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

AMBASSADOR SMITH HEMPSTONE, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an interview with Ambassador Smith Hempstone, Jr. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

HEMPSTONE: I was born in a place called Washington, DC, in 1929. My father was a career naval officer. His family was from upper Montgomery Country for the past nearly 300 years. My mother's family, the Noyes, came originally from Maine. My maternal great-grandfather moved down here about 1840 and was one of the founders of The Washington Star, of which my grandfather was the editor and publisher. I grew up in various parts of the United States as a Navy junior: Annapolis, Maryland; Newport, Rhode Island, and Coronado, California.

Q: When were you in Annapolis?

HEMPSTONE: We were there twice during my father's period of active duty. He was commissioned in 1911 and retired in 1945. We were there at the time of my birth. