

FRECHETTE: No, they had a generator later, which put on a few essential lights, but essentially most of the palace was in darkness. I had a funny experience going out of the palace. Oh, but in the conversation he said, look, what do I do now? I said, I think it's very simple. You have been rescued by an army, which is made up of people from all over Cameroon, and you have defeated a regional group that tried to take you over. I said, I recommend that in the future all the police, your army, everybody, all these be made up of people from all over the country so that no one single group can dominate. I said, you must make a speech tonight to the Cameroonian people saying that this dreadful interruption in democracy has been overturned by all the ethnic groups in Cameroon represented by your army. He said, yes, I think that's a good idea. Absolutely, you've got to do it and you've got to do it tonight. Please pay attention to me, it will work. God damned if he didn't do it. It was a huge success. After that he said, well, you're my best political advisor, and so I used to get in on conversations in which he'd ask my opinion about how to deal with internal stuff which I didn't have a clue of the cross currents, political, tribal whatever, but I did my best. The short end of this story is I ended up in a much strengthened position after the coup. I was able basically to derail some of the efforts by some of the ministers to get around or not deal with us at the embassy. This of course led to great tension with the French ambassador.

Q: Let's talk about that the French connection. Were the French behind the coup at all?

FRECHETTE: No, not at all. This was these guys up in the north, all Muslims. The president had been exemplary. He held elections. He was the first of the original generation of African leaders. The elections were held, Paul Biya won with 70% of the vote. It was like a fairly tale.

Q: Is Ahmadou Ahidjo still there?

FRECHETTE: Yes, but living up in the north. I don't think he had much to do with this. Frankly, I just think it was that those guys in the palace guard probably represented the

interests of people from that part of the country who saw their influence waning and decided what the hell is this, we'll take it over, and it didn't work. We had nothing to do with it. I don't think the French had anything to do with it. On the contrary, a lot of people from the French embassy came over to tell us how much they admired the way we handled it and how much they admired the way that I and Barbara had personally take care of our staff. The French ambassador had locked himself in his place and wouldn't talk to anybody. The Canadians also, in Cameroon, got after their ambassador on the same grounds. It didn't improve our relations with the French ambassador. He was always a sort of distant guy anyway. It didn't stop the corruption, but it did put us in a place to have some real influence for a couple of years.

Q: Did President Biya have a problem with the French do you think? I mean if the French were calling things or not?

FRECHETTE: No, I think that Biya had been properly influenced. He had been influenced by his visit to Paris and his studies there. He really thought that the French were sort of the cat's meow and that was the way that one behaved. He and his wife did their best to behave like French people although they could speak English. I think after the coup something went out of Biya's heart, and he began to oppress the human rights of dissenters, and he probably reached a conclusion, and he became more African. He became less French and more African, in a sense saying these guys, these Muslims up in the north, they were out to do me in and I'm not going to put up with it. As soon as my secret service tells me about something I'll put it down. That became sort of the daily stuff of our conversations. I made many demarches on this issue, and it became so bad under my successor, Frances Cook, it couldn't have been worse. Frances and her successor, Harriet Winsar Isom. The Africans used to call her Mademoiselle Grande because she was so damned tall, two meters tall. She had come into the Foreign Service along with me. Things have never been the same in Cameroon. I mean human rights continue to be a problem. It's better than it was in those days. President Biya has perpetuated himself in power instead of sort of pushing along other people in his party to take over and moving aside. He's still the president. He governs, I think, in a very French kind of a way, very stiff, and it's just not the fun it was. It's just not the country that we used to admire back in the '80s.

Q: You say with human rights, how did this work? How would you find out about the problems and how would you deal with them?

FRECHETTE: Oh, sure. You could find out, it was all over town. I had a relatively good staff in Cameroon. I had a good political section, a good economic section, a big aid mission, a huge aid mission, and it was not hard for us to pick up information about people being held. There were leaks, and people used to bring us information. That's how we did it. Of course the whole idea was to try and stop the torture and stop the detentions and all this sort of stuff. I used to go to see the ministers and I'd go to see President Biya. I'd say, look, we understand so and so. He'd say, no, that guy's not under detention. I'd say, Mr. President, let me tell you where he is, and he's been there for 45 days, and they've been beating him constantly, and I really think you ought to investigate that and

have the people who are doing this put a stop to it, knowing full well that he probably said beat the crap out of that guy and teach him some manners. It got much worse after I left. I could appeal to him and things would happen, and after I left it wouldn't happen.

We had a subtext, which was reestablish better relations with Israel. The Israelis at the time felt very isolated in the world, and they wanted very much to get into Africa. They used a lot of Moroccan Jews who were French citizens to maintain contact. The architect who did the national palace was a Moroccans Jew. All of a sudden, Washington, in one of my consultations, said your job is to get Cameroon to reestablish relations, and there is going to be a guy in the Belgian embassy who will represent Israeli interests. Work with him. He was born in France, a nice guy. His wife and we used to talk, and he would come over once a week, and we'd spend hours talking about their view of things. I was struck by this sort of manic-depressive attitude of the secretary general of the foreign ministry, a guy called David Kimche. David had a brother, Jon Kimche, who was at Columbia for many years, and he wrote a famous book about the Middle East called There Could Have Been Peace. This guy, David, was brilliant. I gather he was real brains, retired now. He used to send cables of his impression, and one week he was being glorious, and gee we're going to break out of our isolation, we're going to have relations with everybody. The next week he was down in the dumps, you know, we're not getting anywhere. He was just up and down. I was struck by the manic-depressive aspect of all this. We used to sit and chat, and you know, he was always pushing me. I used to go and push the president and eventually it worked. They reestablished relations, but with a lot of hugger mugger and funny strange people sort of coming in and out of the woodwork on all of this.

I remember the Pope came to visit, and I was in the line receiving him behind the Brazilian ambassador because he had arrived before me. The Brazilian ambassador and I were pals. We spoke Portuguese and I'll be damned if we were talking Portuguese and then the Pope heard nuncio and he began to talk Portuguese to the both of us. I was a good friend of the papal nuncio; a Monsignor who despite his name, odd name, was a really good guy. I used to help him take money to the cardinal in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, because you know the dictator was very hard on the Catholic Church and knew that the church did not agree with him. Well, he was a murderer. He used to invite his political opposition to his palace, and they'd go up to his private rooms up on the second or third floor and he'd throw them off the God damn window and kill them. I used to help the nuncio when I visited Malabo, which wasn't very frequently, because in Hume's time Equatorial Guinea had been part of the embassy in Cameroon, but at the insistence of the Spanish who felt that the communists were taking over Malabo we made it a separate place. In fact the Reagan administration. Therein lies another funny tale. You know, I used to go and see him despite the fact that he was very right wing and I was a career guy, we were sort of friends. He came over every once in a while.

Q: How did you get back and forth?

FRECHETTE: A plane. There was a flight that went over there. You know, Malabo was a bizarre place. I remember Francis Stephen Ruddy. Anyway, the post was minuscule. His wife was the PAO and we had a couple of young officers there and that was it, that

was the post. It was basically a listening post. So, he took me up to the top of this volcano, which is of course what Equatorial Guinea is. It's a volcano, and the next one is Mount Cameroon, and the next one is in Chad. So, we went up to the top, and to my astonishment there was on one side of this road a big farm where they were growing cabbages and things, and it was run by the North Koreans with all sorts of antennae arrays at their place. On the other side of the road was another place full of antennae arrays where they had a cattle operation and it was run by the South Africans. The South Africans had an outpost there in Equatorial Guinea, and we didn't know that the South Africans were sort of egging us on. It was funny. I mean you never saw anybody out in the yard on either of these farms, but there were people behind the windows watching each other with binoculars all the time. It was like a comedy. I couldn't believe it. It was delightful up there. Up there it was very cool, you could go pick raspberries and strawberries. Anyway, that was my connection with the church

Q: You were going to talk about, you said, therein lies the tale.

FRECHETTE: Yes. About Ruddy. Well, the Pope came and of course Ruddy being a strong Catholic, wanted to come over and be a part of this process. I said, look Frank I've talked to the papal minister and you know, it's not appropriate for you to meet the Pope, but you have been invited to the special box when he says mass and so on. So Frank came over and stayed at the residence. Then I was told that I was going to be one of the few Westerners who would receive communion along with the Africans and the Cameroonians. When it was my turn to go up and receive communion, Frank Ruddy got in the queue right behind me. The guy was just irrepressive. Obviously it didn't offend the Pope, but I did have a private meeting with the Pope. I said, look, you know, I'm under instructions to help these guys reestablish relations with Israel, and it's not bad for Cameroon. The Israelis do have technologies, particularly in agriculture, that would help this country a lot. These people have a future. I don't know what the Pope said, if it was a good idea. I don't know if they ever did anything, but in the end we pulled it off. There must be piles this high of my dispatches to Washington on the Israeli thing, because it was all this manic-depressive stuff. That was one of my big adventures. The other one was sort of becoming an advisor to President Biya and I was very nervous about it, too, because I just didn't know enough about local politics to really give him good advice. On many things I just recused myself. I just don't know enough about the politics.

We talked a lot about foreign affairs. We sent General Walters down to talk to President Biya and of course Walters was a God to Biya as he was to most of the African leaders at the time. They regarded Walters on a par with de Gaulle because he'd been there. Walters was a great raconteur. Of course his French was superb. He got down there and told these stories. Of course by this time I had heard all of Walters' stories about seven times. It was very hard to stay awake when Walters was recounting because it was just the same old stuff over and over again. Walters had a habit of repeating himself. He was a good guy, a friend of mine, a personal friend of mine, but when he had been military attaché in Brazil, the Brazilians called him talkie-walkie because he was always talking and it was always the same old thing. We stayed in Walters' apartment on the Champs Elysees. He was a very kind guy. When he was over at the CIA I used to have lunch with him every once in

a while. Walters was a magic sort of interlocutor for us with the African leaders. They really thought he was great.

Well, Shultz saw to it that President Biya got invited to a luncheon. We had this marvelous visit in Washington and all of the stuff I've told you about, and then the meeting between the two guys privately. When Biya said, you know, Frechette, he's my right hand, Reagan then extended me for another year. I found that extra year very difficult because I had set my goals for three years in Cameroon. I was going to do this set of things and then that would be three years. I had a chronology all set for myself. All of a sudden you come back and you've got an extra year. What the hell do you do with it? I found it very difficult to sort of gear myself up for new projects that I could approach. I did not find that fourth year great, and I've always felt that three years for an ambassador is just about right.

Q: Well, tell me, when you arrived there, you found that we had 130 or something AID projects.

FRECHETTE: Some of them were piddly.

Q: I would imagine at a large AID mission that this is not an easy battle to fight. I would like to pick up something on that.

FRECHETTE: I did have some help, and that was that I had an extraordinary AID director called Ron Levin. Ron Levin later got into big trouble because he couldn't keep his hands off of other ladies when he was made AID director in Panama. They fired him. Ron was a big believer in my idea that you had clout and you had more influence and you could do more for a country with fewer projects and more money. I had this big ally in Ron who drafted all kinds of documents for me to go back to the Department and argue for this. This led to endless meetings with the AID people in Washington about how do you want to do this, because all the vested interests were coming out. AID is full of people with special little ideas, and all of these little projects played to one interest or another. Of course it didn't add up to any influence in Cameroon. It didn't make a damn bit of difference.

There was a guy there called Mark Edelman, who had been political, a guy from Missouri always championed by Danforth and the other congressional delegation from Missouri. He had worked for AID, for USIS and the State Department and various other agencies. I finally convinced Mark that we were on the right track. Mark finally got it, and we shifted it around. It was a big, big fight.

Levin left to go to Panama because they needed a strong AID director in Panama. He was picked partially because of what he had done with me in Cameroon. A lot of this was his own idea, it was not mine, because he knew how to do it, I didn't. He knew how to work the AID bureaucracy.

You asked me who followed me, and it was Mark Edelman. Mark Edelman kind of liked

the idea of Cameroon after a while. He was a total disaster in Cameroon. He didn't like the Africans. He and his wife stayed there for one year. They locked themselves up in the residence on weekends and didn't want anything to do with the Africans at all. His wife wrote a book about some of the art objects that had been collected. I can't think of a guy who was less well suited to go to Africa, but he chose it. He chose it. As I say, total disaster. Sixteen months in Cameroon. Nobody even knew who he was, and his marriage came apart there and he got divorced, and Mark Edelman has disappeared from the face of the earth. Nobody even knows what he's doing now.

So, we concentrated on the agriculture. We had a land grant college there; it was an American type land grant college. That's where we concentrated most of our money and our efforts.

We had a terrific team from the International University of Florida. You know, what is Florida today was once a part of Africa, believe it or not, and got stuck on to the North American continent. As a result you can grow in Southern Florida many African crops and plants because the soil composition is very similar to Africa. Once you pass the point, go up into Georgia, you can't grow them. Florida has this distinctive ability to do great research on agriculture. The chunk of Florida got pasted onto and stuck onto North America. I don't know all the geology and all that stuff, but apparently it's a fact. I thought the AID mission was very strong, very dedicated people, but the biggest problem was the bureaucracy in Washington. It was absolutely entrenched. After Ron Levin, I got an AID director who was really not ready for prime time. All he wanted to do was play golf and he ended his career in Cameroon because everybody realized he just couldn't cut the mustard.

Q: How about the Peace Corps?

FRECHETTE: Well, the Peace Corps was one of my favorites. We had 169 volunteers. I visited every single one of them. Drank huge amounts of beer with the Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Good German beer?

FRECHETTE: Well, it's Cameroonian beer, it's okay. The beer in Chad is better. They had beer made by the people who make Heineken, and it's really good. The Cameroonian beer is okay; it's got a lot of formaldehyde in it so you get a terrible headache after you've drunk a lot of it. We had a guy called David Belmont who was the first director of the Peace Corps when I got there, a guy who played bluegrass and really loved the Peace Corps. He'd been with the Peace Corps from the beginning. I really liked it and they did a good, good job. Then the Reagan administration appointed a woman from China called Kathy Dress as the Peace Corps director, and she was something else again. Very into Reagan type politics. She tried to change the Peace Corps there and had some limited success, moved them into a fancier place, because Belmont was very much any old place will do. He was sort of dirty clothes and that sort of stuff. A guy who could make do with anything, and the Peace Corps volunteers liked him very much. Kathy came in and they

did not like her. She never really fit in. She was difficult, and she ended up sort of cottoning more to merchants of Greek ancestry and French ancestry, and it often caused me terrible problems, but I couldn't really chew her out too much because I knew she had all these terrific connections up at the White House. So I had to very careful. Eventually she got involved in some sort of scandal, and she had a husband here. She got connected with some guy and the word got out, and so she was eventually withdrawn after I left. In many ways despite the difficulty, she was very entrepreneurial, and she wanted very much to get the Peace Corps into some entrepreneurial activities, not just community development. On this I agreed with her, because I think that community development was a nice idea, but you know, you could spend two years as a Peace Corps volunteer doing community development and never doing a damn thing except living in some village and becoming friendly with the villagers. I wanted more stuff. I wanted to talk to the villagers about organizing themselves and doing more economically for themselves and helping themselves on. So, it was an odd alliance, but I did love the Peace Corps. Then I left. I still have a huge scroll signed by every volunteer in the bunch. Mr. Ambassador, thank you and so on. The Peace Corps was a favorite of mine. Sorry I didn't have them in Colombia. They'd been withdrawn because they were all getting killed. Both AID and the Peace Corps which were two elements that I had wanted to go to Cameron to be associated with. This turned out to be tremendously, not only successful, but satisfying to me and Barbara.

Q: Were there any of the surrounding countries, was anybody messing around there, or at a distance, the Libyans or anything like that?

FRECHETTE: No, Cameroon was quite lucky in the sense that we were below the radar screen of the Libyans and Chad. That wasn't the issue. Having said that, the Libyans had, they didn't call them embassies. They had people's bureaus and they had a people's bureau in Cameroon. We got word that they were going to try and bomb either the embassy or me and we tattled on them. They were expelled and eventually some more came back, but that was the only sort of exciting thing that really happened. There was no sort of armed opposition. There was this tremendous backing and forthing between the Anglophone Cameroonians and the Francophone Cameroonians, in which the Anglophones were trying to resist. We had a lot of AID projects in Cameroon with good reason. I mean the Cameroonians were adept. It was a place that could make use of this. We had the Chinese communists there, very active, no Taiwan. A lot of European countries had aid projects of one kind or another. We had a good detachment of Europeans there.

Q: How about the Scandinavians?

FRECHETTE: Not at all. They were not present. They were all accredited to other countries and they used to come in and ask for an appointment and of course pick your brains. They would write reports on Cameroon and I must have said the same thing to everybody in any given times. Nice guys, and some of them very capable. Some of them didn't know whether they were on foot or on horseback.

Q: I mean they were still going through this infatuation with the area, I think.

FRECHETTE: Yes. Of course, mine was sort of a golden period. I mean, Cameroon had succeeded constitutionally. Except for the coup attempt, things were looking good. Cameroon had oil. We had American oil companies and French oil companies, and they had gas. The problem was the deposits were small. They were off the coast, and just a few miles to the north off the coast of Nigeria there was lots of oil and lots of gas. But in Cameroon it was small deposits, and eventually most of those people sort of gave up because it just wasn't enough to justify more exploration, even though digging for the stuff was like duck soup. The water isn't very deep off of there, and you just go down 2,000 or 3,000 or 5,000 feet and there it is. The deposits just weren't big enough. So, mine was really a golden period in Cameroon. It was a tremendous confluence. Everything was coming up roses during my time in Cameroon except for the coup and it was rapidly downhill after that. Today, Cameroon is considered one of the most corrupt countries in the world and one of the poorest in spite of the fact they have all of this wonderful agriculture.

Q: Did the subject of South Africa come up at all?

FRECHETTE: A lot. This was the subject of many instructions from Chet Crocker, and I used to go and make the point.

Q: Did you find that you were in basic agreement with what we were trying to do?

FRECHETTE: Yes. I thought that the idea of better relations between front line states in South Africa, and of course we were against apartheid, how vigorously I don't know, but it sounded good at the time. I thought that Chet Crocker was on the right wicket and I respected him intellectually. I did my damnedest to push all the instructions that I knew came from Chet, not a lot, you know. I've always followed all my instructions, but the ones from Chet I took special care with and really made an effort to think them through and really understand the issue. Of course many of the issues that we got instructions about were UN issues which were never very clearly explained. You always sort of went in to make your demarche, sort of saying do I really understand this thing or not. I must confess that more than once the instructions we got in the field were not quite as good as they could have been. We were drowning in all these papers on the UN.

Q: Well, how did the Cameroonians respond?

FRECHETTE: Well, you know, they sort of take careful note, and I knew that they weren't going to do most of that stuff. In the areas where I felt there was some real move I would push very hard and then go see the president, because I knew that if I could get him to call it would be done.

Q: Were the French more or less calling the president there do you think?

FRECHETTE: On the UN issues?

Q: Yes.

FRECHETTE: I didn't detect that particularly. The French calling on the president was really sort of to stay as the preeminent influence in Cameroon and to get whatever money the government was spending. Of course the French were very open about it. I remember the French ambassador saying to me, look, you have $39 million, do you realize how much we give to Cameroon? We made this place. In effect he was saying we're entitled to have them spend their money in France. He said, you'd do the same thing. I mean, if you give aid you want to source it. I said, well, it's not exactly the same thing. That was their interest. It was a very commercial interest. I didn't detect anything more than that.

We had a small station, which was reduced to one person. I sort of said to their headquarters, this is ridiculous, you guys aren't doing anything, you're not contributing anything. One of the heads of their station I complained about was running around and offering embassy vehicles to help out. There was a guy there from Liberia who was an ambassador, and he was a great friend of the station chief. One day this guy was riding out there in the bush and his car broke down. The station chief ordered me to send out one of our vehicles to get the guy, you know? I said, why? He's a nice guy, but I mean, why should I spend taxpayer money? Let him hire a guy, there's lot of places here. That was their way of gaining influence, but I went to headquarters and I said, look, this is really silly. You could do without them if you want to. If you want to I will do all the connections with the government and I did, too. I went in and made all the briefings and all that sort of stuff. I'll never forget the head of the police, Connie was his name. Connie Robeaur, and he was a good guy. Every week you got a package of stuff from the CIA, which was a briefing to put him in the picture, but it was good. It was good stuff. It was a good sort of a summary. He sort of gave them a sense of where they fit into the world. This guy who lived in and was brought up in some little teeny heel in the south of Cameroon was really quite a sophisticated dude. That was all I could see. I mean we just did the weekly briefings. We really didn't have any issues to raise with them except that one about the French corruption, and that wasn't the station in Cameroon, it was the station in Paris. Of course they had the manpower to do this.

Q: I don't quite understand this apartment on Champs Elysees. What was the apartment doing?

FRECHETTE: Well, the apartment was given to the minister so he could use it whenever he was there.

Q: It was put in the name of some?

FRECHETTE: Yes, some sergeant who was the putative owner.

Q: But you've got a place to go.

FRECHETTE: Yes, and well, when he retired, those apartments are worth a hell a lot of

money. When he retired as minister he had the choice. He could sell the gosh darn thing and make a potful of money or he could retire in Paris and he'd have a very shishy place to live and with his minister's salary and one thing or another he'd do all right. He had studied in the states. He came to see me and said, Mr. Ambassador, I'm happy to say that the American bid won hands down, everything, technical and money. You're the cheapest and you're the best tick. I said, great, just what I've been telling you all along. Isn't this wonderful, let me tell Washington. It was a wonderful two weeks. We were kissing each other on the cheeks all the time. He was coming over to the house and we were having lunch and all this sort of stuff. Then one day he shows up at the house and says, I've got some very bad news. We have reevaluated this, and in fact the French offer is better. I knew that was nonsense. I said, I'm very disappointed. There was no provision for this. You didn't tell me anything about this. I mean, you understand I'm going to have to go see the president about this. This is a terrible blow to U.S.-Cameroonian relations. I played it up and practically pulled out violins and everything. He knew he was in deep trouble. I went to see the president, and he said, well, he tells me this and I don't have the capability myself to look beyond. He's been a trusted minister, etc. The French ambassador tells me that somehow or another people in the ministry didn't examine carefully enough all the technical specifications of the French offer. I mean it read defeat to me wherever I went. The French had won, and so I came back to Washington, and we put the station in Paris on it, and they discovered all this skullduggery. I came down and I told the president, I said, you know, I'm really sorry to tell you, but here it is, here's the address, it belongs to the minister. He fired the minister but it didn't get us a contract.

As I say, what I detected on the part of the French was they just wanted money.

Q: From what I gather the money sort of went to political parties and individuals.

FRECHETTE: No, it was just a gravy pot, that's all. People could dip in.

Q: Okay, this is a good place to stop.

FRECHETTE: Yes. There's more about Cameroon, if you give me a chance to chat about it.

Q: If anything more occurs.

FRECHETTE: We have some more sessions coming up.

Q: Oh yes, but we'll stop here at 1987, and what happened? Where did you go?

FRECHETTE: Yes. Okay, 1987. Well, something happened. I can tell you more about it the next time and that was the president tried to keep me there and George Vest thought I was trying to stay there. I wasn't trying to stay there, but I'll tell you that story. When I came back the Republicans were still in office, and they said, sorry, we made a deal with the Cubans. We can do whatever we wanted, but you can't go back to Latin America for anything that requires senate confirmation. There's no embassies for you in Latin

America, no assistant secretaryship, no nothing. So, I went to work for a bank in New York for a year.

Q: Leave without pay or?

FRECHETTE: Yes, leave without pay.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

***

Q: This is June 12, 2002. Myles, you want to tell me about George Vest, who at that time was director general of the Foreign Service?

FRECHETTE: Yes, well, I had been sent out to Cameroon for the standard three year tour, but I got along very well with Biya. We had been through the coup attempt together, and we really did have a good conversation and a good personal relationship.

Q: You're talking about the president there?

FRECHETTE: Yes, President Biya. In an odd way it was kind of a relief for him to have some other ambassador with whom he could talk about all sorts of things other than the French. I'd helped him after the coup. I think I may have told you that when the coup ended I called him down in his bunker and asked to see him. I was the first chief of mission to see him. We spent about four hours together talking about the coup and why it had happened and so on. I advised him to make a speech that very evening about how the coup may have taken place with some Muslim northerners. In fact troops from all over Cameroon had saved the presidency. He did. He told me and still tells me that it was the most important speech he ever made in his career. He's still president. Unfortunately, he's become something of a human rights violator with the passage of time, but at the time he was new and there was great stuff. He was the first president who had succeeded peacefully through elections from the first generation of leaders. I didn't realize this, but he really liked me and when we came to Washington in February of '96.

Q: '86.

FRECHETTE: Sorry, '86, yes. I was supposed to leave in July of '86 and the Department already had a guy called Allan Wendt all queued up to follow me. After the conversation in the White House, President Biya and Reagan went off into the corner with the interpreter and then we went downstairs to say goodbye. The president came over to me and said, "You know, that guy tells me you're the best American ambassador he's ever known and that he'd like you to stay. Would you go back to Cameroon for another year for me?" Well, what do you say, of course, Mr. President. Frank Wisner was the DAS for Africa standing there. He was absolutely dumbfounded. Frank is a hard guy to surprise, but this one, his jaw dropped. I immediately called, what was his first name, gosh. He was sort of the head DAS, but he couldn't be there, and I told him. He just had a fit and

he said, "You know, how is it possible for a foreign president to come and tell the president of the United States who is going to be the next ambassador." Anyway, Jim Bishop was his name. At the end of the fourth year, unbeknownst to me, Biya sends off his foreign minister I thought to Paris. Well, he did go to Paris, but he also shuttled off across the Atlantic, and he showed up there and asked to see Chet Crocker, who was then assistant secretary, and said, "You know, Biya wants you to leave Frechette some more." Well, that got right upstairs to George Vest, who called me up. He was very unsettled. He sort of said, "You know, I've seen cases of guys who try to stay as ambassador forever." I said, "Just a minute, George, I told you at the time that I really wasn't that keen on this extra fourth year because I had to invent a whole bunch of things to do. I'd had a three year plan. I didn't know anything about it and I want you to believe me." But he would not, and he sort of called me every other day and made it extremely uncomfortable for me. In any event, eventually I did leave, but I was really quite surprised at the suspicions in Washington. I guess trying to stay on at post is not such an uncommon occurrence. It was a surprise to me.

Q: Yes, of course one can always if they develop a good relationship particularly in smaller countries, the president, you know, is very likely to say well, keep so and so on and I'm comfortable with him or her.

FRECHETTE: If this had been the Congo and Biya had been Mobutu, it would have been done in a flash. Mobutu was a guy who had people who disliked him. Washington removed them on. You knew when Mobutu didn't like you when he gave you the order of the leper. He called you in and gave you the order of the leper, that was the goodbye sign. Just in Saudi Arabia, you know, when the Saudis didn't like an American ambassador they gave him a sort of trinket and sent the word through Prince Bandar here that so and so should be removed, and we removed him. But Cameroon wasn't important enough. Frankly, I've got to tell you, three years is about ideal in my view for an ambassador. The first year you're learning the ropes and the people, and the second year you're really sort of hitting on all cylinders, and the third year you're finishing up your projects. I think it's time to go myself. I think staying too long can wear you down. Circumstances change, the enthusiasm and the drive you had when you got there sort of go. Many of the problems that you can't solve are there like a boil.

Q: Then there's the local problem of localitis. You understand the problems too well and you begin to.

FRECHETTE: So you start lecturing Washington.

Q: Well, then okay, '87.

FRECHETTE: I came back and they said well there's no chief of mission for you in South America because you offended the Cuban Americans, so what do we do? At that point President Reagan had a program called the PEEP, Presidential Executive Exchange Program. It had been a program started by President Johnson. Not at the ambassadorial level, but somewhere between political counselor and DCM. You would go off and work

in the private sector, and the private sector would pay you your government salary. You would be on leave without pay. Reagan took it over, and he had some woman from out where he was from in California, a big Republican operator, who ran this thing. She cranked it up. We had about 50 guys. She actually did it two ways. She brought guys in from the private sector to work in government, which caused tremendous difficulties because the rule was, you could only be paid a government salary. Of course some of these guys in private enterprise thought that was small change. In the end, I'm sorry to say, a couple of years later, toward the end of the Reagan presidency, people accused her of exceeding the speed limit and spending money that had not been allocated for the program. The program was ended by Bush because he simply did not want the embarrassment.

In any event, they sent out feelers to people and Manny Hanny said, you know we could really use a guy who knows the developing world at least Africa and Latin America. So, they called me up and said, we'd love to have you in, doing debt equity swaps. Off I went to New York for a year and I loved it. I learned about banking. I was not a banking officer because that's a special category. I could only consult. I lived there for a year. We went into debt to do it because I had an allowance with the Department, which was $18,000 for housing, and I spent every nickel of it. I had an apartment about the size of this room with a pull down bed. They call them studios up there. I lived only 15 minutes walking distance from the bank. I learned a lot about banking. They sent me all over the world. I went to Russia. I went to Poland. I went to several African countries, not Cameroon. I refused myself on that. It was a wonderful experience.

Q: Now which bank was this?

FRECHETTE: Manufacturers Hanover Trust, which was then taken over by Chase, which has now been sort of bought into J.P. Morgan.

Q: Did you see were they looking at countries with quite a different eye?

FRECHETTE: It was a totally different situation. What you were trying to do was to pick countries that had a lot of debt and try to exchange that debt somehow for some equity. You'd write it down in effect and say okay, you know, give you fifty cents on the dollar for this, and people would accept that fifty cents on the dollar. This meant still some flow of money into these countries. A kind of a complicated thing, but there were some industries in which it worked very well. Tourism, for example. We did debt equity swaps in Mexico and financed a lot of the Cancun tourism facilities. A lot of those big hotels were all financed by debt equity conversions. They sent me to Africa. I went to Senegal several times. We were trying very hard, but the Senegalese kept sticking their hand out for a handout so we just couldn't do it. I liked it. One of the things that I learned was the disdain that the banking sector has in New York for the State Department. I'd be there in a meeting, probably everybody in the banking international sector, 50 people. These are bankers. I'm the only guy who isn't, and I said, well, you know, country X, I know the president, I know this, and I think it's a good thing. I think that they will do it, and for whatever it's worth I'm in favor of. There would be sort of general laughter. You know,

it's one of these State Department guys who like countries. We've got to be hardheaded about this. Are they going to pay or not, that sort of thing. In a way it was helpful because you realize some of the stuff we handle as political officers, because I was a political officer. This business about it's a good regime, doesn't mean a thing, doesn't mean squat, nothing. What they want to know is the bottom line, and they were very dispassionate. They generally tended to discount whatever the State Department told me. I said, well, if that's the case, if you people have such little regard, why in the world do you send people down to the State Department to consult when you're going to do a big deal with country X? Well, that's called due diligence. Due diligence means you consult with absolutely everybody who's got anything to do with it to make sure you're not going to do a bad deal. It was an interesting event.

Q: I'm not sure of the timing of this, but these banks got themselves into tremendous debts by their great analysis of the situation. How the hell did they get themselves into these tremendous debts, which became a burden for the whole third world and for the Untied States and others?

FRECHETTE: Well, it was good business. There was a time in history when the idea was lend, lend. All the other banks figured if we don't lend, we're going to be left out here. There was a certain amount of that sheik-like mentality. It was always the feeling that somehow or other, despite the disdain they have for the U.S. government, that somehow the U.S. government was going to force it. You know, you have that situation right now with Argentina. It's really interesting because the banks up in New York stand to lose a lot of money; I mean billions of dollars in Argentina. The Bank of Boston, Citibank, several billion dollars down in Argentina. They're running around sort of saying, do something, do something. Admitting all the while that the president is corrupt, admitting that he has still not come up with a plan that will stop the provinces in Argentina spending money without control of the central government. Banks have a very special attitude towards these things, and they don't really care very much about foreign policy. It's the bottom line. That was one of the things I learned up there. Sometimes we think that we do these marvelous analyses down in the State Department, and people listen to us. Well, they listen to you about 5% and that's where it ends up in the mix. I can tell you that because I do consulting now with companies that want to know, not country risk, because I'm not a country risk analyst, but sort of political risk, and they don't want any pie in the sky stuff, no I trust the sky, no, no, very cold. In fact they have to learn to do that, but it's a very different kind of thing than we do in the State Department. Maybe EB does it, but I've never worked in EB.

Q: That's the Economic Business Bureau.

FRECHETTE: Yes. There is a dramatic difference, and I learned that at Manny Hanny, and I enjoyed it. I also learned that private enterprise is every bit as inefficient as government and sometimes more. It takes forever to make decisions, and some of the people you meet working in private industry frankly are quite mediocre compared to the Foreign Service. As I look back on Manny Hanny, the people that I worked with up through the senior vice president level were, with few exceptions, sort of disappointing

when you stack them up against Foreign Service officers in terms of general background and moxy.

Q: Well, then, so you were doing this from '87 to '88 about. Was anything perking for you back in?

FRECHETTE: Not with respect to Latin America. Latin America was dead. By then it was Bush. By then, in '88, wasn't it?

Q: He came in in '89.

FRECHETTE: '89. Okay. By then the Bush people had made clear also that they were going to respect this Cuban American thing, so really after the bank there was really nothing. Harry Shlaudeman, who was ambassador in several countries and assistant secretary and for whom I had worked on Peru, kind of saved my bacon because he called me up and he said, "You know a lot about Brazil and I'd like you go to Rio as consul general." I said, "I don't think it's ever a good idea to go back to a place where you'd served." I'd served in Rio back in the mid-'70s. A day later he called me up and said, "How about Sao Paulo?" I said, "Fine." Off I went to Sao Paulo. As it turned out it was a three year assignment, and it turned out to be only two, and I loved Sao Paulo. It was a huge place, terrific food, the best restaurants in Brazil are there, lots of culture, all the music from Brazil and all the great actors, singers and performers in Brazil went to Sao Paulo. It was the sort of New York. It was also the heart of the military-industrial complex. They were making airplanes and all this stuff. During the Iran and Iraq War they had made rockets and stuff. It was a big and exciting place with sort of tawdry politics. As I described earlier when we were talking about my assignment to Rio, the jealousy at the embassy. We had a consulate general station right in the middle of the banking business, right in the middle of the military-industrial complex, right in the middle of where a lot of human rights violations had taken place years before. It caused a lot of jealousy. Once again the ambassador was always saying, you can't send messages directly to Washington, even on very simple things. It's got to come through the embassy and we'll give it a chop. Then of course they'd let it sit sometimes a week or even two. Just to show you who's boss.

I had an ambassador by the name of Rick Melton, who really was in over his head in Brazil. He had been ambassador to Nicaragua in the Reagan years, and the Nicaraguans had PNGed him. The Reagan administration said, no tin pot lefties are going to PNG one of our guys, so they sent him to Brazil, which was a shame. He wasn't ready for Brazil. It was over his head. It was an undistinguished embassy. It didn't do much, I thought, for U.S.-Brazilian relations, but that gives you some sense of what they thought about Brazil at that time in Washington. They didn't.

Q: When you got out to Sao Paulo in 1988 where you were until 1990, how would you describe the state of relations between Brazil and the United States?

FRECHETTE: We were not in the deep freeze that occurred in the '70s. We put a lot of

pressure on Brazil in the '70s on human rights and getting rid of the nuclear program. That brought an immediate chill to the relations between the U.S. and Brazil. The Brazilians kicked out our drunk Brazilian-U.S. military commission that had operated in Rio since World War II, and things were really very distant. When I got to Brazil, to Sao Paulo, we were still in the falling out period. Brasilia still had a lot of influence, with the national security agency of Brazil. The military was still very strong, made a beeline for all of the local military commanders to get to see them and get their views. These guys had a lot of influence in Brasilia. It was a period also in which the Brazilian private sector was beginning to look around and beginning to wonder about greater exports, and they were very protectionist. One of my jobs was to point out to them that they really had to open up, had to get rid of a lot of this protection for their own good. It was a consistent refrain. They didn't like it; many of those Brazilian businessmen, because they didn't like the idea that the U.S. should be telling them this sort of stuff. Intellectual property was one of the big issues that I raised constantly. At the time, for example, the Brazilians had decreed no computers from abroad. Everything would be built in Brazil. Well, the result was Brazilian businesses were operating with sort of tenth rate computers compared to what they could have bought from the United States or Europeans or whatever, and they've had sort of a record of doing that.

I must say many of the things that I pushed for in Sao Paulo and later at USTR have now been adopted by Brazil. In fact every time I see some of the people I used to deal with, they say, well, you know you used to tell us to do this, we've done it. There is a consciousness in Brazil that they've got to move along that line, but at a certain pace. They don't want any tutelage from the United States.

Q: Was anybody within our organization looking at this and seeing that their protectionist business was paralleling that of India, which at time was worse, too. I mean essentially impeded the country, because we're moving into a different era.

FRECHETTE: Sure. Well, you know, it's funny that you should raise that because Brazilians are always talking about their size. I was born in Chile, and the Brazilians never tired of telling me that Chile was smaller than one of their states. Chile has only 13 million people. Then they used to talk about the size of Brazil. I used to take a jab at them by saying, well, 150 million people, I mean, good heavens, the size of the middle class alone in India is 150 to 200 million people, which was true at the time. It's bigger now. They were always out there telling me Brazil really makes a difference. You know, it's interesting, things have not changed that much. Brazil still only exports about 10% of its GDP, so exporters, and for that matter a free trade agreement with the Americas, is less important for Brazil than it is for many other countries. Eventually they're going to have to move there, and they know that, but you have that situation. If I may, since you brought in India, I met a lot of businessmen who did business in Brazil and later were transferred to India or vice versa. In Brazil, for example, Whirlpool made what they called a world washer. It was a very simple, but very effective washer and they also produced it in India for the Asian market, Brazil for the Latin America market. What they discovered was there was much less acceptance despite the huge size of the Indian population, the huge size of the middle class, there was much less acceptance for things

like washers and that sort of stuff, because in India labor was dirt cheap and you could hire a guy for peanuts to wash your laundry for you. You didn't have to buy a highfalutin washing machine and make sure that you had enough pressure in your pipes and all that stuff. Not only washing machines, but other sorts of things that are sold to the middle class increasingly in a place like Brazil, still in India don't have quite the acceptance, because there is still this idea of employing people who earn next to nothing. It's one of the problems. Things have changed so incredibly since my time in Sao Paulo. India now is very big in computers and software because they speak the language, and it's really moving by leaps and bounds. You can call some company about your software and a lady will answer, and she will answer as thought she's an American. She'll have an American name, but if you probe, she may well confess to you she's actually in a city in India, and she's been given an American identity and stuff like that, but that's happening everywhere. The Indians happen to have a lot of graduate engineers and very good quality, and they speak English, a big leg up over everybody.

Q: Now, in Brazil, a major thing was of course looking at industry. I mean this is really the beginning of the age that you're talking about now, the internationalization, the fact that borders don't mean an awful lot, particularly when you're talking about the communications age and so much dependence on knowledge moving around. Did you find that the universities were preparing people to enter this?

FRECHETTE: Absolutely. Look, the University of Sao Paulo had in 1989 60,000 students. It had something like 10,000 teachers. It had a physics and a nuclear physics department that rivaled anything in the United States or in Western Europe. I mean these people were cooking with gas. I left Brazil and went to USTR. When I was in Sao Paulo, there were very few people in the Brazilian Foreign Service who knew anything about trade issues. Trade issues had always been, as in the American Foreign Service, sort of something that was secondary. By God, you know by 1993 the Brazilians had really pulled up their socks. They had sent many of their diplomats to study trade issues in Europe and in the United States, and they're first class negotiators. They're moving right along despite the fact they're really not ready to be integrated the way other countries are. No, don't ever underestimate them. A tremendous pool of very bright, young people, very well educated. Brazil has never been a country that has been close to the United States. I mean we always talk about it, we're both continental countries, we both have integrated societies, although in Brazil, let me clue you, if you're black you're far worse off than you are in the United States.

Q: I've heard this again and again.

FRECHETTE: Just look at a graduating class of the Brazilian army college, the Brazilian air force college and the Brazilian naval college. You may find one black as a graduating officer in the naval academy, which is traditionally the whitest of all the academies throughout Latin America. You may find three in the air force, and you'll find ten in the army. It gives you some sense of the social stratification that they come from. Brazilians are excellent linguists, except the one language they often have trouble with is English. They have a very strong accent. When a Brazilian says you're very well informed Mr.

Ambassador, it usually comes out, you're very well informed (not clearly said), but yet, catch them talking Russian or French, they're fantastic. They're almost bilingual in Spanish.

Q: There used to be the saying that was butted around that Brazil is the powerhouse of the future and always will be.

FRECHETTE: Well, there's something to that. As I said, Brazil always looked to Europe, not to the United States. I mean we were there, we're in the same region. But, like Argentina and Chile, it was always Europe up until World War II, that was the major orientation. World War II was a really an exception. It broke the links, and South America had to do business with the United States, although the Argentines still sold beef and wheat to the Axis, and in both world wars Brazil was with us. In World War I their navy patrolled the Atlantic and did a good job. In World War II President Roosevelt was really smart. He brought up Getulio Vargas, who was then the dictator of Brazil, and he basically sent him around the United States to look at the factories. The message was very clear. We will out produce the Axis and we will win. Vargas figured it out and he went back and he threw in with us. We had Brazilian troops that fought in Italy.

Q: Oh yes, Vernon Walters was dining on that for the rest of his life.

FRECHETTE: Well, he liked mainly French food, but some Italian.

Q: But I'm saying as far as making his point. Well, let's talk about the situation in your consular district, I mean it's so huge it's almost ludicrous to call it a consular district.

FRECHETTE: Brazil is basically two countries in one. One part of Brazil is Portugal, and you have sort of a fourth level world power, and the rest is Haiti.

Q: We're using the map here. You better do it by saying. This is all history here.

FRECHETTE: I was below the Brasilia line. This was my consular district, and this was the modern part of Brazil.

Q: We're talking about the lower part of Brazil.

FRECHETTE: I had all the states where you had large influx of European and Japanese immigration, a lot of Poles, a lot of Italians, a lot of Germans, a lot of Japanese. Brazil is the country where there are more Japanese living than any other country other than Japan. More than here, 400,000. Very large number of Jews down in that area. It was the piston and engine of Brazil. My reporting from Sao Paulo was just totally different from the reporting at the other consulate posts. Now remember, much of what is in the Amazonian region of Brazil is empty. There are some native people living there and a few colonists, but basically not much happening. It was a totally different experience, and we always kept telling Washington to make sure you look at the totality of Brazil. What we reported on was just a very special sort of a place. You met people who had been educated abroad

and in first class universities. I mean it was like being in a developed country, there was absolutely no question about it. Even at the time, Brazil was clearly a more powerful country if you really wanted to count up the military than Italy, than Portugal. It's a big place and I think American policymakers often don't think about that. Of course Brazilians don't help, because we're always talking about how big and gigantic they are and all that stuff.

Q: So, too, their power in a way doesn't go anywhere. I mean, this is true of most of Latin America. As the Foreign Service looks at it, you want to keep things quiet there, but you're not worried about somebody shooting the archduke in Sao Paulo and having World War I start or something.

FRECHETTE: No, it doesn't go anywhere. Well, we did worry about it in Carter's time because both Argentina and Brazil had competing nuclear programs. One of the great triumphs in American diplomacy in the region was basically to say to both of them, you really don't need it, and eventually both agreed and dismantled their nuclear programs. That was the big bugaboo in my time, what's going to happen there. They had a military government in Brazil; you had military governments, a succession of them, in Argentina. You know how that goes. Take a look at India and Pakistan. Now here we are, and everybody is upset about India and Pakistan because they've got nuclear weapons. That was our concern about Argentina and Brazil.

Let me back up a little bit and say that American firms, big ones, Citicorp, DuPont, many of the others, have been operating in Brazil for as long as, at that time, for 70 years. It's been a decade ago, so 80 years. The internal market in Brazil was so huge that they could sell what they produced within Brazil, or they produced, as in the case of some of the chemical companies, a relatively undifferentiated product from what some of their other plants were producing in Mexico or in Italy. So, they did the source thing. Say you had some poly vinyl X, you know, if the plants in Italy and Mexico couldn't provide it, well the one in Brazil could. It was very specialized kind of exporting, but the U.S. was no stranger to operating in Brazil. However, the influence, as you say, was relatively strong because in fact most of the production was consumed internally and still is consumed internally. Brazil is one of these countries, like the United States up until not too long ago, which sort of fed itself.

Q: Yes. What did you find when you got there? In the first place, what was the staffing of the consulate general?

FRECHETTE: Well, I had, if I recall, about eight or nine agencies there. Commerce, Agriculture, etc., and I found that the place was run very traditionally. I said, wait a minute. Here we are in the middle of a military-industrial complex, and we're going to concentrate on economic reporting first of all, that's our value added. Secondly, we're going to do political reporting, because what happens in Sao Paulo is important as far as the Brazilians are concerned. We're going to keep track of the military-industrial complex, and we're going to reduce some of the other reporting that was being done, which I thought didn't add anything to the U.S.'s knowledge of Brazil. Let's talk about

what's really happening in Sao Paulo. That got me into some conflict with the ambassador, who preferred to have a more traditional reporting place rather than a place that specialized only in certain areas. I can understand his concern, because of course most of what was happening in Brazil in those areas was in our consular district. The capital had nothing to do with it. I spent my two years there encouraging the best economic officers I could find from Washington to come down and work. I was really successful. There was a lot going on and they really enjoyed being turned loose on the military-industrial complex. We had a good time.

Q: Were there any conflicts within your consular district, between regions?

FRECHETTE: Between?

Q: Well, in other words, were there political developments in various parts of the region that impacted on Brazil?

FRECHETTE: Oh sure. For example, the traditional rivalry between Sao Paulo and the state just to the north. Sao Paulo is just an agricultural powerhouse. It's the most amazing thing you've ever seen. I knew a guy who was the orange juice king of the world. I mean at that time he took me out to see one of his operations. He had 14 million orange trees. He could drive for hours and smell the orange blossoms and see the orange trees. They'd collect these oranges with mechanical pickers, and they would take them in great big trucks and dump them into what looked like a huge swimming pool. Then these machines would squeeze the juice out of them, and then this juice would be just mixed naturally, no sugar added, no nothing, would be put into refrigerated trucks, shipped down to Santos, which is Sao Paulo's main port, and then shipped to the United States in ships as big as petroleum tankers, but totally refrigerated. Anything you put in the ground grows in Sao Paulo. Sao Paulo, by the way, also has a very big canal network in addition to roads. If you wanted to rip out your coffee. Coffee was one of the biggest exports traditionally; you could rip it out and put in soybeans. It would grow. Corn, it would grow. Sao Paulo produced the alcohol that went into the alcohol fuel that Brazil tried to get into because it didn't have much petroleum, and it was getting killed by a high price, a world price of petroleum. Soy beans, oranges, I mean Sao Paulo is the most fantastic place. The state to the north doesn't have nearly the options, but it's always been a big cattle state. So the Brazilians always refer to the two of them as coffee with milk, and those were the two states which traditionally have sought to secede from the rest of Brazil. They've fought some wars with the central government, and lost them obviously, about seceding, because they were saying the very thing I was telling you a few minutes ago. Why in the world would you want to live with the north, with people running around with no shoes, and people dying of hunger. I mean this is where it's at, let's make this the real Brazil, and the rest can be something else.

You had tensions between Sao Paulo and other states. There was always competition with Sao Paulo, with Sao Paulo being preeminent. A lot of very good politicians at the local level. There's a guy that I met who at the time was the mayor and he's now the governor of a state. He's a world-renowned architect and town planner, absolutely fantastic guy.

When you go to his home town, it's a strange place, doesn't look like Brazil at all. I'll tell you about another town, a town of 200,000 people that had 200,000 trees. The quality of life was fantastic. The town was so conceived that you could either walk to work or ride a bike. You didn't have to own a car. The city hall was built by German designs. It looked like something out of Bavaria, but very modern. I was there when Khomeini died. There were three mosques, and they were all Shiites, and they were all in there mourning Khomeini. There was a Ukrainian Catholic cathedral, a Roman Catholic cathedral, two synagogues, a potful of Protestant denominations. The diversity in those places is extraordinary. You have a lot of people from the Middle East. We always worried, and we still do, about security issues, because while most of those people are just businessmen, it was very easy to get people infiltrated in there to work with these various terrorist groups. Paraguay is right there, and Paraguay is a place that lives from smuggling, whether it's people or coffee. Paraguay exports coffee, but it doesn't grow a single bean. It's smuggled in there from Brazil. I used to get all these Chinese guys showing up at the consulate for visas, and they'd plunk down a Paraguayan passport, couldn't speak a word of Spanish or the local language in Paraguay. They could only speak Chinese. Why? Because they'd just arrived from China three weeks ago, paid off some guy and got a Paraguayan passport and were coming up to Sao Paulo to try to get into the United States illegally. Paraguay is still a place that we worry about in terms of terrorism.

Q: Well, it's one of those loose countries, you might say, the rule of commonly accepted law doesn't hold.

FRECHETTE: It doesn't exist at all. It's getting a little better, but in those days that was one of our concerns. Just the whole question of terrorism.

Q: I realize that Argentina and Brazil have always been sort of rivals, but was there one of these things that was built in, you know, you think about India and Pakistan, or Greece and Turkey, or anything like that. I mean was there an intensity about it or was it just natural, you know, two countries sort of economic and football rivals or something like that?

FRECHETTE: Brazil and Argentina were really the divide between the Portuguese empire and the Spanish empire. At one time they were together. But, the tensions between the two were very strong. They fought wars and then they fought the war of the triple alliance in the 1870s in which Paraguay joined. Guess what? The end result of the war of triple alliance was to kill virtually every man, every male, in Paraguay between the ages of 15 and 75.

Q: It was just awful.

FRECHETTE: Just slaughtered everybody. So if you go to Paraguay today, despite the fact that most people speak a local language rather than Spanish, they speak Spanish with a lilt, because the local language has a lot of stops while you're talking. But anyway, most Paraguayans are descended not from the original Paraguayans at all, but from

Argentines and Brazilians who went in there to fill the space. Even today there's huge numbers of Brazilians working illegally in Paraguay. What happened, the oriental Republic of Uruguay was established to act as a buffer between Argentina and Brazil, and it's still there. A little tiny place, very socialistic, cradle to the grave kind of government and services for its people.

Q: When you were there, were drugs a problem?

FRECHETTE: Yes, of course, but denial was a bigger problem. The Brazilians have always tended, and still do, although it's getting better, to disparage and to basically say you're exaggerating this business with the drugs. Brazil is not a drug producing country, but is a transit country. In my time I went to the government and the embassy did, too, because it was very clear that drug use in Brazil was increasing. For example, in Sao Paulo, we had three hospitals; three full of AIDS patients, and most of those people had gotten AIDS either from sex or from using dirty needles in the Port of Santos. But at the time, just to give you a sense of it, the federal police of Brazil had 435, count them, 435 police officers assigned to narcotics along the whole frontier of Brazil. Brazil is bigger than the continental United States, and it gives you a sense where they put drugs. Today, there's more concern. The Brazilian border with Colombia is largely just jungle, there's nobody living up there except native Americans. Still, in all they've increased enormously their air surveillance. They've put in a great big radar system, which watches for people flying illegally over the Amazon and that sort of thing. It was a growing problem, and it's still a growing problem in Brazil. The Brazilians are still in denial, but not nearly so much as in my time..

Q: Were you preaching though?

FRECHETTE: Preaching?

Q: Yes, I mean on the drug problem?

FRECHETTE: Well, I tried to say, you know, we can work with you, we can bring DEA guys in to help to work with you guys. They said, don't lecture us, we can handle this and of course it was getting away from them. Today you have drug wars in Rio and that sort of stuff. No, it was a problem in those days, a decade ago, clearly huge, clearly ignored totally by the Brazilians, and still huge and getting huger, but a little more sense on the part of Brazil that they've got to do something about it.

Q: There was an article quite recently in the Washington Post about the discrepancy between the upper class and the lower class and how the upper class in Sao Paulo has moved into enclaves and all. How did you see the society there, and was it a concern of ours?

FRECHETTE: Yes, but there wasn't an awful lot we could do about it. I mean obviously wealth is highly concentrated in Brazil. In Rio for example, the wealthy are the beautiful people with guys running around with their shirts open to their waists, with big gold

chains, and doing a lot of samba and carnival, so a very sybaritic kind of a life. Not much industry in Rio. Then you've got the great unwashed. All these people who live in the neighborhood who provide the cheap labor. You can't go down there without being touched by the magnitude of the poverty. For example, both in Rio and in Sao Paulo there are trains that bring people from the periphery into the city to work, and many people don't pay to ride the trains. Instead they hang onto the roof or they hang onto to the window. But the rails are laid so close together that both in Rio and in Sao Paulo, if you should have two trains going in opposite directions, every person caught between them gets killed because the trains ride so close together. Nobody seems to pay a bit of attention to this. There's very little sense that people care about the poverty in Brasilia. Rio is an absolutely fabulous city, and up rising out of the sea of these great big rocks, with people living in all kinds of poverty. Unfortunately you can also see TV sets up there and people will go without food to buy a TV set. It's a very big problem, largely unrecognized. If you go to Brazil today, all the futures are quite disappointing in terms of child diseases, early death of children, poverty levels, malnutrition. You go up to the north of Brazil and people die regularly of hunger.

Q: Were there in the United States, in Congress or anywhere else, people who took a particular interest in Brazil? Was there a Brazilian lobby of one kind of another?

FRECHETTE: Brazil is kind of a forgotten person. You know, Brazil is just so different to most Americans. Let me give you an example, and you may remember this. In World War II there was a movie made about South America and it was a cartoon. It was made by Walt Disney.

Q: Yes, Walt Disney.

FRECHETTE: There was a character in there who was a little green parrot. That was Brazil, and you know, that movie was, I think, the first time many in the United States even were aware that there was a Brazil and a Latin America down there. I know that sounds incredible, but that's the case. Members of Congress worry about El Salvador and they worry about Chile, but Brazil not much.

Q: I think probably the biggest impact from Brazil in the post war period was Carmen Miranda.

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes. No question about it.

Q: I mean she was Brazil.

FRECHETTE: Sure, she was. Yes, she made a lot of movies in the United States. You're absolutely right about that.

Q: The Brazilian bombshell.

FRECHETTE: It was World War II, and you know these movies about Latin America

were made, not because Hollywood thought it, but the War Department and the State Department said you've got to tell people about our allies. So they made all these Carmen Miranda movies where she ran around with a bucket of bananas on her head, and she did all this hoochie coochie dancing. Her specialty was to talk English very fast. You could hardly hear what she was saying. And dance around a lot. She was only about five foot two. She was born in a place called Orca in Rio and her home is kind of like some religious shrine to a Catholic. People are lined up there. I lined up two hours to see her little teeny shoes and her little size I don't know what dress. I mean she was a little, tiny woman and she wasn't even Brazilian. She was born in Portugal and came over. Anyway, the Walt Disney movie and Carmen Miranda were the first time Americans had ever really looked at Brazilians or even were aware it was there. As I say, the Brazilian connection was with Europe, and it still is largely with Europe. I've said this many times, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil will with time, even if there is a free trade agreement, develop stronger ties with Europe as they did traditionally, because so much of the population came from there and traditionally so much trade goes from there. The business of the U.S. orientation is simply an aberration of World War II, and it will pass.

Q: Well, then, while you were there were there any major developments that you had to deal with?

FRECHETTE: No, it was a relatively quiet time. As I said we were coming out of the freezer with Brazil and things were getting a little warmer. We were trying to get the Brazilians to understand that they were a big economic power and they ought to act that way and open their economy. I might add even at that time Brazilians had investments in the United States. In fact there's a factory in North Carolina that produces aluminum automobile engines, which is owned by Brazilians. We were always hoping that Sao Paulo because it was so big and powerful and represented a totally different mindset, might in fact produce a president for Brazil, which would change things. We never got what we wanted, but the closest we got was Fernando Enrique Cardoso, who's been president. He will soon leave and will probably be replaced by Lula, who is a trade union guy whose thinking on economics is backed by the prohibition in the 1950s. That's what we were trying to do. We were trying to illuminate Brazil. We were trying to say, look, here's the sunlight, and if you want to, join us in the sunlight. It was slow work, very frustrating, and the Brazilians were very sensitive about American hegemonic aspirations.

Q: How did you find the Brazilian military officer corps that you dealt with?

FRECHETTE: The Brazilian army is the largest army in Latin American today. 50,000 people in it. It's largely an army to occupy and exercise state sovereignty over this huge, vast national territory. It's true they fought in Italy in World War II, but like the Colombians who fought with us in Korea, they were largely American trained and equipped, and they fought with American units and were in fact integrated into American divisions. The navy, interestingly enough, was perhaps the most right wing of the Brazilian armed forces, and that is because among other things they patrol the South Atlantic. During my time in Brazil the idea still was if the balloon went up and the commies attacked the Brazilians would play a key role along with South Africa and the

United States in keeping the commies out of the South Atlantic. The navy was very right wing and still had very right wing views when I was stationed in Rio years before. Many of the grossest violations of human rights were in fact done by Cubans. The army wasn't far behind. You know, the truth is that you can meet more impressive officers in many ways in Argentina, Chile, or even Mexico than in Brazil because the Brazilian guys are so inward looking. They're so concentrated on their thing. Our relations with the Brazilian military were very correct, and we treated them with a great deal of respect. Clearly in Brazil the armed forces were given their due in civil society. If you went to a big reception, there would be military there. In Colombia on the contrary, interestingly enough perhaps because of social stratification, I don't recall ever going to a party in which military were there even at the highest ranks except at the presidential palace and in my residence as the American ambassador. But Brazilians paid a lot of attention to the military.

Q: Where did the military come from, because so many in Latin America, come up from sort of the lower class.

FRECHETTE: Lower middle class. Very dark skinned people. You know, the Brazilians are a beautiful mixture of black, Portuguese, and Indian and Native American Indians. So, they have a beautiful skin color, almost copper. Those are the lowest levels of society, and that's what you see in the army. The air force is a little whiter, the navy almost totally white, the same thing in society. It's interesting despite all those Japanese Brazilians, there are 400,000 of them, Japanese Brazilians do not play a big role in society. They tend to go into the army, the police, into the legal profession, many judges, veterinarians, doctors. It's interesting. I don't know why that's happened. Perhaps its the origin of those Japanese guys. They were the lowest peasants from Japan at the time that Japan was trying to decrease the population. It's the same sort of policy that Italy had and Switzerland, you know, get rid of the poorest.

Q: Did you have any African American officers, and I was wondering how did they find this worked?

FRECHETTE: I did. Well, basically they dealt with the Brazilians' white dominated society. You go to Sao Paulo; you're not going to see many blacks. You go up to the north, and those states which were largely slave states, are full of blacks, but the economy is run by whites. Most Brazilian food is pretty bland and uninteresting, but the food in the north is interesting because of the Africans. They brought over vegetables, gumbo, and stuff like that from Africa, and they have delicious food. They eat a lot of hot pepper, which is something we eat in Chile, too. I like hot peppers a lot and the north is the only place in Brazil you can eat that. In Sao Paulo it's sort of pretty bland stuff, roast meat and beans, that's about it. Great coffee.

Q: Well, were there any war crime cases left over from World War II going on?

FRECHETTE: The only thing that happened, and this happened before I arrived, but my predecessor actually played a part, Dr. Mengele was discovered down there. My

predecessor was Steve Dachi, a USIS officer who had originally begun his life working as a dentist.

Q: He was Romanian?

FRECHETTE: No, Hungarian.

Q: Hungarian.

FRECHETTE: Steve got down there, and there were these stories swirling around that Mengele had in fact been living in a suburb of Sao Paulo, and he drowned. Steve got onto this, and it was just a personal hobbyhorse. The U.S. government didn't push him, the Brazilians didn't push him, and by God he made a positive identification from the teeth. So, Steve's written a book about it, I don't know what it's called.

Q: I've interviewed Steve, too.

FRECHETTE: He's very proud of that. It was a great piece of detective work. The key guy who helped him find the dentist was a Japanese Brazilian, because the dentist who had taken care of Mengele had been a Japanese Brazilian. I'll tell you the story of the Japanese Brazilian. You know, the Japanese are very much into agriculture, and every year there's a large number of Japanese who come to the United States and go to Japan and learn about agriculture. This is all a people to people exchange. No government involvement at all. This year the Japanese Brazilian society said we'd like you to give us a speech. We're sending off 60 guys to the U.S. to learn about agriculture. I said, where are they going. They said, well, Hawaii to learn about coffee, they're going to Oregon to learn about peaches, they're going to Nebraska. Just absolutely fantastic, not one penny of government money in there. Then they said for the first time we're sending some to Japan. I thought to myself what do I do? How do I challenge these guys? How do I say something that knocks them out of their seats? So, I had a Brazilian employee called Marina Como, and I wrote a speech talking about bettering themselves and working through agriculture and what this would do for Brazil, because the first Japanese who went to Brazil were sent into the jungle, and they were the ones who decided to cultivate pepper. It was those Japanese Brazilians who took away the tremendous near monopoly of the Indonesian pepper industry and it went to Brazil. So, I did the speech and Marina translated it for me into Japanese and I had her tutor me so that I could speak it so that it sounded like Japanese. I'll never forget this event. Here were these 80 young Japanese Brazilians and their families, all proud as punch. Most of these people are very humble, farmers and so on, and the Japanese consul general. I got up and I started to speak Japanese, and I'd memorized this 20-minute speech, and at first everybody knew something was wrong, but they couldn't figure out what it was. They were sort of looking around and finally I could see these smiles spreading, the guy's speaking Japanese. So, I finished my speech and they loved it. Then they asked me a question in Japanese and I said, that's it, I don't know a word of Japanese, but the Japanese consul general had to make his speech in English. I fixed his wagon.

You know, there are psychiatrists helping Japanese Brazilians who have married real Japanese, because Brazil is a very open society, very relaxed, particularly sexual. Japanese Brazilians even though they are much tighter than normal Brazilians are still pretty relaxed, and you have these cases of Brazilians who marry Japanese Brazilians. I knew this psychiatrist, and that was his entire practice. He was a Japanese Brazilian. He counseled these couples. One was from Japan and the other one was from Brazil. They both spoke Japanese at home, they both looked Japanese, they both had Japanese names, but tremendous cultural clashes.

Q: Well, you mentioned the relaxed sexual thing. I've talked to people who served in Rio earlier on. I was saying that at least what I've heard from Rio was that some of our guys and gals would sort of take up the Brazilian attitude. This broke up families and it was a very disruptive thing. How about the time you were there, was this a problem in Sao Paulo?

FRECHETTE: No, it wasn't really a problem in Sao Paulo, although it always was in Rio. I know it had been in Sao Paulo, too, let's not kid ourselves. I mean you know the Brazilians were very relaxed and they have a very natural attitude towards sex, which comes historically. When the Spanish got there they saw these Indian women bathing and the Spanish didn't bathe worth a damn. Maybe they took a bath once every three months, you know, coming out of Europe in those days. But these Indians took a bath everyday and they saw these beautiful women with this long black hair and they thought these were mermaids. The mixture of the Brazilian and the Indian and later the African was one that produced really a very loving culture. I mean they are lovely people and they express themselves and they're very open. I'll tell you one story. I went to a party with my wife the first stay in Rio, and the first party in Rio, and there was this lady there, and she was about 60 years old and she was a knock out. She'd had every part of her body done over by plastic surgery. That was another thing. Brazilians are very sybaritic. That's the home of plastic surgery. A Brazilian was one of the most famous plastic surgeons in the history of the world. He's retired now. Barbara and I couldn't believe it. She said, I'm 60 years old. The only way you could tell was sort of the spots on her hands. She looked terrific, and she without batting an eyelash opened her blouse and showed us the surgery on her breasts. Barbara and I, poor gringos, sort of looking and trying to look nonchalant because what do you do? It happened to us many times. At parties we'd be talking to Brazilians and they just spontaneously break into music. It was just very normal for them.

I used to have a thesis, which was that if you put three Brazilian men and three Brazilian women in a house over the weekend, by the end of the weekend everybody would have had sex with absolutely everybody else because sex between men and between women is fairly common. A lot of transvestites. Remember a large part of the participation in carnival is transvestites. The other thing is Brazilian men. This is a gross generalization, but nonetheless, Brazilian women like to marry American men because American men are nicer to them and treat them like human beings. Many Brazilian men don't, and they've got girlfriends and all this stuff, and gringos tend to be pretty monogamous. So, these poor guys who showed up, particularly if they were having any strain in their marriage with the American wife, and these Brazilian girls would look like 60, and of

course Rio is a very different kind of a culture, and you can enjoy Rio much more if you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend who is Brazilian. Two Americans sort of stick out like sore thumbs. I know a number of Foreign Service officers who divorced their American wives. Bill Walker is a good example. He's got a Brazilian wife now, but there are many others. I know of one case it was the reverse. A guy was married to an American woman and she fell in love with a Brazilian, divorced the American and never married the Brazilian. It happened a lot, but it was just these beautiful women in a culture in which they fit in, and men, too.

Q: But Sao Paulo was a little bit different?

FRECHETTE: Rio is a place devoted to the senses. What do you do on the weekend? We did the same as all of them; we went to the beach. Sat around. We didn't wear postage stamps for bathing suits the way the Brazilians did, but I mean we sat on the beach, what else do you do? Then you go and you dance the samba and carry on and drink and all that stuff, and you become very sybaritic yourself because that's what the society does. It was hard for some families to withstand that.

Q: Let's talk a little bit again about the relations with the embassy. Did you have lines of communication with Washington directly?

FRECHETTE: You could not send cables at all. My guess is that today with e-mail that has eroded a great deal because we have secure e-mail. My first ambassador in Brazil, John Crimmins, whom I've idolized, and this fellow Rick Melton, whom I did not idolize, both were very protective of the embassy. They wanted the embassy to endorse every single cable. It's getting a little more difficult I think with e-mail, with secure phones because now you can pick up the phone and talk to the desk officer on his secure phone, you don't have to worry about anything. Nonetheless, I would be willing to bet you any money that the ambassador there now is still enforcing some kind of embassy tutelage over the constituent posts.

Q: In a way, too, there is this real problem with Brasilia, that it's not the center of anything.

FRECHETTE: Well, but you have similar problems in Australia. Nigeria and in the Ivory Coast. They all have artificial capitals supposedly to be in the middle of things that don't represent anything. They sit up there kind of in gorgeous isolation. It's a real problem. Brazil is so huge and air transportation is so expensive. I've always advocated the policy that constituent posts do the reporting and if something was wrong, then the embassy could simply say strike Sao Paulo 27-30. Even if it happened three weeks later. The problem is you really have the sense in Brasilia that you're not the ambassador of anything. You're just the ambassador of that little kind of a thing that looks like a junior high school in Montgomery County.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. 1990 whither?

FRECHETTE: 1990, Carla Hills called me up one day and said President Bush has asked me to put together the enterprise for the Americas initiative and everybody tells me you like trade issues and you happen to do good things for organizations. Would you like to work for him? I said yes, and a month later I was here in Washington.

Q: Carla Hills at that time was the?

FRECHETTE: The U.S. trade representative.

Q: All right and you did that from 1990 to?

FRECHETTE: To 1993 into the Clinton administration.

Q: All right, well, we'll pick this up at that point.

FRECHETTE: Okay, good.

Q: Great.

***

Q: Today is July 3, 2002. From 1990 to '93 you were working for USTR? Can you talk about in the first place what was the situation that you came into, and then what you were doing?

FRECHETTE: Well, I was the assistant U.S. trade representative for Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. In addition, I did the generalized system of preferences, GSP. I was also the coffee negotiator for the United Stats within the international coffee agreement, and of course the Bush administration had this enterprise for the Americas initiative which was designed to encourage the Latins to look to lowering their trade barriers in preparation for President Bush's long term vision of eventually having a free trade area with the Americas. They wanted somebody to really get the Latins squared away. Now, this was 1990. The 1980s had been the lost decade; tremendous debt burdens in the region and so on and so forth. The 1990s you had what's called the Washington consensus, basically a set of ideas that said the best way to develop Latin America is to adopt market economics and start moving in that direction. Also it coincided with a period in which leaders were understanding that democracy was very important, openness was very important, politics was very important and the two things, political and economic openings, sort of buttressed each other, you know?

So, it was a period of extraordinary opportunity and I got in there and completely reorganized the unit that I had. We created an organization in which we had TICs. These are called trade and investment counselors, TICs. We assigned one with every country in the region, with the exception of Cuba obviously. Cuba was out. What we did was we met with every single country, either in that country or in Washington. It was an alternating thing. What was the advantage? The advantage was really very simple. I had

everybody from the U.S. government that had anything to do with trade, you know, EFIS, Agriculture, Commerce, State Department, anybody who had anything to do with trade. We'll all meet with the other side whatever it was; Bolivia, Chile, and we discussed barriers to trade in Chile. They were in a position to discuss barriers to trade in the United States, and it was a real eye opener. It was an immense amount of work. I had a truly dedicated team, but USTR does have extraordinary people. Workaholics.

Q: They're very small, very effective organization.

FRECHETTE: Full workaholics. 150 people was the staff, including the two drivers and all the secretaries, when I was there. It's a little bit bigger now simply because they had more responsibilities, and it's going to get bigger if we do the Doha Round and if in fact we move to the free trade area of the Americas, the negotiation. It's just got to grow bigger. There it is, all stuffed into the Winder building, which is right by the Old Executive Office Building, a fabulous building built about the time of the Civil War. They used to keep Confederate prisoners in the basement.

Q: They have a passage, don't they, or something?

FRECHETTE: Well, there might have been one, but it's gone now. Lincoln used to visit the prisoners. I used to joke that he used to come in and he would goad the prisoner, nah, nah, we're winning, but anyway, it was a cheap joke, but it was really there. It was a strange building built at the time. Every floor was done in bricks, and I couldn't figure out why. Well, it wore very well. Then the lower floor, the ceiling was like 18 feet tall or something like that, and do you know why that was? First of all it was cooler, it's like the Old Executive Office Building, but also in those days officers rode their horses into that first floor.

Q: Good gosh.

FRECHETTE: An orderly would hold the gosh darn horse, and the horse would poop and everything, and they'd go in and see because this was a headquarters for the Union army. I mean the big honchos worked from there. So, General Bottomside or whatever would just ride his horse ride into the damn place, and there would be some guy to hold the horse and clean up after him, and Bottomside would do his thing. I was up on the fifth floor and we worked like hell, but we were hugely successful. Interestingly enough, Mickey Cantor, who succeeded Carla Hills, tried to obliterate that record and has often spoke of the enterprise for the Americas initiative as something only marginally useful. why? Mickey Cantor came in in January of 1993.

Q: This is part of the Clinton administration?

FRECHETTE: That's right, I mean I was hired by Bush, and Bush finished 19 January, and then Mickey Cantor came in. Mickey Cantor's a guy from Kentucky, I think, or from Tennessee, although in those days he lived out on the West Coast. An extremely capable and wealthy lawyer, very successful, but a guy whose roots were with the trade union

movement, and he thought free trade sucked. He thought it was just dreadful. He thought it hurt the working man, and from the very first meeting I had with him it was clear to me that the enterprise for the Americas initiative wasn't going to go anywhere. They didn't want a free trade area of the Americas, so part of the process was just like the Egyptians, who chipped off the names and faces of the pharaohs, was to have this guy run around and say the enterprise of the Americas had been only so-so.

Q: I mean basically what you were doing was breaking down trade barriers?

FRECHETTE: Yes, what we did was we sort of talked about, and at the same time we were negotiating, the NAFTA, remember? I mean we had negotiated just prior to that the U.S.-Canadian free trade agreement, and we were hard at work negotiating the NAFTA. The line we took at the time was if indeed we're going to have a free trade area with the Americas, these are the sorts of things that you guys are going to have to have in your economies to be eligible, because to be eligible means responsibilities as well as enjoying the benefits of free trade. You're going to have to lower your barriers; you're going to have to have a much better system of regulation, all these things. The system I devised was extremely successful because they had a chance to hear from the Americans, and you could point out the documents from the NAFTA negotiations and say look, we're not kidding you. Here's the way its going. At that time there were different theories as to how you would achieve a free trade area with the Americas. Some thought that you would just take NAFTA and do the ink blot trick. The inkblot, the ink spot, would get bigger and bigger and eventually engulf the whole region. Others thought it had to be a sort of a different kind of thing that would absorb the NAFTA. Anyway, it was an eye opener, and it was very successful. I must say I am very proud and I enjoyed my time, because I got to know absolutely everybody in the region, except the Cubans, who had to do with trade.

Q: First, let's talk a bit about Carla Hills and her leadership and her outlook.

FRECHETTE: Well, Carla Hills is somebody that I have enormous respect for. I'm still associated with her in a sort of a very loose way. When I retired she offered me an office in her firm, which she runs with her husband, Hills and Company. I didn't work for her, but it was a nice place, to say I have an office with Carla Hills. It was a phone number, people could send me e-mail, people could send me mail. It also had another make-weight, if you will, advantage. Since the security people in the Department had told me, do not list your home address because the narcos are looking, it was nice that I could have my mail from Latin America sent to Carla Hills. Occasionally I would bring possibilities for business to her and she would develop them, but I didn't work for her. Occasionally she would say, look, I have this thing, I don't do this kind of thing, are you interested? I have tremendous admiration for her. She was one of the people who recommended me for the job in New York, which was astonishing. Anyway, she is an extremely capable lawyer, specialized in trade issues, razor sharp, and does not suffer fools. She was a member of the cabinet. She is a moderate Republican. She's not a conservative Republican. She really knew what she wanted to do.

What I say about USTR is there are no levels between an ouster and Carla. When you

have a problem, in other words, you run your own show. If you have a problem that requires a decision, you get an appointment with USTR, and that person makes the decision and you're off and running. It's marvelous. It's absolutely distinct from the Department, where it's just sort of penetrating peanut butter to get a clearance on something. USTR is instant. It's magic, it's like one of these fast systems for getting onto the Internet and bang, and I love that. The people I had were dedicated to these trade issues and they work all hours.

I had a wonderful time. First of all, I learned a lot about trade, which I didn't know an awful lot about. I learned to know people all over the hemisphere who worked in trade, which has of course helped me with this present job that I just got. All in all I thought we were doing God's work. We were helping the Latins to understand what open trade was, what was necessary to do it, because they had really crazy notions. They thought the U.S. would just simply say, here you are, and you can now ship all your goods duty free to the United States with no reciprocal applications. We said, oh, no, you've got to meet all the requirements of GATT and eventually the WTO, the World Trade Organization. It impelled all the governments of the region to really get moving on this. The process isn't over yet, obviously we're still negotiating a free trade area of the Americas, but it was, I think, one of George Bush's really great contributions in terms of policy.

Q: Well, now the politics of this, did they intrude? We keep running across every time we try to open this up, particularly on the Democratic side, generally it's supposed to be free traders and all, but as soon as the unions get in, it gets very difficult. Was that one of the influential elements that you were having to deal with?

FRECHETTE: Yes, sure, absolutely. Would you excuse me for just one second? Okay, you've got to remember in 1990 Latin America was coming out of many decades of a business orientation which in many cases the government was the largest employer. They had all kinds of government owned outfits that were inefficient as the devil, employed far too many people, and you know, you had labor unions which were extremely powerful. Argentina for example, putting the workers out on the street, a big source of power for Peron and subsequent presidents.

Q: Mexico.

FRECHETTE: Sure, Mexico, everything. Here is an important point. It was the Mexicans who decided, Salinas de Gortari and his predecessor, Lopez Portillo, they were the ones who said to George Bush, let's put our money where our mouth is, let's have a free trade agreement. It wasn't George Bush's idea. George Bush's genius, if you will, is not to say, well, let's think about it, he turned around and said, we'll do it. Extraordinary. We'll see if his son has a legacy like the father. Anyway, it was very difficult, and there was no question about it, a lot of people in the '90s lost their jobs as privatizations took place. 10,000 people, for instance, were fired from an Argentine railway system when it was privatized. I'm not here to tell you that the private sector companies that were running it are marvelous, neither is British rail, now that it's privately owned, working so well, but it's a damn sight more efficient and better than it was in years.

Q: Well, it has the apparatus within in to change and to meet demands and responsibilities.

FRECHETTE: Exactly. But what it did do, in privatizing some of those firms, with a more open economy, it opened up opportunities for these countries to produce exports they could sell beyond raw materials. There were some exceptions. Brazil is an exception. Brazil still is like the United States in 1950. It largely traded internally. It was so big that it could produce everything. Today, we're highly dependent on exports, as it should be in the kind of world that we're living in, and Brazil is still having trouble biting that bullet. I'm not here to tell you that every one of the countries sort of docilely said yes, you know, U.S., you're absolutely right, we're going to do it. Some like Brazil said, we're not sure that we have to do it. They have learned. For example, in the case of Brazil, intellectual property. The Brazilians just did not want to recognize intellectual property or protect it. So, in their zeal to do that, for example, they developed their own computer business. Their computers were definitely inferior of course. They weren't open to competition, but the Brazilians very early got into electronics and electronic banking for example. In Latin America, the Brazilians even in my time were just head and shoulders above the others, but the problem was they were not competitive with the rest of the world. They were locally made, hardware and software was second rate, third rate. Today they're much more open. It's an interesting process. As they become competitive in the world and seek to sell their products, that's when they start giving protection to their products and to the products of others. Brazil eventually will get there, but they will do it slowly, as they become more competitive. There are special areas where we're going to have severe problems in reaching an agreement. One of them is foreign exchange.

Q: I want to go back to the time.

FRECHETTE: Please, go ahead.

Q: You were dealing with this, what were some of the problem areas that you saw? I mean were we resolving anything or were you basically evangelizing?

FRECHETTE: Both. There was frankly the tutorial aspect of this, which basically said we are going to enter into a free trade agreement with Mexico like the one we have with Canada, which means that all trade, everything, will be open, although for certain sensitive products there will be a 15-year phase in, some five, some ten, some 15, but essentially this is what it's going to look like. We'd like to do a free trade area with the Americas, it's got a lot of advantages. If you want to enter into that this is the kind of model you're going to have to adopt. So, there was the didactic element obviously, but they couldn't quarrel with it because Mexico is a big a country, a big economy and they were headed that way. You see, what had sustained them before is that there is a solid block of countries saying, hell no. We want Cuba as protection; you guys are protectionists, too. Now, what's the truth? We are so much more open than any of the economies in Latin America. It's a joke. On the other hand, there is no question that there

is some aspects of our foreign trade that are very protectionist and President Bush, the present one, his decision on steel and other things discourages some of these countries because what he's done is extremely protectionist. The subsidies business, that really is an arrogant procedure on the part of the U.S., where basically you have the International Trade Commission, which can decide pretty much by not exactly fudging the numbers, but by interpretation, whether some countries are subsidizing or dumping or whatever. These are things that are eventually going to vanish, but they're there.

Q: Well, talk about the time you were there. Let's stick to the '93 period. Were we reaching agreements here as well as getting ready for the big enchilada or were you making deals with different countries?

FRECHETTE: Well, we did that. The basic purpose was didactic. Let me back up and just say that the main effect of what we did was for the countries in the region to lower their barriers dramatically throughout the decade of the '90s, toward each other. The amount of trade that took place within the region has tripled since that time simply by lowering trade barriers. Now, Chile was the leader and they were ready for a free trade agreement with the United Stats in 1992, but the politics here in Washington were very difficult. Carla Hills felt that our first priority was the Uruguay round, as indeed it was. She was right.

Q: This is the World Trade Organization?

FRECHETTE: That's right. In those days, the GATT. She said, and the Bush administration basically took the view, Nick Brady, the secretary of treasury, that it was more important to get a Uruguay round so that we could work toward reducing trade barriers worldwide than a trade agreement with Chile, because a trade agreement with Chile would have been tremendous in the sense that here is a Latin American country which on its own, without any urging from the United States, has done what's necessary. It was a country which was also becoming a democracy. You know, Pinochet was phasing out. He resigned in '88 as you know and they had this other president, Patricio Aylwin Azócar. It had a lot of things going for it. The Chileans did a great job, but of course they came up here and lectured us. It was highly irritating to Carla and I must say to me, too, to have Alexandro Fox get up in the middle of some big meeting and say, yes, I can't understand it after having strung us along now you won't negotiate a free trade agreement, saying that the GATT is more important. What could be more important than a free trade agreement with Chile? Well, the Chileans have that effect. They tend to look at themselves at the umbilical region of the world, so do a lot of other countries. The main achievement was the lowering of trade barriers among the countries of the region, the signing of many, many free trade agreements, so-called free trade agreements within the region, and a tremendous increase correspondingly to interregional trade, so we did not in my time sign a single agreement between the United States and those countries, but we were getting them ready for the big enchilada. Number one and number two, they took this stuff to heart, and they increased trade among themselves tremendously. It was also one of the things that frankly impaled Mercosur, which is a free trade customs union and so on made up of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. On the one hand it

adopted many of the ideas that we were proselytizing about. On the other hand they also saw it as a way of defending themselves against the Untied States. The Brazilian objective was to first create Mercosur and then create a South American free trade area so that the South Americans could negotiate as a block with the North Americans and the Central Americans and the Caribbean their entry into eventually a free trade area of the Americas. In some ways we're still there in terms of concepts. The Brazilians, only 10% of their GDP is exports, so exports not very important. They're like us in 1950.

Q: An awful lot of that is cultural, too, anyway.

FRECHETTE: Yes, and we are very protectionist with respect to orange juice. Fifty percent of the orange juice drunk in this country comes from Brazil and it's produced in mammoth, mammoth quantities down there. I remember going out one time to see one of the two big producers of orange juice in Brazil. Well, hell, I drove several hours into the state of Sao Paulo, but eventually I could smell orange blossoms everywhere and pretty soon we got to the edge of his estate. He had 14 million orange trees, 14 million. They harvest these things mechanically and they fill up this huge truck and the truck goes full of oranges and dumps them into a thing that looks like a swimming pool. The swimming pool is really a giant crusher and it crushes these darn things and sort of separates the skin from the juice. Then the juice flows in and it's electronically mixed so that the color of it is always the same, sort of a baby chick color. That's because it sells better. It has exactly the same amount of sugar in it. They don't add sugar; they mix the different juices with different sugar contents so that the product is always the same. Then they take this product, they put it into big tank trucks which are refrigerated, and they drive it down to Santos. There it's loaded aboard ships as big as petroleum tankers, which are refrigerated, and head north to Florida.

Q: I've never heard a case of orange juice spill in the ocean.

FRECHETTE: No, but here's the deal. Fifty percent of every glass of orange juice in this country is Brazilian oranges. Of course you have big citrus businesses in Florida, California, Arizona. A colleague of mine from the Foreign Service has retired down there, and he is a grapefruit rancher, grapefruit and orange rancher and he makes a lot of money selling these things. He came from a family who did that anyway. First he became a missionary, and when his father died he left the Foreign Service and took over the business. In any event, steel is another thing, which the Brazilians produce in large quantities and we don't like to let it in because their prices are frankly subsidized. They really have subsidization. This goes back to World War II. One of the things that we offered Vargas, then dictator of Brazil. Roosevelt was very smart. He brought him up and had him tour the United States, and he quickly figured out that we simply had the productive capacity that would drown the Axis, so he threw in with us. One of the incentives for throwing in with us was the U.S. said okay, we will help you to develop your steel industry.

Q: While you were promoting all this internally, wasn't there a problem of, you know, the big brothers coming down and telling you how to run things?

FRECHETTE: Well, here's the deal. They either wanted into the free trade area or we got the hands on the door. They were the supplicants. They were asking into a free trade area. Our position was, if you want in, here are the conditions. If you don't want in, okay, but you will be condemning yourself to a basically bush league role in the world. So, yes, there was that, and there was the irritation. On the other hand, this Washington consensus which was developed, largely with Fred Burks at the Institute for International Economics, sort of said, the only way to let countries in Latin America progress and grow their economies and become real players in the world is to adopt free market economics. Enough of this protectionism and all this other stuff. So, yes, there was, and places like Venezuela, for example, there was a lot of resistance within the bureaucracy toward this approach. No question about it. Why should we do this? Well, the answer was very simple, if you don't, you're not going to get in to the free trade area of the Americas. It was self-interest that drove them to do it, even though they didn't like much of what they were doing. Now, what is the problem? The problem today is.

Q: Well, let's keep it to the '90 to '93 period.

FRECHETTE: Many of the countries in the '90 to '93 period did do some of the macro economic reforms that we advocated because they were relatively easy to do, they could be done by decree and by a law. The second generation reforms, which we're still working on today and which we advocated at the time are much more difficult, because they require real political will. The congresses of those countries and their labor unions have to basically understand that you're headed in a certain direction and you're going to make some very difficult choices. It was a highly successful thing in that it sensitized them to what would be required by a real free trade area and it grew their own trade. Then Clinton came in in January of '93 and it was clear that he didn't want a free trade area with the Americas. He didn't want greater free trade with the countries of the region in part because he felt for our labor unions. We would not have had a commitment by the Clinton administration for a free trade area with the Americas if the Latins hadn't basically demanded it. We had created the demand under Bush. Clinton tried to shut it down. We had the summit process, you know the first summit of the Americas was held in '94 in Miami. This was because the Latins were saying to the Clinton administration, (Mack McLarty played a very helpful role in this) they said, let's keep trucking here; let's get that free trade area. Essentially, the Latins basically demanded it from the Clinton administration, and that commitment made in 1994 was the thing that started us moving toward the FTAA, the Free Trade Area of the Americas. It was against the Clinton administration's desires, but they didn't have any option. However you know, under Mickey Cantor, who is a very good guy and a friend of mine, I mean they did everything possible. They dissolved the TICS, the Trade and Investment Councils, these bilateral things, and they tried to put everything on the slowest train they could possibly put it.

Q: Well, then, were there any countries that you found with these TICS and other ones who were particularly helpful and particularly obstructive in this?

FRECHETTE: Well, the most unstructured was Brazil, and it was followed easily by

Venezuela. The rest were sort of in the middle, and then you had super stars like Chile who in effect said, yes, fine, sure, we'd sign tomorrow. They had this teeny economy, and this Bush administration has promised finally a decade later to make good on the promise of the father to have a free trade agreement with Chile. Why is it easy with Chile? Because the Chileans have done all the right things. Here's the little teeny country of 13 million people, and they've done all the right things, they've privatized their pension system. They're ahead of us in the United States, and they have done it very well, but they had the will power to do it. They had the vision down there among their politicians. Admittedly some of the vision occurred when Pinochet was the dictator in effect, but it carried through. The successor presidents had that vision, and the Chileans could see that that vision was bearing results for them, and so the Chileans have done virtually everything right. They were there superstars to such a point that the Brazilians really got nervous about this. They were the big obstructionists. They used to say, Chile, what is Chile; there are fewer people than in one of our states. Of course that's true, 170 million Brazilians is quite a behemoth against this little mosquito of Chile. That was roughly it. The Caribbeans were difficult, too because the Caribbeans could see that when you have a country like St. Vincent, which has a total population of 40,000, that's a country, it has a vote at the UN. It's going to be very difficult to compete, so the Caribbeans were always clamoring for a special and differential treatment. What it means for them is they would like a free trade agreement which is a free trade agreement in name only, that we make all the openings and they keep some of it. But the way to skin that cat is basically to give them very long periods to achieve the reforms. You've got places like Jamaica, which are doing very well thank you, in part because Cuba is out of the equation. When Cuba becomes democratic and comes back on stream in the middle of the Caribbean, people like the Dominicans and Jamaicans are going to find that the Cubans are going to run circles around them. Cubans are very industrious people, and they're going to be a big competitor in the region.

Q: Today we're looking at Argentina which looks like a failed state, practically. How was Argentina playing in those days?

FRECHETTE: Well, they had a brilliant economics minister, Domingo Cavallo. I went down one time and he said, you've got to improve your intellectual property protection forces, be it patents or copyrights or whatever. Of course Domingo Cavallo didn't really know what we were talking about. He said to Carla Hills, well, send down Myles and we'll work up a patent law that's acceptable. So, I took down shall we say a patent law based largely on us and give this guy. Overnight he had studied that thing, and by the next morning he understood it. He's a bright guy. I can remember, just to illustrate the difference, the then finance minister of Brazil came up and he tried to lecture Carla Hills. Well, he said, "You know Brazil is like the U.S. in the 19th century, you can't expect too many things for us. We're headed in the right direction, but don't expect too many things like on this patent law." She said, "We've had patent laws in this country from the beginning, and I want to tell you that the first director of the U.S. patent office was a man called Thomas Jefferson." It sort of put him in his place because he was trying to pull us down. "You know you can't expect us to run forward simply because you beckon." She said, "No, we understood the importance of patents right from the beginning." Of course,

why did we understand the importance of patents? We stole from the British, in effect, the design of a number of machines that could weave material out of cotton. The guys would come over and in their minds they remembered how the British made that machine. They copied it here, and it was clear, simple patent theft. Having achieved the theft and having become competitive with the Europeans because of this theft, we then very quickly understood the importance of the protection, and so we had Thomas Jefferson and a patent office cranked up before the 19th century came around. We knew these things. That was a great.

I met Fujimori for the first time with Carla Hills.

Q: The president of Peru?

FRECHETTE: That was a bizarre encounter. He had come over in 1990, and we were delighted to have a president who had studied in the United States even if it was agriculture and a pretty undistinguished agricultural school to boot, but we were delighted. We looked forward to have him defeat the guerrillas and in effect turn around all those misguided economic principles of the military, the left wing military reformers and others and the mismanagement by Allen Garcia who almost won the election last year in Peru. Anyway, we walked into Blair House and somehow or other the people at Blair House were very resourceful and had gotten for Fujimori a seat that was very high. I don't know where they got it; it was almost like a throne. Then his ministers were seated in a semi circle around him and Carla Hills and I were down there in chairs that I think were designed for kids, you know. We were very low looking up at the imperial Fujimori and I remember Carla, she's very forceful. She has a strong moving voice, hello, Mr. President, blah, blah. He listened to her and then of course, he said, good morning. He spoke English and then didn't answer her question, pointed toward the minister of commerce, who is now going to prison for having been corrupt, but in those days he was minister. To respond to Carla Hills' questions, the minister of foreign trade had to respond. Fujimori didn't open his mouth other than to say hello in English and to greet her. That was the way it was. The whole thing, we met for 35 minutes perhaps, and it was frustrating because Fujimori wouldn't say a damn thing. He just pointed to these guys. It was like a shogun, the way I imagined Japan would be. We walked out of there and Carla says, I've never seen anything like it. I said, exactly, but that was exactly the way Fujimori was. We had a succession of presidents and ambassadors down there who were treated to the imperial presence. He was a laconic sort of a guy, he would meet with the American ambassador only when absolutely necessary, usually he had to go and see the ministers.

Domingo Cavallo from Argentina was one of our heroes because he was really trying to change Argentina. Argentina is one of the biggest pirates of pharmaceuticals and in fact it's a mafia. Those people kill each other to keep these laws off the books, so.

Q: Well, you see the intellectual property, which sounds like books, but it really is a great deal more than that. It's pharmaceuticals; it's patents of all types of things. It has been a real can of worms for our people because an awful lot of people have sort of assisted

other countries' outfits in taking our know-how and then selling it to the wrong people and to others.

FRECHETTE: Exactly. I used to go around the region and talk about intellectual property, give bible thumping kind of speeches. There was always a big bunch of Latin Americans in every country who were 100% for what I said. You know who they were; they were the artists and the writers, because copyrights are infringed all the time in Latin America. Latin America is a place where the books are full of laws that are very similar to our laws. The problem is they're not enforced. The typical reaction we used to get, I used to get, these ministers would look at me and say, oh, but we have laws and they're very similar to yours. I'd say, yes, but you don't enforce them. In other words, what good is a law if it's not enforced? That goes to a very basic aspect of Latin American society, the belief that the law in the books is all you really need. The enforcement, the will, these are things that are lacking down there and it has been one of the things that has bedeviled the governments down there and is leading many in Latin America today to question whether free market economics and the Washington consensus is the way to go, but they never had the will to do the other things.

For instance, proper regulatory structures so that the private sector doesn't go crazy. Well, we need more of that here, too. Corruption is a huge problem in the region. You'll notice that the Bush administration interestingly enough is talking a lot about taking effective action against corruption because corruption does undercut the ability of democratically elected leaders to move their countries forward. So, you know, it was very disappointing to us to see somebody like Domingo Cavallo after so many years in power become quite corrupt. Fujimori became corrupt and his ministers became corrupt. Is there sort of a silver bullet you can fire in that direction? Obviously not. These countries have got to make up their minds that they're going to have anti-corruption laws that make sense and pursue them; very difficult to do. Why? Because in Latin America, even though a president is elected on a platform, by and large, once they're in power they do pretty much what they want. There are exceptions. Mexico is one of them. Chile is another one, bright. All this corruption stuff, all the back-sliding that's taken place in Latin America, did not happening Chile. In part it's just political will and the realization of the populace that these dramatic and different kind of ideas were actually leading toward great prosperity for all. It was the water that lifted all the boats, not very high, but it was lifting them. Perhaps because Chile is small, perhaps because the Chileans are particularly tough people and very practical, that they've understood this, whereas other countries have not. Mexico still has a long way to go on the corruption end. You read the newspaper on any day of the week, the Washington Post or the New York Times. They are dealing with all kinds of revelations of corruption and torture and assassination carried out by previous presidents, very difficult. I believe that Mexico is going to get there for the same reason as the Chileans. They've got too much at stake, too much business, and people can see that it's going to lead them to something better.

Q: In the campaign of '92 between George Bush, Sr. and Bill Clinton, was there the feeling in the trade office that we're going to lose ground or not, or if Clinton won it would continue to move ahead or no?

FRECHETTE: We hoped so. Remember that Clinton was beating up on Bush because Bush had been inattentive to the economy. So, the question of foreign trade and so on and so forth was really a sort of a backwater issue. The basic issue was Clinton's attacking, it's the economy stupid, and George Bush didn't pay attention to it. So, we in USTR felt, I wasn't a political appointee, or very few there felt that their hope was that Clinton would carry on, but there was no indication that he would not. It was only after Mickey Cantor came in that I realized that there was a guy who just didn't believe in much of what we had done on the enterprise for the Americas initiative. Not because he's evil or retrograde, he was just very committed to trade unions. The trade union mantra was and still is that free trade rips off the American worker, completely ignoring the fact that in an interdependent world, I'm in a world in which we're going to have to do more trading, and we do indeed because of the dependence of our economy, there's going to be some adjustments. For instance, in the United States, today the textile industry is shrinking. The simple reason, other countries can produce the same kind of stuff cheaper. Steel. We've eliminated some of the old rust buckets that we had, and we now have some much more agile steel producers, very small ones. Everything's not perfect in steel, but little by little the work force is changing in the United States, not only the way they do their work, but where they do their work. People are migrating to the southwest and other areas. It's a period of great change. We did not suspect that Clinton was not going to carry this forward. It was only when Mickey Cantor came in and I had one long conversation with him that I realized that this was not their top goal. However, we had ignited the desire among the Latins as I said earlier, and it was they who sort of went to Clinton and said, free trade area and he agreed in the Miami conference. It was Gore really and Mack McLarty who took the main roles in that. Then he promised to get on the fast track in '94 and of course failed for eight years. It didn't happen.

Q: Now in '93, the Clinton administration comes in. What happened to you?

FRECHETTE: Well, I had been there for three years at USTR. A detail from the State Department to another agency for more than one year is highly unusual. My personal situation was one, however, that was different. As I've explained to you, Stuart, in earlier episodes, the Reagan administration caved to the Cuban Americans and he said okay, Myles Frechette, we will not make him an ambassador in Latin America, basically. So, I was in a tough spot. I had come back from Cameroon as an ambassador, Reagan had himself pushed for me, but that wasn't Latin America. There was nothing for me really in Latin America, Harry Shlaudeman who was then assistant secretary asked me to be his consul general in Sao Paulo. I talked about that, but after that what does one do for an encore? I'd been to the bank for a year, which was a terrific investment. I mean, I took a bath financially, but I learned a lot about New York and business and how they look on the relationship with the Untied States, but you know, there was no real future for me. It looked to me like my career was going down the tubes. So, I would have been happy if Mickey Cantor had said we want you to stay on another three or four years and the Department would have granted it. By then it would have been very difficult for me to go back into the mainstream, but at least I was doing something that I really thought was useful. A contribution to the region, not just to the Untied Stats, but to the region, because

I care about the region. Then when I could see that Mickey Cantor was basically telling me we're not going to continue with the stuff that you're doing. So I went back to the State Department kind of glum saying, you know, what's going to happen. The next thing you know I was nominated to be the ambassador in Colombia. This was done by the Clinton administration. The job I had done at USTR was a good one. Everybody recognized it, and so I was sent to Colombia instead.

Q: Before we move to that.

FRECHETTE: Because these were not Republicans, they were not beholden to the Cuban Americans. All bets were off, that had changed.

Q: Yes, what about.

FRECHETTE: But I've got to add one thing. There is no question that some of my colleagues in inter-American affairs were not delighted to see me come back in and compete for an ambassadorial post. They understood that I was out of the running and I was a powerful candidate and it was more for them or more possibilities for them. With me it was fewer options and I can tell you that the reaction of a number of my colleagues, not to my face, but to others was pretty glum when I got Colombia.

Q: I want to come to that, but it was sort of tied to this, while you were at the USTR, what were you getting and what was the impression that the State Department had in the USTR?

FRECHETTE: You mean the State Department thought of USTR or USTR thought of State?

Q: USTR thought of the State Department.

FRECHETTE: That's a terrific thing because it was really amazing. Bernie Aronson, Bernard Aronson, was the assistant secretary although a Democrat. He's friends with James Baker, who was Secretary of State. I remember at USTR many of my colleagues sort of looked on me as sort of a traitor, you know, I turned my back on the State Department. The first reactions were very odd and people would talk about trade as being technical issues. Well, surely the political outweighs the technical issues you know. I stood up and I said, you know, let me tell you, trade is the future, none of this technical issues stuff. You're all going to have to learn to live with this technical issue, and it's not Myles Frechette, and it's not Carla Hills who are going to have to deal with this thing. A lot of people sort of giggled a little bit. Well, here we are. The attitude of the State Department I remember very well. I used to get calls from deputy assistant secretaries about this position you've taken in USTR, requiring the countries of the region to do this. I mean surely you can't be serious. Bolivia can't do that. I said, yes, we are serious and yes, they can do it. So, there was this attitude by many of my colleagues and my contemporaries in the Foreign Service that as the detailee to USTR I should be State Department's guy in USTR and feed them all sorts of private insight on what was going

on in USTR and basically defeat some of the things we were doing in USTR. I was quite shocked by this, and USTR said to me, well, welcome to the club, we've always been treated like the poor relatives. We can't even come into the backyard run by the State Department. It was fascinating. Their regional bureau did not understand the importance of trade at all, at all. It was only EB that thought that what we were doing was important, but even they had this sort of imperial attitude that we should be taking orders from State Department rather than USTR.

Now, of course, therein lies a tale of great tension, because USTR reports directly to the president. It was designed to allow the president to move the country forward on trade, in part because both the commerce department and the State Department tended to put political issues ahead of trade issues. It was one of the reasons, I might add, that the commerce department developed its own foreign commercial service. It was felt that State Department officers who did commercial work were always sort of looking over their shoulders at the political consequences of some of this stuff. Today every ambassador gets a big lecture on how to do trade promotion. I know because I am occasionally called upon by FSI to give that lecture. There are others who do it, too. How did I do it and how was I successful? Trade is now part of the kit bag of every ambassador. I think it began really in the mid-'90s, but today those critics of the State Department say no, nobody cares about trade issues. They're dead wrong. All ambassadors are instructed heavily to take a real interest in this issue. So, I was at USTR in an interesting period where trade was emerging as something much more important and of course nowadays, the State Department supports APEC and all of this stuff.

Q: Well, I would think if you're telling Bolivia they have to enforce their laws, this is for an ambassador to go in on that. I mean he's concerned about UN votes or trying to promote democracy and to come in with something like that or to support what you're saying is kind of extraneous or something like that.

FRECHETTE: It's a tough sell. The way I did it, the way I was able to, was to sort of lay out for the foreign minister, at least in Colombia, and say look, our bilateral relations are composed of a wide venue of issues, and on some we're going to agree and on some we're going to disagree. The fact that we disagree on one here should not mean some sort of retaliation over here. Now that doesn't always work clearly. I think it's the only way to deal with it, particularly in Latin America where they do have such a wide-ranging relationship with the Untied States. The other thing is that the advantages of a free trade agreement are so obviously to the countries down there that they are prepared to cut the U.S. some slack when the U.S. acts in the way that it says, well, if you want in, you're going to have to play by the rules.

Q: Did you while you were in the USTR, was retaliation an instrument that was used much in your particular area you were dealing with?

FRECHETTE: You mean trade retaliation?

Q: Yes.

FRECHETTE: Well, yes. The Brazilians didn't like some of our subsidy and counter-veiling duties and sometimes tried to take retaliation or threatened to do so, and some of the others threatened to do so, too. Or in the case of some Latin American countries they would take a whack at you in another area, basically retaliating against us. Going to another country that's a friend and saying, you're just not doing right, you're got to do better, is never popular. Take human rights, the staple of my ambassadorship both in Colombia and Cameroon. Do you think the presidents of either of those countries like to have some ambassador who is not even a politician and doesn't even really know the president of this country very well come in and sort of give them a lecture? I mean a lot of foreign policy, U.S. foreign policy, particularly in this region, consisted precisely of giving people a lot of lectures. It is very didactic. It creates tremendous resentment. On the other hand, we are the biggest game in town.

Q: Well, were we retaliating much against trade practices in the areas you were dealing with?

FRECHETTE: We did not, for example, with agricultural products. Today, just as it was then, it was this tremendous field that developed countries really should allow less developed countries to grow products and sell them. Developed countries really should not do too much in the business of growing the products. The key example of this was always Switzerland, where the Swiss had for many years a policy, and it's still there, largely of producing all their food. Consequently their food is enormously expensive, but it's theirs and it's based on the thesis that Switzerland is going to be neutral and the rest of Europe could go to hell in a hand cart and they'd still be okay. That was the example I always used to give, that you pay sort of practically $3.00 a strawberry in Switzerland if you want to have a strawberry, but that's the way it is.

We have not opened up enough in agriculture, but of course agriculture is an enormously useful export for the United States. Out of every three acres planted in agriculture, one of those is for export. So, we export grain and other things which is one of the reasons we're the biggest, we're the top honcho at the FAO. The FAO director is almost always an American, at least in recent history. Why? Because we have the largest amount of food to give away and that the FAO can use to feed the starving millions. We're still living with a myth that the United States is really a small farmer and all that stuff, and the politicians evoke that all the time. This latest subsidy bill for American farmers is full of pious platitudes which are not true. Agriculture in this country, as in many developed countries, is really big business. We're talking about Archer Daniels Midland; we're not talking about Joe Farmer. The number of small farmers in the Untied States is going down, they can't compete with the big outfit, but that's one of the difficulties, and certainly it is one of the sticking points for free trade of the Americas. The Latins are saying, here you are in Brazil, you can grow an enormous amount of soybean and sugar, and Argentina you can grow wheat like it's going out of style and they're saying, why don't you open up your markets and produce well for us. Of course our farmers are saying, not on your life. That's going to have to be resolved frankly at the World Trade Organization. If the other producers, particularly the Europeans, agree to lower the degree of protection, then the

U.S. will. The idea that we would do it just for Latin America simply is not going to sell. Congress won't approve that. The other thing to remember, Stuart, is that in the U.S. trade is the responsibility of the congress, not of the executive and that was done because our founding fathers understood the importance of trade and they understood it was too important to give to the executive branch, so I forget how the constitution actually reads. Trade with other countries is the purview of the Congress, and they are very jealous of that. Trade will be regulated by the congress.

Q: You went to Colombia and you were there from when to when?

FRECHETTE: I was there from '94 to '97. Almost four years. The longest serving U.S. ambassador there since the 1980s.

Q: Did you have any problems in confirmation?

FRECHETTE: No. Nope, I didn't. I remember when I went to Cameroon I think I told you this story, Senator Helms threatened because of my attitude that I was soft on Castro which was bogus, he might give some trouble. He made me wait a long time. He made everybody wait in the room and then eventually one of the staffers came in and said the senator was too busy to ask me any questions. So, I got confirmed for Cameroon with no problem. Colombia, nothing, I sailed through that. By then the Cuban American thing had disappeared and all the rest of it.

Q: Where did you feel the thrust or the push for your nomination for Colombia came? You were talking about the ARA establishment and sort of hoped you were out of the way.

FRECHETTE: It didn't come from ARA, I can tell you that. I don't really know exactly where it came from, but the story that I had been sacrificed for the Cuban Americans rang a bell with the Democrats and they also felt that I had done a good job at USTR. The two things together. I was not ARA's candidate for Colombia at all. They had felt basically here was a guy who'd been shipped off as a remittance man and you know, it's one less guy in competition. It's one of the failures I think in the Foreign Service; we're not very cohesive. We do not have a real sense in the Foreign Service of helping each other or even of helping the Service. It's partly due to our promotion system. Our promotion system is you against the world. Don't you think?

Q: You have to look out for yourself.

FRECHETTE: Absolutely. So, where's the solidarity for fellow officers? Chuck that, you know, I want to get ahead. I could see that very carefully. I was welcomed back to ARA. I was heading up the policy planning group when I came back from USTR, but it didn't take any kind of a weegie board or any extra sensory perception to see that there was no hostility, but there was disappointment. God durn it, this guy here is going to compete for jobs. I don't know who ARA put up for Colombia. You know how it is. The director general has input from various areas in the Department, it's not just the affected assistant secretary. It's other people, and the Secretary sometimes plays a role. I was not ARA's

choice. I don't know who was.

Q: Who was the assistant secretary for ARA at that time?

FRECHETTE: Alec Watson.

Q: He's a Brazilian hand, too.

FRECHETTE: Yes. Sure. There were many in ARA. There were many in ARA who felt that I took USTR too seriously, that I took trade policy too seriously, that I should have been looking out more for State Department's interests than USTR's interests. My argument was the whole idea of details to other agencies would falter if that was the operating assumption. The operating assumption is that you go to another agency because you have skills, and you work for that agency, as though it were your own. You're not sort of our man in USTR who calls up in the dead of night oh Carla Hills is going to do this. I never did any of that, any of it, although I was asked continually for sort of tips and stuff and I was threatened, too. If you ever want to come back here to ARA, you really ought to be playing closer to us.

Q: In '94 before you went out to Colombia, you obviously were reading your way into this and all, who had been our ambassador there?

FRECHETTE: Morris Busby. We really had three ambassadors who were, how shall we put it, national security types, and I don't mean types in a preferred way. We had had Tony Gillespie who was really a very capable ambassador. He came from the administrative side of things and he in the Reagan years was our ambassador to Grenada. That was basically seen as sort of a national security person followed by Ted McNamara who was a PM guy all his life, all his career.

Q: What was PM?

FRECHETTE: Pardon?

Q: For the thing, PM means political military.

FRECHETTE: Political military. Then there was Morris Busby, who in fact had been a military man. He'd been a naval officer and came over from the law of the sea and was very skillful at negotiating and writing law of the sea positions, so he left the navy and became an FSO under one of those strange entrance programs that occasionally appeared. He went to Colombia basically as a military man to craft a prescient and militarized policy against the narco traffickers.

Now, at USTR I also had to be the U.S. coffee negotiator and this was a problem for me in Colombia because President Bush had reached the conclusion that the coffee agreement was signed in '63 and of course times were different. In '63 everybody thought this was a good way to transfer resources to the developing world, and we had

trade agreements, I mean wheat, sugar, you name it, we had agreements. None of them exist today or at least operate. They may still exist and they may meet every once in a while, but they basically exchange information. The idea was that if the coffee producing countries would restrict the amount of coffee they would sell, that is quotas, then they could keep the price up at a level that would be beneficial to their economies. What happened immediately? The producing countries would then sell what they were not able to sell under quotas, but they were supposed to keep in their warehouse until next year, and they'd sell it on the black market and so it would appear in Eastern Europe or somewhere like that. The Eastern Europeans didn't drink Colombian coffee or Costa Rican coffee. They then sold it on the West European market and the Eastern Europeans drank that dreadful Arabica or from Africa or instant coffee, worse. So, the agreement really did not function, ever. With time the private sector in this country kept beating up on the administration saying this does not serve our interests, why the hell are we doing it? So, finally President Bush, the father, said to the President of Colombia, hey, we're getting out of the coffee agreement, it doesn't work. He responded, oh, you're going to put hundreds of thousands of people out of work, you're going to ruin Colombia, and Bush said, fine. As long as it's a trade oriented, market oriented coffee agreement, I'm prepared to negotiate it. So, that job fell to me. Of course Colombia was not and is not the most powerful country in the coffee agreement. It was Brazil, because it was tremendous. The Brazilians, the first two years that I was there at USTR, they just stonewalled. They didn't want negotiations. Eventually the pleading by the other countries got so great that there were negotiations. Then it was basically the Brazilians and the Colombians who frankly thought that Bush had winked and said I want a market oriented agreement, but it was just a little makeup on the patient and it's going to be all right.

It was my misfortune to have to negotiate with a whole bunch of very good, bright Colombians and Brazilians and keep repeating market oriented, market oriented. I spent many hours in London, very pleasant ones, negotiating coffee and repeating my mantra, market oriented. In the end I left USTR. USTR, to emphasize Bush's position, three months before I entered USTR, the U.S. got out of the economic clauses of the coffee agreement. We won't observe these anymore. We don't believe this meets our interests. Then of course there was no willingness on the part of the coffee producing countries to really make change. They thought that they were entitled to a free ride. I left USTR in May of '93 and in September, the next meeting in London, the U.S. dropped out of the international coffee agreement altogether. So, one of the things that happened in Colombia when I was appointed ambassador, and it was known down there that I was going to be the ambassador, was the coffee people who said, oh, that son of a bitch, he killed the coffee agreement. Of course, I'd done nothing of the kind. That's the way they are. They personalize these things and because I speak Spanish and because I visited their countries and made a lot of speeches, everybody knew what our story was, market oriented coffee agreement. At first I got down to Colombia and there was some very strong op-ed pieces about this guy who had wrecked coffee. So, I was obliged to do my own op-ed piece and I said, let's review the chronology here, and I gave them the chronology I've given you. None of these things were done by me. It was the policy of the United States. You can hardly think that the U.S. ambassador negotiating coffee was going to take a position like that if it hadn't been articulated by the president, and in fact

it was. The thing just went away. They were not used to that kind of thing where the American ambassador says, wait a minute, the truth is this. They weren't used to it and there was muttering. They said, this guy is like Ambassador Spruille Braden who in World War II said we had to shape up and stick with the allies and stop flirting with the axis. They didn't like Ambassador Braden. He was a tough egg, and he was declared persona non grata in Argentina by Peron, and all the rest of it. It was for the Colombians not a great thing when I was appointed because they saw me as a guy who didn't want to play along with the coffee agreement. When I left it was very different. They knew that I was truly interested in trade issues and I was trying to help Colombia. The reaction in Colombia in the press to my being named president of the American society was very positive.

Q: Well, now when you got there in the first place, let's talk about the embassy, how did you find the embassy at that point?

FRECHETTE: You know, this is good and it's worth talking about. In the U.S. government people don't like to hear bad news. So, with a number of governments the public enunciation of what country X represents, the United States is often way out of synchronization with the present. That was certainly the case in Venezuela. When I was there the mantra was Venezuela's the strongest democracy in the region. It didn't matter that the embassy was under my three ambassadors there sending up cables saying corruption is increasing in politics. The parties are stealing money from the government to maintain their apparatus. We went through that, you know, they thought that was a good thing. The same thing with Colombia. I met people like Pete Vaky who was one of my heroes. He had been ambassador to Colombia. They all said, look, Colombia is a very legalistic place, but it's a country of laws. All the institutions in Colombia work, and you know, all you have to do is go to see the old presidents and they all work together sort of in the dead of night and things will be squared away. This was a myth. This was a myth. When I got down there I discovered that in fact the democracy was failing in Colombia. None of the institutions worked. I was given one of those briefings that Meridian House gives out for ambassadors. All the academics in the United States who worked on Colombia, and they all gave me the same pap and it was pap.

Interestingly enough I asked for another meeting with the academics in 1996 two years after I'd been there and then the song was very different. Then it was so clear that Colombia was all the things I've told you. Morris Busby had run the embassy, narcotics that's it. The State Department was very depressed. Nobody gave a damn about political reporting. He took the view that it didn't matter much, or economic reporting. It was a one note embassy, drugs. I got down there and I said, this won't do, we've got many things to do here and the most important is to really increase the political and economic reporting. Here we are trying to get the Colombians to join the free trade area. Let's talk about this economy, it's faltering terribly. Let's talk about the political events here so Washington understands the climate under which we're working. That made me something of a hero to the State Department. I had good officers clamoring to go to Colombia despite the difficulties and the rotten living conditions and the death threats because we were really hitting things that had been ignored for some years in Colombia.

I'm not going to tell you that Morris Busby didn't send political reporting up, but it was clear that was not his. The DEA and the FBI and other agencies at first sort of said, God, you know, narcotics is not his only priority, he's got other priorities. With time we developed an excellent country team approach and everybody understood that I was there to advance our counter narcotics policy, but I wanted to advance other policies as well.

There was a guy there who was the head of the DEA. His name was Joseph Toft, T-O-F-T, and a very good DEA man. He'd been there for seven years and you know that old expression in the Foreign Service, this guy's missed too many boats. Well, that was what had happened to Joe Toft. I got down there and it was ridiculous. Our ambassador, Mr. Busby, did not speak any Spanish and he abhorred the press. So, he rarely if ever met with the press. On the other hand, Joe Toft used to hold court. He had a salon in a coffeehouse where he met with the press and he told them what U.S. policy was. I got down there and I remember the first staff meeting. By then Joe knew he was leaving Colombia after seven years, they figured it was time. Besides the narcos were pushing a little bit. Even they knew that seven years was too much. I remember we had the first staff meeting on my third day at post and everybody went in there. Joe Toft said, well, Mr. Ambassador, welcome to a narco democracy and this is going to happen and that's going to happen and I agreed with some of what he said. Most of what he said was just poor Joe Toft, a DEA guy who really didn't understand what all our interests were in the region. So, when the staff meeting was over I asked him to stay behind. I said, look, you and I haven't served together and you're leaving in September. I just want you to know this is your last staff meeting. I don't want you on this floor again. I don't like your views. I think they're dead wrong and I'm running this embassy. That was it. I never saw Joe Toft again. In the meantime Joe Toft decided that he really didn't want to continue with DEA because they weren't giving him the post he wanted, so he resigned from the DEA. His resignation became effective at midnight the day before he left Colombia. The day he left Colombia, which was just a few hours after his resignation from DEA, he gave an interview to the media, to this woman he'd been working with on a TV channel, that was full of half truths and Joe Toftisms and so on. Blasted Colombia on a number of grounds. That was my first call-in to see the president. He called me over to the presidential palace. He said, I've got to see you right away. I got over there and the minister of defense was there and the minister of justice, and they were pissed, and I didn't know what was going on. They said, your DEA guy, Joe Toft, has just given an interview. I said, wait a minute, when was it given? He said, well, it was yesterday morning. I said, well, he resigned from the DEA at midnight and he has left the country. Well, they had the text of the interview and it was a blast against Colombia and against the president, and the people weren't doing their job to fight drugs and so on. That was my first experience. It was a good experience because I sort of gathered in everybody in the embassy and I said look narcotics is job one here, but we have a number of other jobs and the first job is the following. Nobody in this embassy other than the public affairs officer or the ambassador will talk to the press. Anybody who does, and I catch them, will be on the next plane out. I want that clearly understood. I direct the policy. I'm very confident that I know what the policy is and I'm going to work very closely with you guys, but the salons with the press are over. That worked very well.

Q: As you saw it when you went out there in 1994, what was the government of Colombia like in its executions?

FRECHETTE: The government of Colombia then was lead by César Gaviria, who now is secretary general of the OAS. He's a very straightforward guy, very realpolitik kind of guy. He'll make a deal with the devil if it advances his cause. He had a relationship with Busby where basically he didn't let Busby get out of line. Busby spoke sort of out of turn and he would shut him up. So, I knew it was not going to be easy. Fortunately, the president was leaving office. I arrived there on July 21, the transfer of office was August 7, but the foreign minister said I want you to meet this president. He's agreed to accept your credentials three days after you arrive, which is a huge gesture towards the United States. I mean they've had all these other ambassadors waiting for weeks spinning their heels. So, I went in there and he gave me a dressing down about the United States, not about me, didn't know me at all. He said, you guys are always trying to tell everybody what to do. I govern Colombia, and the next president will govern Colombia, and don't you tell us how to run our country. It was really, talk about a bucket of cold water, it was really something. I sort of thought for the first five minutes, maybe I should walk out. Then I thought to myself no, he's just unburdening himself. He won't be the president here in three weeks. Let him get it out of his system. I sat there and I didn't say anything. I said, Mr. President I thank you for your candor and I thank you for having accepted my credentials. This is a great thing for me. Washington appreciates it. I am now official. In other words I sidestepped that big pile of smelly stuff that he left there on the floor. We got along fine. We got along fine even after he left office. I had to go and see him on a number of occasions on one thing or another. For instance, his brother was kidnapped by a guerrilla group and was let go under suspicious circumstances, and Washington wanted to know if it had been arranged by Castro. I had to go see him and he gave me a very good account.

The other thing was we had had three ambassadors who didn't care much about the politics of Colombia, and I became very much involved with all the parties, getting to know what it was they were thinking and so on. We had never had an ambassador who had done a lot on trade. I never gave a speech on political issues. All my speeches, every one of them, was about trade and the advantages of lowering trade barriers. However, I was instructed by Washington for articulating our policy. We had to make the Colombians understand that we wanted results on the counter narcotics war and no more fooling around. When I was caught by the press coming out of the foreign ministry, out of the president's room, they'd say, what did you talk about with the president? I wouldn't give them an awful lot of details, but what is the position of the Untied States on cooperation with Colombia? I said, well, we need more. We're giving you a lot of money and we want you to succeed, but we need more results because remember when I got to Colombia it was true that Pablo Escobar had been shot to death in December 1993.

Q: He was the top drug lord at that time.

FRECHETTE: I arrived in post in July of '94 and the Medellin cartel had been taken over. With Escobar dead, the Medellin cartel began to fall apart just like mafias do in the

United Stats when you nab one of the top people. The Cali Cartel was in full sway, and they were gaining influence. The most amazing thing to me was everybody in the media knew how to find those guys in the Cali Cartel, but the police weren't on their tail. The first thing we wanted was catch the Cali Cartel, and within one year of my arrival every big guy in the Cali Cartel was in jail. Either because he'd been arrested or he figured out that if he didn't turn himself in, he might end up like Escobar, dead.

Q: I want to come to narcotics, but let's talk about the political situation first.

FRECHETTE: Colombia has a very proud history. It's a country of great literacy. A lot of people. More people can read and write in Colombia than virtually any other country in Latin America except possibly Cuba. It was one of the first countries with which we established diplomatic relations. It was a country that in a continent of dictators for well over a century had only two dictators in its entire history. One guy who was dictator for just a few months in the 19th century. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla who was dictator for about three years in the 1950s. This is a country that was regarded by everybody, people like Vaky, the academics, as a country of laws. It was a country that believed very strongly in the OAS. The Colombians after all had sent troops to Korea.

Q: And very proud of it, too.

FRECHETTE: Very proud of it, and it was a great gesture, and so we had distinguished relationships with them. They were a country that appeared to be on the surface one of the poster children, if you will, on democracy. The conventional wisdom in Washington was that's where the all the institutions are alive and well, thank you and the place just kind of took over. What I discovered just as I mentioned earlier, it wasn't the truth about Venezuela. It wasn't the truth in Colombia either. There were two political parties, which had dominated politics in Colombia since the beginning. The liberals and the conservatives.

Q: Wasn't it the reds and the blues or something?

FRECHETTE: Yes, right. They had fought throughout the 19th century, the war of 1,000 days. That had a lot to do with the rivalry between the two parties. The Valencia in the 1950s was basically sort of two feudal armies, liberals and conservatives, sort of say, a landowner in the interior will go to fight against another landowner who was the other party, all the serfs went with him, you know, all the guys who worked with him automatically became liberals or conservatives. Whatever the patron was, that's what they were. A lot of people were killed there. Probably over 200,000 people died. By then the population of Colombia was five million people. In the war of 1,000 days at the end of the 19th century when Colombia was just two or three million people, hell, they lost 100,000 people. It's a violent place.

Q: Here in the United Stats, we're always hearing about when Colombian drug people came up there they tended just to shoot everything. They were considered more violent than other groups.

FRECHETTE: Exactly. The Conservative Party became the second most important party in Colombia way back in the 1930s. The Liberals clearly were the dominant party. After the Valencia there was a political device that was put into place by the head of the two parties in which the two parties would alternate in power. It was all cooked up. That lasted until the 1970s, and it still to some extent exists today, but formally it ended in the 1970s. Obviously the Liberals are the big party; the Conservatives in World War II were very much in favor of throwing in with Hitler and company. It was a situation, and the congress was a mess full of corruption. Many people were either bought off or intimated by the druggies. I mean, the court system, except for the Supreme Court, was corrupt. What institution was there that worked? There were none that I could see except maybe the presidency and the Supreme Court, and who did we have as president when I arrived? A man who had been elected with $6 million of narco money. The United States was very concerned about him and understandably so.

Q: What was his name?

FRECHETTE: His name was Ernesto Samper. We had warned him before I was appointed ambassador that we knew he had taken the money. Of course he denied it and we entered into a pact with him. We said, okay, you say, you didn't take the money, fine, then behave as though you were a strong counter drug guy, work with us. He said yes. Of course that was not the case. Both he and his interior minister, Horacio Serpa, who lost the election in 1998 to Andreas Pastrana, did everything they could on a strategic basis to defeat what we were trying to do. They were always trying to weaken the laws in the congress. Remember it was the liberal party that dominated the congress when I discovered that the minister of interior was watering counter drug legislation. I went to see the president on several occasions. I said, you know, you've got to turn this thing around. You made a promise to my government that it would turn around. You've got to make a speech, and you do it. It was a case of constantly watching these two foxes attacking the hen house. Fortunately I had a lot of allies among the ministers. The ministers, by and large, were very decent people who felt that the image of Colombia in the Untied States was of just a drug ridden society falling apart, or a drug ridden society that was unfair, and they wanted to help Colombia. The police chief and I became fast friends and we made a lot of progress, but it was a very odd thing where the president and his interior minister were fighting a strategic battle to undercut our objectives. On a technical level those ministers who had a role to play were working with us. That's what made the job particularly challenging because it was a political nightmare.

Q: We keep coming back to drugs and in our next session, we'll talk about the drugs, but let's talk about getting the embassy, I mean, what had caused this image of Colombia being an institution where all the places worked?

FRECHETTE: I think essentially, Washington adopts an attitude about a country and they very frequently don't want to hear when an embassy says you know, it's really not that way. Venezuela was a good case in point and I'm sure that there are many other cases. For example, Saudi Arabia, today, Hume Horan in his time told the Department

that Saudi Arabia was a place with severe problems and all the horrible things that we believe about Saudi Arabia today. That was not the conventional wisdom in Washington, it wasn't in the congress, it wasn't in the administration. They didn't want to hear different. I don't know how you deal with that. I was sent to Colombia in the belief everything was okay in politics and when I got down there I came back very quickly. I said, everything you've told me is not true. Let me explain. I did a whole series of cables, and even then the Department didn't want to hear about it. They just didn't want to hear about it. Why? I suspect the main reason was you didn't want to sort of add to your list of trouble spots another country. The other thing was that the real concentration of the United States with Colombia was not really democracy or even human rights, it was the drug issue. Let's not confuse what our priorities are in Colombia. You say the politics and the economics suck, let's work on counter narcotics. We've got to get some results. My explanation for why it is Washington had this mistaken view is probably simplistic. There are probably other factors in it.

Q: How did you find the staff of your embassy? Had they felt they had been under constraints about reporting the problems?

FRECHETTE: Yes, they felt that basically Ambassador Busby was interested only in the counter narcotics thing and didn't really care much about politics or economics. So, when I arrived and said we were going to divide that, I think the morale of the State Department officers did a whole lot of good. Because when I got there it was Fort Apache, this was a counter narcotics embassy, who cares what the State Department thinks. In fact there was some mumbling and grumbling on the part of the DEA and others. Busby was a former military officer. McNamara was a pol/mil guy and here's a guy, whose most recent claim to fame is trade. They couldn't understand it. So, there was the grumbling by those agencies, for example in the business of who was going to be the spokesman. I told the other agencies to butt out and leave it alone, it's my job. There was some disappointment. I think though within the year the drug agencies realized that I was on their side and that I was pushing their case and pushing very hard. We made more progress in my almost four years on counter drugs than my previous three predecessors who were so highly vaunted as national security types. The reason was we articulated what we wanted and we were persistent about it and we had a weak president.

Ernest Samper, because he was so under suspicion because he'd taken the money, was in fact a weak president. It was very difficult for him to say no to the United States. I can tell you some of the things that he did. He wanted to get the DEA out, and I can explain to you why he wanted the DEA out of Colombia. He thought they were spying on him and I said, no, they're just a police agency doing drugs. Now, fighting drugs. If somebody in your administration is in fact dealing with the druggies, yes, they'll go after them, but he thought they were bugging his phone. One of the biggest battles I fought for the first two years I was there was to keep the DEA in Colombia. That's what brought the DEA around to realize that I was not just the State Department cookie pusher and that I really believed in the mission.

Q: Were we able to do anything to strengthen institutions there? I mean, like the courts?

FRECHETTE: We had a program. President Bush's father had given $36 million to Colombia for judicial reform, and my three predecessors had squandered that money because they just didn't give it much importance. They were there fighting drugs and the justice ministers in Colombia sort of said, well, I'll give you some examples. They said, you know, our courts in Colombia don't have a good set of law books from Colombia. So, millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars went into buying Colombia law books. It was an absurdity, but it was a way of saying they're cooperating when in fact nothing much was happening. I worked very hard on judicial reform and indeed we did do some judicial reform. We strengthened laws on counter narcotics, strengthened the laws on money laundering, strengthened the laws on forfeiture and on a bilateral basis we entered into a maritime ship boarding agreement that is today hailed in Colombia as a great example of U.S. cooperation. Again, not as much as we would like.

Reforming the judicial system in Colombia is going to take a very long time because among other things, maybe Colombian lawyers just don't believe that the accusatory system we use here is really better than what they've got under the Napoleonic Code. So, the U.S. government is still today sort of fiddling around at the edges of judicial reform. We are financing places where people without money or influence can go to resolve things that shouldn't have been in the legal system anyway. Disputes with their neighbors, small claims. It's a contribution, but does it get to the fact that there's 97% impunity in Colombia legal system, both civil and criminal? No, of course not. We're pussy-footing around this issue, but you really are going to have to have a president in Colombia who can mobilize public opinion to seriously go after judicial reform. Judicial reform is the key to everything in life. You do not have a legal system that works and is perceived by Colombia as working, you won't have democracy, you won't have a working democratic system. It's as simple as that. Judicial reform is moving closer to the front of the queue as one of the issues.

Q: We've got to keep in mind that we're a foreign power and we can suggest, we can help finance, but if the will isn't there.

FRECHETTE: If the will isn't there, and that's the problem in Colombia. The idea of imposing our system on them often struck me as kind of strange, but you know it doesn't have to be the Americans who set the pace. There is now a justice system in Santiago, Chile, a, how shall I put it, a multilateral regional center, and surely they could develop with the Chileans a judicial system that works better. The new president has brought in an absolutely cracker-jack lawyer who I'm sure will do some good things to reform the judicial system, but I'm not sure he really thinks our accusatory system is the best.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop, but I'll put down what we want to talk about, your coming to Colombia and your initial impression of the place, which is over-concentrated anti-narcotics and nothing else. I do want to talk about the whole narcotics thing, but before that, let's talk about your officers, how you lived at that time, what the threats were, how did this affect the ability of your officers to get out and meet and do the normal things that political and economic officers do. Also, consular activities and

Americans involved, and then we'll go into narcotics and what we were doing there, but let's first let's talk about running an embassy that's not as you were terming as Fort Apache, which was strictly under siege and all.

FRECHETTE: All right.

Q: Great.

***

Q: This is August 1, 2002. Myles, confirmation, I mean you'd had your problems. How did things work out when it finally came time?

FRECHETTE: Actually confirmation was much smoother than the first time when I went to Cameroon where we thought that Senator Helms was going to raise a ruckus, and in the end he just sort of faded around and made us wait for an hour and then didn't come. The confirmation hearing went very smoothly. The Department gave plenty of support. I was very pleased with it. Senator Dodd presided.

Q: Of Connecticut.

FRECHETTE: Yes. He was amazed when in my testimony I pointed out that Colombia was an old ally, an old friend, and that they actually sent troops to Korea, the only country in Latin America. He loved that theme and he embellished on it for about 10 or 15 minutes and then it was just kisses on both cheeks and I sailed out of there. By then all the business with the Cuban Americans and the Castro thing had disappeared. What I focused on in my statement was we have to do narcotics, that's obviously the first responsibility, but we have to also understand the politics and economics of the place. I pledged to them, and I kept it, that I would take a good look at staffing our political and economic section. It was very clear to me, and Dodd himself, he said, you know we haven't really heard anything other than narcotics for a long time. I said, yes, that's absolutely right and this is what I'm going to do. Well, I was quite prophetic because when I got down there.

Q: Well, before you got down there, in the bureau and the Colombian desk, did you find that there was discomfort with the fact that everything was narcotics? I mean were people coming up to you saying, look we have other fish to fry besides this?

FRECHETTE: Oh, I did. The desk officers were very good. I had one woman who was really very good, a sort of a junior officer, Eva Weigold. She's at the NSC now. Excellent officer. I'd been very lucky. I'd had a terrific series of desk officers when I was ambassador to Cameroon and I did very well in Colombia as well. Of course that was the complaint, you know, nobody gives a damn, etc. I talked to them about the political and economic reporting which seemed to me to be pretty thin. I understood why. My predecessor was Ambassador Busby who had been a naval officer who had worked on the law of the sea and then left the navy and came into the State Department under some

special program. He had done very well on law of the sea, a smart guy, tough as nails, very to the right of the spectrum, and he understood that his predecessor, who was Ted McNamara, a pol/mil specialist, they both were given to understand that drugs were the thing. When I got down there of course I found Busby had concentrated totally on the narcotics thing and had been very heavily involved in planning how to defeat the cartel. He worked very closely, being a former military officer, with the Colombians. This brought an end to great conflict with General McCaffrey who was at SOUTHCOM. General McCaffrey is a very difficult guy. I don't want to go into it, but there's an awful lot. He's just, he was mendacious, vicious, probably the most mendacious and vicious person I've ever worked with in public service. He was a four star general, highly decorated, but he was basically sort of always like a teenager. It was something immature about the guy. When he wanted to do something, he wanted to do it, and of course he had the Clinton administration over the barrel. The Clinton administration was known as not being hard on drugs, and he had been at the NSC. He was insulted by Dee Dee Myers who was then in the press office.

Q: And Clinton not having served in the military.

FRECHETTE: Soft on drugs. Remember, I smoked marijuana, but I didn't inhale it. Never served in the military. McCaffrey was adolescent in every way. He recognized that this was a terrific opening for him, and he went for it. Very ambitious and that's good, I mean, after he tried to get to be chief of staff of the army, he tried to get to be chairman of the joint chiefs and not just once. He tried several times until he finally figured out that he had outworn his welcome even with Clinton and that it was curtains, and so he went off to West Point to be a sort of a senior guy. In any event, McCaffrey had absolutely outrageous modus operandi, which unfortunately Busby fell for. What was the operative? He ran SOUTHCOM, you know, they say this is a war-fighting command. Well, sure, but that's why the four stars.

So he had those poor buggers there working 24 hours a day and seven days a week, those officers. Of course since this was not war fighting, the kind of work they actually produced was garbage and the poor guys were exhausted. He was tyrannical and he rode them. Anytime the guy didn't perform in an absolutely obsequious way McCaffrey would ruin his career. McCaffrey I think has ruined more careers than he killed people in his entire military career. He's a terrible guy, but one of the things he used to do since he worked there seven days, he used sort of a technique that Fidel Castro uses and Stalin and Mao. He'd call Busby, get this, at 1:30 am in the morning. Now you know an ambassador is sitting in his residence, he doesn't have any staff officers, nothing. He's in the residence with his servants and outside there are the guards protecting him, but no staff, no nothing. It's certainly not running 24 hours a day. He'd call him up and then they'd get into a huge fight, yelling and shouting on the phone. I remember when I went to see McCaffrey, he said, well, the problem, looking pointedly at the four stars, Busby might have made a good brigadier if he'd ever been promoted to that rank. Very quickly, when I got down there he gave me one of those calls. He didn't call me at 1:30 in the morning; he called me at 10:00 pm. I said, you know, Barry, let me tell you something about an ambassador. I'm living here with my wife. I have servants in the back. I do not have any

staff. Is this call about something that I must make a decision about tonight? He said, well, no. I said, fine, call me in the morning, I get up early, you can call me anytime after 5:00 am, I'm up. I think let's set some rules here. If you want me to make a decision you can call me anytime of the day or night, but to call me up to schmooze at 10:30 pm, no I don't want to do that. Among other things I have a very active social life representing the United States. I am the president's representative. I knew all the antecedents with the guy. He went back to his staff and said, that guy Frechette is a prima donna. He won't talk to me after hours unless it's to make a decision. Frankly I gave him a very good decision, you know, screw you. You want to call me to schmooze at 10:30 pm? Get lost.

I got down there and of course everybody in State was absolutely bummed out. Busby had not dealt with the State Department. He ignored the political and economic sections according to the people who were there. I wasn't there as you know, but this was what they told me. I found quite honestly that the econ section, which I thought should be very strong, was held by a guy whom I discovered to be not the hardest working guy in the world. I was amazed when an old ambassador friend of mine said, oh, you got ruh ruh, I knew his father. His father was a lazy guy who never worked more than 9:00 to 5:00 any day in his whole career in the Foreign Service. It's interesting, this guy is gone, was doing exactly what his father had done.

Anyway, I got in there and I sort of got together with all the sections. I said, we're going to make a team here. We're going to have the guys who work on narcotics and we're going to have people who work on pol and all this sort of stuff and I'm going to work with all of you. Then I set about trying to recruit a new bunch of good political and economic officers. It was virtually impossible. The security situation, the reputation the post had acquired as being run by an ambassador who couldn't care less about the economic, and of course I can understand it. It's very rational. Washington as far as he was concerned, only cared about the drugs. The econ officers just didn't want to go to Colombia. They'd heard about the reputation, they didn't like the security thing and I could not really recruit a first class guy. Finally Ambassador Patterson, who is now the ambassador to Colombia, who had been a deputy assistants secretary said, why don't you try this guy, he worked for me in El Salvador and he's not really an econ guy, but he can do econ work. Well, I'm sorry to say the guy was a bust. On that one it really came out wrong, but I did manage to recruit some, the word was out that I didn't mind the gender of an officer or if they were black or whatever, I wanted good officers and I got some good women. I got some good women, but not at the senior levels. I wanted sort of a pol/econ counselor if I couldn't have a good econ counselor. You know, ARA got cleaned out in the Reagan years. It's very difficult to really point to really outstanding offices in WHA today. One of them, Tom Shannon, who was my desk officer when I was in Cameroon, has now been promoted to deputy assistant secretary and I recommended him for a number of jobs. There's a guy who's on the move. But it's very difficult and very sad.

Q: This is interesting, I mean what was it that caused this exodus do you think? One of the charges ever since I came into the Foreign Service in 1955, and it probably goes way back before that, was that somehow ARA is such an enclosed place that the real action

isn't there. I mean these people live in their own world, and Kissinger felt this and he had the GLOP program. Had things improved and then all of a sudden been ruined?

FRECHETTE: No, I think, first of all, let's be honest. Latin America, except for short periods during my career, has never been top priority. It was briefly in Kennedy's time, very briefly. Well, you had Bolivia and all this stuff, and Castro, and Kennedy cared. I once got a call from him about 7:30 in the morning. He used to call desk officers. That was the way it was, and there was the time when Kennedy had several of his senior people who were State Department officers, guys who advised him on a bunch of things. Some of the assistant secretaries were less than fantastic. There was Tom Mann. I think I told you his quote, which he smilingly told me when I met him, was you know the Latins are the kinds of guys you pat on the head and kick in the ass. Sort of almost contempt. You know, Tom Mann is a very capable guy and they've had some very capable assistant secretaries, but by and large the bureau did not do well by really the bright officers. Then the Reagan people came along and the brighter officers didn't think much of the Reagan emphasis on Cuba. I was the Cuba guy and they didn't think much of his emphasis on Central America. There were other issues. So, what they did was, I think I've mentioned this before, they brought in lawyers. They brought in Mike Kozak, they brought Jim something or other, I'll think of the name, very capable lawyer who later was administrator for AID. Why did they pick them? Because these were people who didn't lecture back. They were people who said, fine, what's the job, I'll do it. As lawyers they were trained to sort of take the case and move it forward.

So, there were a number of guys who just sort of said well I better seek my fortune somewhere else. You know Latin America was hot with Kennedy and there was Alliance for Progress and all this sort of stuff, by the end of the '60s, it had pretty much lost it's big luster. There was the overthrowing of the government in the Dominican Republic, but after that it was felt that there were other parts of the world that were far more critical. Then the idea that they really didn't want guys to lecture the Reagan administration on the way the hemisphere worked. Just do it. I think it's a shame, and we're seeing the results of it now. It just was not a place where a political officer felt that he really had a clear way to the future and a future as an ambassador. There are two or three people who are going out to the region now who by any measure should not be ambassadors. They're fine at the lower level, maybe at the consular level, but you don't look to them for any sort of ideas, you don't look to them for any kind of leadership. They were always people who basically took the orders, and that's a shame. Now, I don't know what other bureaus are like. Obviously Africa is the only other bureau that I had any experience, but I never worked in the bureau. You had people who just liked Africa and they want to work in Africa.

Q: Also, it was very challenging, it was not an easy life in Africa basically. I mean these are people self selected. They're willing to take on some difficult jobs.

FRECHETTE: Sure, but they did have some good people. Dennis Keogh, who was blown up and then burned alive in South Africa, stopped for gas somewhere and he and a military guy from the embassy. There was a bomb planted there at the gas station and

they were both burned alive. Jeff Davidow worked with Chet Crocker. Chet Crocker was a Republican. He's at Georgetown, but he was I think a very worthy guy. He was a very serious academic.

Q: Well, he had a policy and it worked.

FRECHETTE: He worked at it all the time, and it was Angola and the engagement of the frontline states and all that stuff. Considering where we were with Africa, it came out okay. You had Chas Freeman, Frank Wisner; they had all been deputy assistant secretaries. You did not have people of that caliber in WHA.

Q: In a way when you got to Colombia, your team was not the type of team you would have liked to have had particularly in the trouble spots. I mean it's not like going to Austria or something like that. You know, you take what you get and all. But here is a team that McCaffrey aside, you are on sort of on a frontline, a real place of conflict and yet the system as it was at that time couldn't produce.

FRECHETTE: Because, you know, the system, it's not very responsive. When you basically give people a choice of where they're going to go, but they're going to go to a place like Colombia where the kids can be kidnapped?

Q: I'm trying to nail this one down, were you able to appeal in the way that in the Foreign Service you can get people to go to a Lebanon, you can get people to go to Vietnam, you know, by saying, look this is a place of danger, but you'll get rewarded for it. The fact that you're coming here, could you appeal to that?

FRECHETTE: I did. It was a little different, what I said, and I was unsuccessful at the senior level, at the head of the econ section, the head of the political section, they were frankly disappointments. I was able to appeal to people one level down and two levels down and I did get some very fine officers, men and women. Very fine officers. One of them left the Service, she works for McLarty now, Kellie Meiman, she was a person in my econ section, absolutely first class.

Q: Kellie what?

FRECHETTE: Meiman. She's married now. I don't know what her last name is, but it's M-E-I-M-A-N. Kellie Meiman. She later left Sao Paulo, she left Bogota and was consul general in Porto Alegre until that post was closed, a very good econ officer. Peg Willingham, who left the Service, too, she was one of a tandem couple. They wanted very much to get down there, and their marriage later fell apart, but I helped her get a job in the private sector. I just got a letter up in New York from Kellie Meiman sort of saying, gee, I hope I get to work together with you on trade issues. McLarty is working very closely with your council in New York. The consular section was also a disappointment. The consul general had been taking money for visas. He got shipped out.

Q: Good God.

FRECHETTE: Not big, you know, this was not sort of terrorists, just.

Q: Corrupt.

FRECHETTE: Oh, yes. I got down there and the first thing that struck me was the guy was never in in the afternoon. He was always playing golf. Jesus Christ, we've got queues here going around the block. Well, I'm the consul general I don't interview. Yes, but have you done everything to accelerate the thing? You know frankly I don't mind if you play golf once in a while, but God damn it we are paid for working 40 hours a week and when I call you up I want to get you on the phone, so get yourself a cell phone so I can get you on the golf course. Well, he figured that one out and went once a week. He used to go everyday. It was just unbelievable. Then I discovered this business. He got drummed out of the Service.

By and large I thought the consular officers were pretty good and I made a real effort to meet every week with all the junior officers. We used to have a session at my residence, with sandwiches and Coca-Cola and whatever and schmooze. What was I doing as ambassador? I'd tell them. This is what I'm doing. These are the issues and they liked that because otherwise they didn't have a clue because a lot of the stuff we did was highly classified and a lot of huggermugger, you know.

We had a big CIA station devoted almost exclusively to the drug target, and they had good people. They knew their priorities of other people were good.

The DEA had some good people, not at the top. A guy called Joe Toft had missed too many boats. He'd been there seven years and he was finally leaving and he was going to be given an important job up in New York. I think I may have told you this story. I went to my first staff meeting, it was the second day after I was there. I talked to everybody and gave them a chance to say their thing. It was a huge, big country team. Joe Toft said, well, Mr. Ambassador welcome to narco democracy. He began to give me a lecture about Colombia. I just didn't like it. I also knew that Busby didn't speak Spanish and never had anything to do with the media. So, this guy Joe Toft was holding court down in a coffee house, and there were all sorts of people in the embassy who were plugged into the media, Colombian, American, and British and all kinds of people saying things about Colombia. So, you know, there was coffee, what was the policy? When the staff meeting was over, I called Joe over and I said, Joe you're on the way out of here, you're out of here in a month and I didn't appreciate your comments, that's something you could have come up to see me about. Just stay on your floor until you leave here. I don't want you back in the staff meeting. The next staff meeting it's your deputy. The deputy was very good and very responsive. He had a number three who was very good. This Joe was too long in the tooth. Then in the end he retired, he decided that the DEA wasn't giving him a good enough spot. He retired and he got with a woman called Gloria who had been one of his sources, a very decent and very courageous woman. She had all sorts of sources in the military and so on. He got with her, he retired, and he was there one more day after having retired. I told him I said, no more media. He gave her this interview where he said

basically Colombia was screwed. It was so corrupt. There was no hope. The U.S. was wasting its time and he'd met a few Colombians who were decent, but basically they were all a bag of ruffians. You can just imagine.

I got called to the presidential palace. The president said, I need to see you right away, Mr. Ambassador. I went rolling over there, and there was the defense minister and the foreign minister and everybody was looking like they had just taken a glass of wine and they said, what about the interview and Joe talked? I said, what about it, I don't know anything about it, what are you talking about? Well, we've seen the proofs of the Semana Magazine that's going to come out tonight and listen to this stuff from Joe Toft. Well, you can imagine, it's sort of our Ambassador who got called in by the Brazilians a couple of days ago to ask that Paul O'Neill retract his comments that we would support money from Brazil, but that we didn't want all that money to immediately disappear in a Swiss bank. I sat there through this and they excoriated me. I said, well, first of all, I'm going to give you a typical answer you're not going to like. The guy retired last night so he's an American, he's free to do what he wants. I regret that this thing, what he had to say, was so upsetting, but the guy is gone, he left about an hour ago on the plane before I went to see the president. You may notice that since I got to post there's only one person, or two who speak about what policy is. My public affairs officer and myself. I said, this place was frankly a place where anybody could talk to anybody and nobody really knew what the policy was and now you're going to hear what the policy is. Well, Joe Toft, a very capable guy, but again sort of like Mary Ryan, missed too many boats. You just hang around too long and you become a liability. Then I got a guy called Seneca who had never worked abroad before.

Q: This is the DEA?

FRECHETTE: DEA. Seneca was a strange guy. He didn't bring down his wife. I suspected that they were getting a divorce and my suspicion was correct. It didn't matter though and pretty soon he got a live in friend and all this stuff. At first I was very impressed with the guy, but then he did a bunch of things which really showed me that he really wasn't ready to operate overseas. For instance, one night at 9:00 pm he said, I've got to see you. He brought in a couple prosecutors and these guys said we know that in the apartment just above your house, is one of the biggest guys, and we need two DEA cars to pull a raid. I said, wait a minute. No DEA cars, I'm terribly sorry. DEA is not here to be a law enforcement agency in an operative sense. They will advise you and work together, but they can't go on raids. In fact there is an amendment in the law that provides for that. Secondly, the use of a car with diplomatic plates, absolutely unacceptable. I'll tell you what I will do. I'll call the prosecutor and have him assign some cars so you can do the raid, because I think it's important. So, I called the prosecutor. I said, look I've got two guys here who tell me that not 300 yards from my residence there is one of the top narcos, and the guy laughed. We knew some of the apartments around my neighborhood were owned by these guys. I said, look, this is very important to me. You and I work well together. I want you to assign some cars, please right away, and let these guys do a raid. I mean what if they're right and we get the guy? Of course they weren't. It was a spectacular boondoggle. There was nobody in the apartment. Egg all over my face

because I'd gone to the prosecutor. The prosecutor called me up and said let's have breakfast. He came down and ribbed me a lot. We're still very good friends. He's their ambassador to the UN now and we're very good friends, but that was one of the indicators from Seneca.

The other thing about Seneca was he thought he was in the Bronx or something, or Fort Apache we used to call it. This is not Fort Apache, I used to lecture him. This is a diplomatic mission. There are very real rules under which you operate, and we operate as a team here. You can talk to me any day at any hour about stuff, but I want to know the stuff. I don't want to be told that I'm a State Department guy and I don't understand about pursuing criminals. Just give me a chance. He wouldn't use secure phones, and when I'd call him on it and they had very few, I said I told your predecessor to order a bunch of secure phones. These people here in Colombia are experts at bugging. You're going to get in trouble. Oh, don't worry, Mr. Ambassador, I've been a DEA guy. I just double-talk it and the guys at the other end understand. Well, one day the British ambassador comes back from a meeting down in Cartagena which I had not gone to because it looked sort of peripheral, but they had invited the entire diplomatic corps, but I had some other more pressing things to do. He said, "You ought to listen to this."

Q: This is the British ambassador?

FRECHETTE: British ambassador. Here's a tape recording, somebody has tape recorded Tony Seneca talking to Mary Lee Warren with two of his deputies on the phone and they're going.

Q: Mary Lee Warren, being?

FRECHETTE: Mary Lee Warren was a deputy attorney general, and she's a good friend of mine. I have great respect for her, but you know, these guys got her into a terrible fix and there they are double-talking to Mary Lee Warren. It's clear that the narcos had made this tape and there's this guy Seneca "double talking" very clear what they intended to do. Then of course, he said, well, you know this God damned ambassador he wants to know what we're doing all the time and you ought to go with Tom Constantine, who was the head of DEA, and tell the Department to tell this guy to ease up. He acts like he's an ambassador; I'm the DEA guy. We're doing the most important. I have a copy of the tape because it's really funny. This tape, the British ambassador said, was being handed around to Carlos who at that time was in the congress. He was a guy with drug antecedents and he'd been a guerrilla, too. He said he's going to play it in the congress tomorrow. This was the day I called in the entire country team and I switched on the radio and I said I want you to hear this debate in the congress. Here appears Tony Seneca on candid camera. I had everybody, the military, everybody. Well, Seneca of course left in great embarrassment, and I said when it was through, I said, you know I don't really think I have to say anything after this. Anybody who is not using a secure phone I expect to be using a secure phone and I said to the deputy in DEA, if you don't have any, just get them in somehow and start using this thing. I want you to know how sophisticated the Colombians are. It's the last time I want anybody to say to me that I'm just an

ambassador. I know Colombia a lot better than any of you guys do and here's a good case in point. I'd been warning Seneca about using the secure phone. I called in Seneca and I said you're out of here tomorrow. I said, your own regulations in DEA require you to use a secure phone. The State Department requires it. I instructed you to do it and now you've embarrassed us. This is being played in the congress. Of course the Colombians loved it and particularly the insults to the ambassador.

Do you know what the DEA did, and the Department? I've said to you in some of my conversations; the Department doesn't stick up for its people. Tom Constantine is a good friend of mine and I'll tell you why. He was the head of DEA, he called up the Department and said, "You know, we want you to make sure that Seneca stays" and the Department said, "Well, but he's the ambassador and he can do this." He said, "Well, if you don't I've got stuff on Frechette and I'll release it." I couldn't believe the deputy assistant secretary Mike Skol, who later was ambassador to Venezuela called me up and said, "Jesus, you better lay off. Constantine is going to release stuff about you that is going to be embarrassing." I said, "Really? Publish and be damned. He hasn't got anything. This is just a bluff. You're been a colleague of mine for 20 years and you've got the God damn gall to suggest that I've got something in my background? Get off. No, he's out of here." Well, of course it was all just. But the State Department. I called the DG and I said, "What's the matter with you guys? I had a security thing here, what do you think he could possibly have on me? There's nothing. Go ahead, call their bluff, but get this guy out of here." So, they did. They sent down another guy who turned out to be much, much better. The Department was just so craven about the thing. It was just awful. Then the Department said, "Were you justified in doing it?" I said, "Really? Have you ever known me to do something I wasn't justified in doing? I am not a guy who shoots before I take an aim. I have a whole career of doing this sort of stuff. I'll tell you what, I'll send you up a copy of the tape recording so you can judge for yourself." Of course they played the tape recording and the State Department sort of collapsed in laughter, and that was the last I heard of it. What bothered me was that the first assumption was that somehow or another there was some huggermugger, some dirty thing in my background that the DEA was going to reveal. Good grief, that is why I said to you earlier, one of the things that is wrong with the Foreign Service is the Department does not back up its people and does not sort of automatically consider first of all that there's nothing in my background that's embarrassing. On the contrary, they assumed that there might be and then they call me up and say, "We don't want that embarrassing stuff about you out." It really sort of boggles my mind and it still bothers me a lot, frankly.

Q: Well, there's also to a tendency I have found within the Foreign Service not to get rid of people. I mean it's very difficult to fire people.

FRECHETTE: Other agencies put in reclamas if you fire other agency people, no question about it. I told you the story in Cameroon where I sent home a guy who was obviously an alcoholic, and AID got some doctor somewhere to certify that he wasn't. He came back and he awakened everybody in the mission because we all had radios. He had the DT's. He thought there was a panther or a big cat on his chest of drawers. You're absolutely right, they don't like you. But you know it's one of the only ways an

ambassador has of sort of enforcing when somebody has really done something that is either against policy or embarrassing or whatever. It's the only way the ambassador has of assuming his primacy. What's happened? The State Department listens to the other agency head, the other agency head will call the Secretary and there's a big kafuffle, you know, Constantine talked to Secretary Albright. Of course they said, well, we'll talk to him, we'll see. They tried to get me to back off. It was only when the tape finally arrived up there that they understood. They wouldn't take my word for it that this was the justified thing. I did a long cable.

Q: While we're at it, we'll move to other subjects, but let's talk about the drug war. I mean how did you find it?

FRECHETTE: Well, let me finish if I may. We had similar situations. The CIA station chief, and I had two of them, they were both excellent and we worked very well together, but I had difficulties with the MIL group chief for example, and I'll tell you why. I mean here is a place, which is very dangerous, and I said, "It's come to my attention that your officers at night are going to the Zona Rosa", which was a place of nightclubs. I said, "People get shot there all the time" because the Colombians pack guns and they get drunk. There's a killing almost every night. I said, "You know, if you people go out there the narcos are going to take a pot shot at you. I am putting out a directive tomorrow morning that nobody is to go to the Zona Rosa." Well, they thought that was terrible. Then they said, "Let us carry weapons." I said, "No. The agreement with the Colombians is that you do not carry weapons so you will not carry weapons. I'll tell you one thing; you can get out of your uniforms. If you don't think your uniforms attract attention. In the Pentagon for heaven's sake, they have one or two days a week where nobody wears a uniform. It's a security measure, and yet here you are in a very dangerous place and you don't want to enforce that. I've never seen a single day with your people in mufti; they're always in uniform."

Q: Why would they do that, do they feel happier this way or a little more prestige?

FRECHETTE: I think it was just you know, I'm the colonel, I'm in charge and who are you to tell me?

Q: Because normally in most embassies uniforms are worn except for special occasions.

FRECHETTE: Well, we had lots of people, don't forget. I had 700 people in Bogota, of whom about 350 were usually on TDY, and most of them were military people. They just didn't take it. The DEA guy not using the secure phone, the military guy wanting to be a good guy so his people could go in uniform at night to a place of, you know I don't mind if a guy has a drink, but to go to a place where people get killed every single night. I mean the chief of police's son was shot to death in a bar because the guy sitting next to him didn't like the cut of his jib and he'd had a few more drinks, he pulled out a gun and he shot him dead sitting right next to him. Why they didn't want to do this, this is the kind of atmosphere that you had to deal with. My predecessor basically focused very heavily on the counter drug thing and worked with the Colombian police and military in

putting together special action groups that were ultimately successful. He didn't care what anybody else did. That was not his interest. The DEA did their thing, the MIL group did their thing and I said, wait a minute, there's some common sense here, things here that people are not doing, and I want these things followed. So, it was difficult in the sense that I couldn't get good State Department people except at a mid-level in the embassy to come down here, and at first with the exception of the CIA guys. I had another case with a FBI guy. The FBI guy turned out to be corrupt. He was taking money, too. I came back.

Q: How did this work?

FRECHETTE: He was taking money from the police to in effect recommend them for visas along with my consul general.

Q: Gees.

FRECHETTE: No, I'm telling you. So, I came up to Washington and I will say one thing. The Attorney General, Janet Reno, I have great admiration for her, a very serious person. I said, "Look, I'm here. I want to work with you people. Mary Lee and I are good friends. We're working together, but why don't you, you need to really take more care in the people you assign. I want this FBI guy removed. She removed him overnight. No question. The FBI people who were sent down there were sent down there because of their Spanish proficiency. Most of them were Hispanics from the southwest whose Spanish, there's little resemblance to the Spanish really spoken in Latin America. They were without exception, sorry to say, the FBI guys, third rate, fourth rate.

The DEA, once they straightened out their two top men, they had some really good guys, but the FBI was part of our country team. They had a counter drug. I'm just happy as I say because later President Samper always believed that the DEA was bugging his phones because there had been a tape recording that had been released a year before I arrived of two narcos referring to the money they paid Samper. It was the basis for the $6 million payoff. Samper decided he was going to get rid of the DEA. I fought a battle for a year and a half with Samper and his ministers and kept the DEA at post. That won the DEA over. Tom Constantine felt that I had exercised a hell of a lot of courage and always defended the DEA even though Tony Seneca had done this caca. The attorney general knew that I was really backing the things that the Justice Department was doing, judicial reform, etc., but they were never able to fix the poor quality of the FBI guys. The DEA was different. They also assigned a Justice Department lawyer, since I'm not a lawyer, who kept me, in dealing with both the FBI and DEA, in understanding what the legal ramifications were of what they were doing. The relationship with Justice became a very strong one, and when I left she called the Secretary of State up, the attorney general, and said this is a really good guy.

Q: Well, what was the DEA doing and then what was the FBI doing?

FRECHETTE: The DEA is the lead agency, but the FBI, look, when there is a hot

mission like drugs every agency, I'm sure even the Battlefield Monuments commission, wants to have some piece of the action because it's sexy, it means more money, it means you're doing something that's really important. The FBI guys were down there collecting intelligence which they shared with the DEA, as was the CIA. Of course the CIA was actually running groups of people who pursued the narcos, and so was the DEA, and in some cases they did them together. These were all people who vetted, they would put them on the polygraph, and they were very good. We would not have gotten the Cali Cartel who was captured in my time if it had not been for the special training and in the vetting because the narcos were always out trying to buy off the policemen who were working on the most effective units. It was just the product of this mentality that we have in Washington that if you're working on a problem every agency invents a role for itself.

Q: Oh, yes.

FRECHETTE: Now, the one thing the FBI did that was helpful to me, but in a way neutralized by the fact that their people down there were so mediocre, it was kidnappings. They knew about kidnappings, and they supported me and they were prepared to negotiate and they went out and tried to make contact with people. I was pleased with that, but again you know, my own FSOs could have done better because these were not top quality people. It's a problem the FBI has.

Q: Did you find there was a problem in your embassy between the Foreign Service culture and the FBI culture and the DEA culture?

FRECHETTE: Oh, sure. There always is, you know. There always is. I think I told you, in Lima, you could just look at an officer, the way he was dressed, and you knew if he worked for the DAO or USIA or State or for the MIL group. They just had a look about them, and there is a difference in culture. In a place like Bogota where these agencies are so powerful and so heavily involved and where in effect ambassadors sort of cede the position to them. Their leading error, I really don't want to get involved, let them do their thing. It can be very difficult.

Now, we had a real problem in Bogota because it was so dangerous. I didn't want any of my people killed, and the sense was, aside from the human thing, we don't want staff killed, I also felt that support for our mission down there would go up in smoke if any American was killed. I adopted a series of policies that avoided people getting killed, but as a result there were places in Colombia that nobody from our mission could go to because the government could not guarantee security. That was detrimental or that disappointed everybody because there were some parts of their job they just couldn't do without going to places where the guerrillas were very active and where the narcos were very active. On my watch I am happy to say nobody got killed. Today Ambassador Patterson has a much more permissive policy, and officers heavily escorted by the Colombians do go to places and have talked to people in places which in my time I thought really should be off limits.

Q: What was your reading of the Colombian apparatus dealing with narcotics during

your time?

FRECHETTE: Yes, during my time I had chief of police, a guy who is still a very good friend, who was superb, probably the best counter drugs guy anywhere in the world outside of the United States and he was relatively honest and we had a great working relationship. The interesting thing was that Samper and his interior minister were always trying to sabotage what we were doing.

Q: As you were saying, these were people, Samper, his antecedents were dubious regarding narcotics.

FRECHETTE: Not just dubious. We believed from tape recordings and other information that he had actually taken $6 million, and that was later proven although his argument, Samper's argument, was an impeachment proceeding. My people did, but I was unaware of it. There was proof about the money. But, I found that at the ministerial level and at the technical level the Colombians were very well into work, and heroic is too strong a word, but they did a terrific job and I was proud to have been associated with them, and we got great results. The only problem was at the minister of interior level and the president. The minister of foreign affairs, of course on Sunday she was like expelling the DEA, they had no option. The guy was telling them to do it and we managed to stave it off. It was very tough.

The other thing was the Colombian government then and now doesn't have any sort of internal coordination so I had to go to each minister and discuss the same issue because I had no guarantee that by raising it with the president he would pass it on.

Q: It wasn't the equivalent, say, to a drug czar or something like that?

FRECHETTE: No, there really wasn't, but this police chief was fantastic.

Q: What about the judicial system, because one hears about the courage, I mean the judicial system is absolutely essential.

FRECHETTE: But the problem with Colombia is that there are many people who have given their lives in the fight against drugs, but the fact is the judicial system is corrupt and ineffectual. It is 97% impunitive. That is 97% of the cases brought never even get to trial, let alone bring convictions, 97%.

Q: This is just narcotics cases or all cases?

FRECHETTE: All cases. Criminal and civil.

Q: All cases.

FRECHETTE: It just is a system that doesn't work, and one of the things that is hurting our efforts in Colombia, the Colombian people don't have any faith, they don't believe in

their judicial system at all. It really needs to be changed. It was one of the things that I was working on, and by the way, let's be fair, President Bush, the father, in 1990 went to Colombia and he gave them the first $36 million for judicial reform. Here we are 12 years later and the efforts we've made on judicial reform haven't added up really to a hill of beans, partially because the Colombians themselves pay lip service to the idea of judicial reform, but most of their bar associations don't care about it. In fact the prosecutor general thinks the law is okay, thank you. It's a very big problem in our policy because we're never going to be able to strengthen democracy. We're never going to be able to reduce drug trafficking to a level that is at least not so alarming without a judicial system that works. Again, I had ministers of justice that worked very hard and some who didn't, who just didn't really trust the American system. I had one guy for instance who passed forfeiture legislation, money laundering laws, helped me with a maritime interdiction agreement so that U.S. boats could pursue Colombian boats once they were out of Colombian territorial waters and you could share them. Much more needs to be done. I found the Colombians very willing and indeed heroic at times in what they did.

Now, Colombia is different from the United States. In Colombia it's very difficult to find anything that's black and white. I don't care who it is in Colombia, at some point in their life everyone has done something bad and you have to decide in your own mind as the ambassador, I'm going to trust this person because we're working on a joint policy together that's helping both our countries. So, the chief of police, people tell me well, he's sort of corrupt, he took some money. I was never able to determine that, but there were suspicions of that. Nevertheless, he did a terrific job as the counter narcotics person.

Q: This brings up a question that occurs in other countries and that is on reporting. Junior officers love to report on corruption.

FRECHETTE: We did a lot of it.

Q: But if you report on corruption up to a point this can make Washington, because stuff leaks out and all, get very dismissive of everything, and so in a way when you can see it in perspective from where you are, if you wave the corruption banner in front of congress or political appointees and all, I mean they'll say, oh, hell, we can't deal with it.

FRECHETTE: I had a real problem in Colombia. Quite aside from the fact that we weren't doing enough reporting under my predecessor. I strengthened the reporting and I did so also because I had a real problem with Bob Gelbard who was the assistant secretary for drugs. He wanted basically to run Colombia from there and he had some people in the embassy who he had promised jobs and to who he had promised jobs in INL if they would keep him informed by phone call of all the latest gossip. So, this was very difficult because Bob would go into a meeting with Alec, Watson who was a nice guy but doesn't like any confrontation at all. Alec Watson was the assistant secretary. He said, well you know, in Bogota this morning they arrested a guy and he had whatever. The idea was he was always criticizing what the Colombians did, so I had an extra incentive to report fully, and we did, on human rights, we did on corruption, but I was very careful with the people. I said, you know, this stuff has got to be stopped. I want you

to really use very close standards on this stuff because of just exactly what you say. You start doing too much stuff; eventually the Department tunes out. It's just too much. I think we put together a body of work both on corruption and human rights that is perhaps the best that's ever been done in Colombia. In fact some of my cables were released by the national security files. I think we talked about that. But there, one of the cables, I reported on Dennis Hastert, who is now the speaker of the House of Representatives, going down there and telling the Colombian police and military they didn't have to cooperate with the embassy. I was right there in the room. Just come directly to me, I'll help you, I'll get you the help you need, this guy's a mistake to bring down here. I reported to the Department about that because I thought it was an important thing. Of course, nothing happened, but the Department wasn't about to go tell him, he was head of a committee, but he was very embarrassed. Two or three months ago these guys from the national policy center released some of these cables with quotes, direct quotes from him. His press secretary called me up and said, you know, Congressman Hastert doesn't remember having said all these things. I said, well, there is a tape recording of it. If that's really an issue we can have a session with the media and we'll play the tape recording. Oh, no, no. I'm very proud of the work we did on human rights.

Q: At the time what were you seeing as far as the guerrilla movement and the narcotics, but the guerrilla movement separate and then the cooperation?

FRECHETTE: Let me say this. The guerrilla movement was not really very heavily in our scope except we knew that they were trying to kill Americans and in fact we knew the ELN was trying to kill Americans and trying to hurt American businesses, but here's an issue that I've raised before. The conventional wisdom in Washington was that, you know, Colombia was okay, that it would muddle through, and that all we had to really worry about was drugs. What I said to the Department in a very big volume of reporting was this place is rotten from top to bottom. No institution in this country works except the Supreme Court. Of course, guess what? When Pastrana was elected president after I had left, one of the first things he did was to tell the Colombian people that the institutions were all something the Colombians knew, but the guy said it publicly, which is very unusual for a Colombian. Then he came to the U.S. and said I need help with all of these areas. Today our policy is focused not just on counter narcotics, but on the other things as well. However unfortunately, most of the money is for counter narcotics. We're only fooling around with judicial reform and we're fooling around with displaced people. When 60% of your money is for counter narcotics, at first it was only 20% for the other things, now it's a little closer to 30% or 35%. It still is basically token because of so much that needs to be done. The conventional wisdom in Washington at the time that I went down was that Colombia is a place that has strong institutions, and that they would muddle through. It was like, I think I told you, when I went to Colombia everybody in Washington, thought democracy in Colombia is very strong. Pete Vaky was my ambassador, and he and I sent in a series of cables that said corruption is eroding democracy in Colombia, in Venezuela. Today, that's conventional wisdom. In those days we actually got calls.

Q: We're talking Venezuela now?

FRECHETTE: Yes. I just am reporting on a phenomenon that Washington seems to have a conventional wisdom that is often far from the truth. It tends to reflect the situation that was perhaps at some point in the past, but is no longer the case.

Q: Or that they would like to see?

FRECHETTE: Yes. Sure. The business about democracy in Venezuela is a perfect case in point. The business about the institutions in Colombia. It's very interesting because when I went to Colombia I asked for a briefing from the academics working on Colombia. there are not too many people working on Colombia because Colombia is so sui generis. Usually academics try to work on three or four countries, where what they'd work, mutually buttresses itself. When you work on Colombia, you're on your own. So, it's not a terribly attractive place for academics. But the academics, there were Canadians, Americans, all told me that the institutions work and don't you worry, you go huddle with the ex-presidents, go talk to the president and things will be worked out. Gee, I went to huddle with the ex-presidents; they were out to lunch. One of them was mentally ill and I found all this. So, I did this huge corpus of reporting saying, we've got to change our attitude. Interestingly enough, that was '94. In '96 I asked for another meeting with the academics and by then the academics had all changed their mind and they basically were coming out where I came out. The Department does get into its mind, Colombia, strong democracy, strong institutions. This doesn't change despite the fact that evidence is mounting. Now I'm not saying the Department never understands, but there is a lag and as you say, sometimes conventional wisdom reflects what people here want to hear.

Certainly in Venezuela, Ambassador Vaky was told people really don't want to hear this stuff about Venezuela. Venezuela is our shining knight on democracy. I never got told that. I never got told people here don't want to hear that. In fact, in my time I felt, and I got this terrific award that cited among other things the reporting, I sort of felt although Washington was sort of shocked, by the end of my three years there was really a sense that the attitude in Washington on Colombia had changed. That's when Pastrana came in the Department was able to embrace Pastrana's confession that in effect Colombia was a failed state or rapidly approaching that situation.

Q: Well, what about, you know, you look at Colombia and it's a very large country. I mean were there areas of Colombia that were specific and well run or what about divisions between the rich and the poor and all that?

FRECHETTE: In Spanish times Colombia included Panama. Panama was the place, from Colombian ports and Panamanian ports, the gold from South America went to Spain. For the Spanish that was the most important issue, the gold. It was much safer to come up the West Coast of South America and take the gold across the Isthmus on donkeys and put them on boats rather than try to go around Cape Horn. Very dangerous. Of course that's why the pirates hung around the Caribbean. But, Colombia has always had a weak central government even under the Spanish. It's been a place where there's always been a large

urban population and there have been centers of power, which have competed with Bogota, the capital. So, the other thing about Colombia is that most of it has never been inhabited except by the native Americans. Weak central government always been the case, differences within Colombia have always been settled by accommodation, that is negotiation or by violence, that is also a tradition in Colombia. The true fact of Colombia, the most important thing about Colombia, is that the central government has never occupied the entire national territory. Of course the guerrillas, when they were looking for places to operate, they'd go where there was no presence. So, today you hear 45% of the national territories are in the hands of the guerrillas. It was never in the hands of the government. It sounds sexy, but there's nothing out there.

Q: It's probably not in the hands of the guerrillas either.

FRECHETTE: No, they just happen to live there because nobody is going to bug them. Today, 76% of Colombia's 40 million people live in cities, and it's becoming more concentrated. Colombia is perhaps the most stratified country in Latin America. Wealth and land are both heavily concentrated and getting more concentrated. Politics have been concentrated in the two main parties, the liberals and the conservatives, with very few options for other points of view. You know, when you say these things and you realize they go back hundreds of years, you wonder why academics and the U.S. government used to think that Colombia was a strong democracy. It wasn't. It never was, and today of course with the guerrillas out there challenging the authority of the state, the guerrillas don't have enough people to overthrow the government, not by a long shot, but the government also has not created the forces of the state sufficient to keep the guerrillas under control. Forget defeating them, that's not the issue.

Q: Did we get involved in all of that while you were there?

FRECHETTE: Yes, I did. I'm still involved in it. I'm still with think tanks. I still write articles. I consult for various government agencies.

Q: When you were there what were we up to?

FRECHETTE: Well, you know, in those days we did not recognize that the guerrillas were becoming more and more involved with narco traffic. In fact I asked the intelligence agencies all over Washington, every single one of them, to focus on this because there were people in the Colombian army telling me you don't understand this, but the guerrillas are being financed with narco money. It was true, but our intelligence agencies said, well, but only to a very small degree. Again, a question of catch up. The U.S. government just wasn't focusing on the things that were really happening. So, the guerrillas tried to kill me on several occasions with rockets and bombs. In fact they got within three days of bumping me off on one occasion. The ELN sent in a team, a man and a woman, and this guy had a rocket and he was going to shoot me as I came out of the residence because that was the only place where for one block I had to go down one street. There was no alternative. He was going to sit up there and fire this rocket right through the windshield. The police however, infiltrated the local cell and they began to

follow this guy, but he came down to Bogota with his rocket and his girlfriend. They followed him for several days, and then three days before the supposed attack they slipped up in tailing the guy and he spotted them, and like a fool instead of pretending that he had nothing to do with it and just sort of wander off and try to lose them in the crowd, it was right downtown, he pulled out his gun and tried to shoot them. He was shot to death with 50 bullets or something. It was a large number of policemen following him. His girlfriend was very badly hurt and spent several months in the hospital recovering and she's now doing prison time for it. They put bombs and so on.

The guerrillas were serious and the narcos were serious, too. I can tell you stories. I was meeting with a bunch of people in the civil society one day and I had one American SY guy and I had 14 Colombians, all fully armed. I was sitting in there talking about civil society of these people and the need to strengthen the civil society and my SY guy comes in and says there's a phone call for you on the cell phone. I excused myself and I went out and this guy was on my cell phone. He'd found the number. He said, "You son of a bitch, you're going to be dead in 30 minutes. Don't leave where you are." I didn't say anything, I just hung up the phone, finished my meeting and we got into the car and I told the security guy. I used the secure radio and told the Department in Washington in the embassy that we're heading back there, the usual routine. We always varied our route, which I think is the thing that kept me alive and other ambassadors. You never go by the same route to anywhere. So, we took off and the cell phone rang and it began. The guy says again in Spanish, "You son of a bitch, I told you not to leave. We'll get you yet." Of course that was just an empty threat and we knew it. We traced it back. I traded in my cell phone and the telephone company was able to trace it. It was some narcos. This stuff was going on all the time. But again the number one problem was there was not sufficient understanding within the embassy or within Washington or anywhere else of the involvement of the narcos, the amount of narco money was financing the guerrillas in my time. Today it's a staple. Everybody understands it.

Q: I don't want to get into methods, but did you feel you were getting from the CIA, the FBI and the Colombian agencies a pretty good feel for what was going on in the narco community?

FRECHETTE: Yes, in the narco community, yes. The groups that worked for the DEA and the CIA and the joint groups were very good when they were selected and when they were vetted. They played key roles in capturing the Cali Cartel. No, I felt that we had good information. Now, you know, when you work with narcos sometimes it takes years before you have enough good information to move in and arrest the guy and make a case. I felt that we were well served.

Q: Well, there must have been in a violent society such as Colombia, I would think there would be the great temptation to say, well, we suspect this guy and we're not going to get evidence, but let's get rid of him anyway.

FRECHETTE: Well, that was a no-no for us and I'll tell you a story that illustrates that very well. When it was really interesting, we got there in '94 and by '96 the pressure was

on so great on the Cali Cartel. Then in June the cops found one of the head guys in the Cali Cartel, Miguel Rodriguez. He was hiding behind the secret panel in a room where he had water, oxygen, a gun, some food. He had actually been sitting in his living room when the police started to break in and the panel was right there in a bathroom when he went in and hid in there. The police went in there and they couldn't find the panel. They began to measure the apartment. They could see that there was one wall that just didn't add up, but they couldn't find the entrance to the damn place. They hung around and then just by fluke one of the police, a guy, said, I'm going to try here and he tried there and there was the guy. They captured him. Then the Cali Cartel fell like kingpins because they knew the pressure was on, and they began to surrender. Rather than wait to be arrested they all surrendered. Why? Because they felt that if attempts were made to capture them and if they didn't play their cards right, they were probably going to be shot to death by the cops. Anyway, one of the guys in the Cali Cartel, José Santacruz Londoño, was an interesting guy. He had come into the United States clandestinely in the 1970s and worked in the New Jersey area distributing drugs, and his wife came in clandestinely as well. Do you know that they have three daughters born in the United Stats who have U.S. passports who when José Santacruz was in jail the three daughters used to write to me these tearful letters, and they lived in Colombia. They knew perfectly well what their father did, saying, you know, we're American citizens, do something to release our father from jail. Can you imagine? America is great. It really is marvelous.

In any event José Santacruz was in prison and he got fed up and he said, you know, I'm safe, they're not going to kill me, and actually he wasn't that safe. Several of the people who surrendered were ultimately killed by other narcos out of jealousy, turf battles and so on in prison. So José Santacruz had some lawyers, supposedly lawyers, come to see him in the prison. He was behind the big glass, the bullet proof glass and all this stuff, and the lawyers were on the other side. They really weren't lawyers, they were accomplices. Those guys removed the glass. José Santacruz went through the window left by the removal of the bulletproof glass, put on a nice suit and a disguise, and left with them. The cops who should have been looking through the window sort of came in and there was nobody in the room and the window was gone. José Santacruz disappeared. We heard the DEA and the CIA and others, and even I heard that the word had been put out that the chief of police, you know, José Santacruz, we want him, but we don't want him alive, we want him dead. I reported that to Washington because first of all it wasn't in accord with our policy, but that if it really happened there would be a lot of people accusing the embassy and the U.S. government of complicity in this. Of course I got a rocket back from the Department saying, get a commitment from the Colombians that they will not shoot the guy. So I went to see a general and he said, you Americans, you worry about the God damnedest things. Of course I didn't tell them to shoot the guy. Of course he had. He said, I'll tell you what, I'll issue a directive that he's not to be shot, but he is to be captured. So, the next day I went over there and he showed me this directive and I quoted from it to the Department. I said, well, he says no, but of course, two weeks later there were some police following this car and out of it came guess who? José Santacruz, and they shot him full of holes and that was that.

Q: You were saying?

FRECHETTE: My good friend personally ordered? No, but the honor of the police was such. The guy had made them look like such monkeys that you knew that the guy was not going to survive, and I might say that occasionally happens here. You know, that old tale, if you shoot a cop, the cops will hunt you down and shoot you. It's the theme of many movies. It happens. I mean these people were made to look ridiculous by this guy. But, did the president explicitly order it? No, but it was irrelevant, he didn't have to. The day he issued the release, everybody in the Colombian police understood perfectly well that this was under pressure from the U.S. representative.

Q: What was the SOUTHCOM's role in Barry McCaffrey and all that?

FRECHETTE: Well, Barry wanted a huge role and of course he couldn't have a huge role, partially because (A) there were real restrictions on aid to the military because of the human rights situation and (B) because they were heavily corrupt. In the 1980s we went to the Colombian military and we said look, we'd like you to be our chosen instrument to fight narcotics, and the military said, no, not on your life for two reasons. One, fighting drugs is corrupting and two, you're too intrusive on human rights. I mean if we start fighting drugs you guys are gong to start slapping our wrists on human rights. If you will recall when in the United States we asked the military to join the fight on drugs. They resisted, citing Posse Comitatus, which is a law from the 1870s, which we're talking about now on the fight on terrorism. This says basically the military fights America's enemies outside. This is not an internal force.

So, the army sort of basically backed out, and there was a lot of corruption, not just corruption in the contracts to buy everything from meals ready to eat to bayonets, commanding generals always got 10% and that was an open secret in Bogota. There were cases where the military under Ambassador Busby, which had gotten into the trade war, had indeed been bought off by the guerrillas. In fact one of the guys who was commander in chief of the Colombian army was a guy we had plenty of evidence that had taken money from the narcos, and my job was to force the Colombians to fire him. Neither Samper nor his minister of defense had the guts to do it, and I had to negotiate with the guy. Of course, what was my weapon? I said, I'll take your visa away. You resign from the military or I'll take your visa away and I'll make sure that everybody knows that you don't have a visa, because when somebody loses a visa in Colombia it's because the U.S. believes they're involved in narcotics. That was the threat I used and it worked.

Barry McCaffrey, I'll tell you a story about Barry McCaffrey. Barry McCaffrey came down and of course he was very frustrated by a number of things. One was the restrictions on military aid.

Q: Well, he wanted a war?

FRECHETTE: Sure, he wanted a war. Secondly, he was frustrated because it was so clear the military was sort of corrupt. For him a military man fighting with the police just didn't make sense. He wanted the challenge. He thought that if he went down with his

four stars, the Colombian generals would say, yes, sir, we'll do it. Of course, they did say yes sir, we'll do it, and they didn't do it. He was so naive he never understood that. He came down to visit when he was still commander in the southern command, CINCSOUTH. He came down to visit one time, and of course he was very good on human rights. He pushed human rights a lot and he helped the Panamanians. He even helped the Colombians issue little cards that went in everybody's pockets, and the military and the human rights are there. He met with these people and lectured them about human rights and so on and so forth. He had a long meeting with a general who was the big druggie. Beforehand I had briefed him. I said, look, my instructions are to get rid of this general because of this, that and the other. He said, I understand. I said, be very careful when you're talking to him, because very shortly here I'm gong to the president and ask that he be removed. I got my instructions. So, they had a very nice lunch, Barry and that general, and off Barry went back to Panama. Shortly after that I received through the classified fax the memo from an officer whom I've known for many years who was then on the joint chiefs. Barry had written one of his famous felt tip memoranda to General Shalikashvili.

Q: Who is the chairman of the Joint Chiefs

FRECHETTE: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, sort of saying I have found the guy who will be salvation of Colombia. That general is a squared away solder, and he will lead the fight on drugs. I just could not believe it. I could not believe it. A two page memorandum full of dribble. I knew the Department wasn't going to help me. I called the Chairman and I said, hello, General, we met before, I'm Myles Frechette. He said, how can I help you. I said, well, you received a top-secret memorandum from Barry McCaffrey about a Colombian general. Well, yes, I did. Well, it's all claptrap. I've been instructed by Washington to get rid of him because he is a druggie and I told Barry that. I said, you know, please don't follow the advice of Barry in that memo. It's against policy and it is total claptrap. Well, of course, the Chairman was shocked and I could tell, but he wasn't going to criticize. He said, well, I'll talk to Barry about this. So, he did I guess. Three or four days later I got a call from Barry and said, well, I had a talk with Shali and he said, I want you to know that I never signed that memorandum. I said, Barry, I have a copy of it. Silence. He said, well, but it was one of those God damn staff officers, you know. A lot of people on your staff you can't trust and there's a lot of people on mine I can't trust. This must have been some staff officer. That was his solution.

Q: This is why you're saying mendacious.

FRECHETTE: That's why I say he was mendacious and vicious and everything else. Then, Shalikashvili had his number, and of course Barry wanted to be chief of staff of the army and he never got there because he was a son of a bitch. Sy Hersh wrote, you know Sy Hersh is a muck raking reporter, wrote a big story about how Barry had violated human rights in the Gulf War, and he got a number of generals to say that Barry was a mad man. Of course, Barry called up his fellow commanders after the article came out and they all put their tails between their legs and then issued statements saying that they'd been misquoted by Sy Hersh. I can tell you that probably would not have

happened in the Foreign Service. When he finished the Gulf War, a delegation of senior officers went to the then head of the joint chiefs who was a guy called Powell. They said, Barry McCaffrey should never have another command. Powell didn't buy it, promoted Barry, and sent him to SOUTHCOM. Powell's got to live with that, but anyway, that's the kind of guy he was.

Then there are many other examples of McCaffrey behaving in this adolescent way. For example, our policy was no senior person should meet with President Samper to indicate our disgust with his early take on narco. Well, Barry in his mind thought, my four stars, I'll get Samper and he started to agitate the guy. Well, of course everybody in Washington told him don't go to meet with Samper. But he blackmailed the Secretary. He said, look, if you give me instructions in writing, I won't go. But she knew perfectly well that if she gave him such instructions he would go to congress and say, you know, the Secretary of State is soft on drugs. She doesn't want to go down there, and all I want to do is talk to Samper and carry the fight on drugs. Don't forget that he dumped Secretary Shalala in the C&O Canal when she was advocating the use of needles by drug addicts in the District (of Colombia). She thought this was a good way of reducing AIDS. Barry went to the Republicans in Congress and leaked it. They all came out against her, and the whole idea of using the needles went down the tube. When he was bearded on this by the people in the media saying you know, you've been disloyal to your own commander in chief. He said, oh, not at all. President Clinton told me to get bipartisan support for whatever we're dong on drugs and that was what I was dong. That's why I went to the Republicans. They never called him.

Anyway, on the trip to Colombia, I called the Secretary and she wouldn't take my call. I have talked to her since this and I said, this is just going to make the United States look incoherent and ridiculous. Barry McCaffrey is going to have circles running around him by Samper. Samper is a very calculating guy, and Barry McCaffrey may be calculating, but not in the same way. This will undo this policy, which by the way is not my policy. I had been asked to carry it out. It was decided by Sandy Berger. But the Secretary would just not give him the piece of paper. So, I get this call from Barry saying the Secretary approves of my trip. Of course I knew she didn't and she didn't have the guts to say don't go. I said, Barry this is a big mistake, don't do it. He threatened me on the phone. Instead of telling me what the policy is, you just make sure that I have a successful witness. It's going to be a disaster and it was a disaster. He got down there. He didn't want to talk about human rights with the human rights activists. He wanted to talk to the foreign minister. He thought he could curry favor with the Colombians and so we had a so-so session, it was not as bad as I thought it could have been, but the activists weren't there. He wasn't hearing first hand what was going on. Then we had a meeting with Samper and Samper lied to him from the beginning to end. It was so bad that even Barry figured it out. When we got in the car, he said, pretty bad, wasn't it. I said, well, Barry, what did I tell you?

I had a cocktail party for him, and several people in the Colombian community asked to see him privately in the library. He had really done a stupid thing. I mean this guy is going to use your meeting with him to give him the impression that things are well, and

what have you done? His response was to get totally news control and tell them that Colombia was just a piece of crap, and that in short order the U.S. would forget about Colombia because it would no longer be cocaine that was enslaving American youth, but amphetamines which are made in the States. I noticed an interesting thing. His assistant, a young major, a very capable guy who spoke very good Spanish, who had been born of missionary parents in Colombia, stopped taking notes. Finally Barry after probably ten minutes of this tirade, which was incoherent, finally got hold of himself and tried to apologize, but they just walked out of the room.

Barry now works in the private sector. He had to leave the military. Barry had the Clinton administration, I won't use the sort of.

Q: We would say in diplomatic terms, he had him by the balls.

FRECHETTE: Or by the short hairs. Exactly right. He played it, and the Secretary was, I thought, an enormous disappointment. When I tried to talk to her about it she didn't want to talk about it.

Q: Well, could we talk a bit about during this time the Secretary of State was Madeleine Albright. What was your impression of her at that time as far as when you were at one of the places that you know was of great interest because of the drug business?

FRECHETTE: Yes. Well, I could tell you exactly because she didn't care about Latin America. She didn't want to become involved. A friend of mine who worked at the National Security Council reported on a meeting that she'd had with Sandy Berger with most of the staff that works on Latin America and that is exactly what she said. So, I knew that, and you know she was as good as her word. The Secretary, she did take a trip once to Cartagena and danced just like she danced the lambada I think at the UN when she was UN ambassador. Basically she didn't care, didn't want to be bothered, and didn't want to meet with any ambassadors from the region. The highest it got was the Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott, who had known Clinton from his Oxford days. He used to cook scrambled eggs for him at Oxford. Strobe really didn't want to engage on this whole thing of narcotics. I mean, you know, I always got patted on the head and praised for what I was doing, but you could tell that they weren't interested.

Q: This is a case that comes to mind. I think there was an American army colonel whose wife got involved with drugs?

FRECHETTE: No, but that wouldn't have happened in my time. Let me tell you two or three stories because of course Colombia for me is the culmination of my career, and I felt I got very little support from the Department. I've already given you some examples of this. I, for example, on the drug spraying, insisted that the NAS, which is an organization in the narcotics affairs section which works for the State Department and works for INL. He's in charge of spraying drugs, and must not hire any Americans who had been either with the CIA or the military. He said if one of them gets shot down or killed the story will get out, and then the Colombian press will have a great story that that

this is really a subterfuge, it's really a CIA or a military operation. Of course that caused no trouble. Why, because we have thousands and thousands of crop dusters in this country, people who've never been in the military. So in my time that was the policy. Nobody with the military or CIA background could work on it. Similarly, the ambassador gets to approve agency heads. I had some bad experiences with DEA. I would never have approved Colonel Hiatt. It happened with Ambassador Kamman, who followed me. Why? Because the army was quite forthright. Hiatt was a highly rated officer by then, and they wanted him to go to Colombia. His wife had been in drug treatment. She abused alcohol and drugs down in Fort Bragg, but she'd been through the treatment. Curtis Kamman allowed Hiatt to come and her to come on the basis that (A) she wasn't working with the Colombians, it was her husband and (B) she has been cleaned up. I would never have done that and I'll tell you why. Simply because the Latins love to laugh at us, and if it got out the colonel who was leading the fight on drugs has a wife who is in effect a recovering drug abuser it would just destroy the MILREP. It was a mistake by Curtis, and he admits it now. They came down, and then it turned out that Colonel Hiatt, all he did was work, and this wife of his got herself a friend, with sort of a dubious reputation, and she used to do drugs right in their quarters. Hiatt just went upstairs to his room and locked the door and didn't want to see her. So, she did drugs with men and women and everything else. She was a teacher at the school and she very quickly attracted attention there because she was a screwball. The Colombian military wrote a letter to the ambassador saying please ask Mrs. Hiatt not to come to any more parties that we give because she abuses alcohol and said some highly improper things, and she grabbed one general by the scrotum, not to hurt him, but just to make fun, make fun of him. Any of those things would have led me to tell Colonel Hiatt that his wife should go home immediately, or I would have told Hiatt you can come, but your wife can't come. In any event, what happened? Mrs. Hiatt used her own husband's chauffeur to get heroin and cocaine and began to ship it home through the APO. Of course people in the APO began to notice that she was coming in fairly regularly and they blew the whistle. They opened the packages and they were full of drugs. Both of them have now been put on trial and they're doing prison time. Hiatt got a slap on the wrist and got a couple of years; she's going to do a little more time. The driver who I gave good driving awards several times is now on the lam. It was a tragedy.

Colombia is a place where you have to be very careful. Of course, the newspapers published stories that said, why, here is a picture of Ambassador Frechette decorating this driver who used to get heroin for Colonel Hiatt. This was before Colonel Hiatt arrived. You have to very careful. Latins don't like getting pushed around by the United States and therefore, when the United States does something that allows them to laugh they do and very heartily, and this is what Curtis should have thought about. Curtis has been ambassador to Chile, but he got by, and the Colombians still laugh about that, and there are still stories about that. That was a terrible thing, but again, what this points to is when the agencies put forward a candidate to the ambassador, the ambassador has the authority to say yes or no. If the ambassador says no, there's hell to pay. I can tell you that if Curtis had said, you know, Colonel Hiatt, I would just as soon you and your wife didn't come or if you come, you come alone. At a very senior level in the Pentagon they would have called Secretary Albright, and probably she would have reversed him. So, maybe Curtis

was right in the end because he realized what was going to happen. When the army picks a guy for an important job like Bogota. They recognize the importance of Bogota. They had picked a guy who had a great career ahead of him. They were trying to move him forward and they would not accept, I can tell you, the authority of the ambassador in saying I think this is just too wobbly, not a good idea.

Q: You left there when?

FRECHETTE: I left there in November, November 8th, 1997. The longest serving ambassador I might say in Colombia, U.S. ambassador, since the '80s, because it's a very stressful place.

Q: How did this affect your family?

FRECHETTE: Well, fortunately, my kids were grown up so they didn't go with us. It affected my wife. The State Department provides no money to protect the children. There was a candidate for Colombia who called me up and said I've been offered Colombia after you and I want to go down there with a ten year old child. I said, you want my advice? She was married to a guy who was not an American. He was a guy who sold jewelry on the side and they had this ten-year-old son. I said, don't do it, because you will never, never be able to do your job with full dedication and devotion. You'll always be worried that your son will be kidnaped on the way to the school because your son will have to go on the school bus. The State Department pays not one penny to protect the kids. Your husband may well get kidnaped not because he's a big man, but he's married to you. I said, think it over very carefully. She turned it down. She's now in Brazil, this is Donna Hrinak. She was right. Ann Patterson asked me the same question and I gave her the same answer. Her son is studying in Florida and her husband rarely if ever goes out of the residence. In Barbara's case, they had a car lightly armored and a driver and a bodyguard. Then the Department said, we're cutting down SY or whatever they call themselves now, security people. They're cutting down on the budget. We're going to take away the driver and guard. I said, well in that case I'm going to ask to be relieved here. It's just unconscionable that the American ambassador, against whom there are many threats, that you should think that my wife would obviously be a very desirable target either for somebody to kill or kidnap gets no protection, so make up your mind. Well, they left the driver and the car and all that stuff. I said to Barbara, be very careful. This one, this lightly armored car and this one guy with a gun, isn't going to be able to do much for her. So she decided to write a book about the leaders in Colombia, and spent a lot of time at the residence. She did go out and we did a very heavy social life, usually then she was in the full armored car and had a lot of people and all that sort of stuff. We went to mass every Sunday, but we picked a church by flipping a coin. We had a list of about 30 beautiful colonial churches in Bogota. We'd flip half an hour before the mass and then the security guys would send a car down to check out the church, and if there was nobody around then we'd go, and we'd arrive just at the time the church would start. I was the first Catholic ambassador the U.S. ever had in Colombia, ever. So, it was kind of a novelty. Sometimes the priests would see me.

Q: Well, also you're spreading yourself around, too.

FRECHETTE: We did a lot of, we went to the movies a lot, we went to social stuff and I traveled a great deal in Colombia. I did not go into the areas where the guerrillas were sort of in control and the military was absent. I followed the same rules that I applied to the other people of the embassy. The conditions for the ambassador are very tough. Barbara and I love to walk. We walked only once in Bogota. One Easter when the city emptied out, surrounded by about 20 bodyguards. We took a walk for six blocks. That was all the security people would allow us to do. We'd play golf of course surrounded by bodyguards which meant that we couldn't go to the best country clubs in Bogota because they didn't want bodyguards on the grass. We went to one that welcomed us, which was the Jewish one. They liked the association of the Americans. So, Barbara and I could play by guys carrying guns.

We hardly ever went to restaurants because we terrified people in the restaurants when they saw the bodyguards come in. They instantly got nervous that we might be the object of some attempt and they might get hurt. I had a lot of airplanes at the embassy. I had three airplanes. A CIA, a DEA and a MIL group plane. I only took a commercial plane once. It was to visit some mine, and the mine had told me they were going to put a personal plane that belonged to the mine on it. I asked to have it checked out by my security people. When we got to the airport they said, well, their plane was down, they couldn't fly. So, we were going to fly on a commercial plane. Let me tell you, the look on the Colombians faces when we got on the plane, because the narcos used to blow up planes full of people. Pablo Escobar had that done. We never flew again commercially in Colombia because it just scared the hell out of the poor Colombians. When we traveled it was always in one of the three government planes. We had to adjust. It was a big adjustment for the whole family. We did have a tennis court. We played tennis.

Q: When you left, what happened to you?

FRECHETTE: Well, I was warned by the people in diplomatic security that the narcos had put a price on my head. I said, well, what are you going to do for me. They said, nothing, there's no money, there's no provision for it. My advice is don't list your telephone, so it's not listed. I didn't realize at the time that you can put your name with a number with no address. Had I known that at the time, but I didn't. I know a guy who was general counsel at the CIA, a good friend of mine, he writes a lot about the CIA. I've seen pieces from him. Jeff Smith is his name, Jeffrey Smith. He works for Arnold Porter. Jeff said, oh no, you can put your name and the number. Sure, you can find Jeffrey Smith with no address, that's the best the Department will do for you. We're going down next Tuesday, Barbara and I, to be at the inauguration of the Colombian president by invitation. The Colombians will provide tremendous security.

Q: When you came back, was that the end, or what happened?

FRECHETTE: Well, when I came back, they said, "What would you like?" I said, "Well, either Argentina or Brazil." They said, "Well, the Clinton White House has people picked

for both of those, but if they run into trouble, maybe we can get you in there." The Clinton guy for Brazil, three of them ran into trouble. Finally, one made it, a guy called Harrington who had been counsel to the Clinton campaign and he was a wonderful ambassador. He did a very good job, very professional, very capable guy. In Argentina, Argentina went four years without an ambassador because Clinton couldn't find a guy to pass muster for Argentina. In the end they gave it to Jim Walsh who is a USIA officer who spent many years in Argentina. He's done a wonderful job.

I used to keep going back to the Western Hemisphere and to the DG and saying "Well, where are we?" They'd say, they gave up on this guy, and "Why don't you wait for the next president and maybe he'll send you?" I said, "The next president, are you kidding? He'll have a friend he wants to send." So, that's when I retired. I got a job working on the Summit of the Americas which I enjoyed, but I thought to myself, Mexico is filled. That's another place I wanted to go to. I wanted one of the top spots in Latin America. Brazil and Argentina weren't available and so I retired and entered my other careers.

Q: So, what are you doing now?

FRECHETTE: Well, right now I have done trade and business consulting the last four years. I also had an office with Carla Hills, my former boss at USTR, where I did some work with her. I didn't work for her. I sort of made rain for her and she for me. In October of the year 2000 I became the executive director of the North American-Peruvian Business Council, and as of today I am president of the Americas Society and the Council of the Americas in New York. I will be moving up to New York to work there. This is an organization that's devoted to promoting trade and investment and democracy in Latin America. It's the biggest organization of that kind dealing with Latin America in the U.S. So, that's what I'm doing. I've done a lot of speech making. People pay to hear me say things.

Q: I pray we don't.

FRECHETTE: Think pieces and all that sort of stuff. So, you know, I had a good career. I enjoyed it. I'm still working with Latin America. I'm going to be able to contribute to the free trade area of the Americas, which is something I always wanted to do in the Foreign Service, but it didn't work out that way.

Q: One sort of final question. Did you and your colleagues ever sit or you thought about this afterwards, why is it that Latin America just hasn't kind of made the grade? I mean I was looking at the paper today in the Washington Post and they're showing how the economies of Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela and I guess Peru or something, all are headed down. Is it unique about the Spanish acquisition?

FRECHETTE: Oh yes, sure. We could spend hours talking about it. You know, the way we look at the world is essentially a promised way of looking at it. Work is good. Work glorifies the Lord. It just happens that Catholic's which I am one, in America have adopted the Protestant way of looking at things, as have the Catholics in the Netherlands

for example. Catholic Dutch people are just like all the other Protestants, and that's what happened here. The Spanish do not glorify work. So, you have a situation that is almost the reverse of the values that we imposed. There, people don't care about the society. They don't care about the world at large. It's only their family, and in some cases only their immediate families, that matters, leading to corruption, leading to lack of civic spirit.

I've written a lot of articles about this and you know, a lot of other people have, too. The particular situation now, frankly, was neglect at the tail end of the Clinton administration, what's happened in Venezuela, and then this new administration got distracted by September 11. Although we may get trade promotion authority this week, and so we'll be able to move forward on the FTAA. Hope so. No, the story of these classic cultures and why the Latins don't glorify hard work and success in the world is something that's sad.

Q: Okay, well, Myles I think this is probably a good place just to say thank you.

FRECHETTE: Thank you. I enjoyed it.

End of interview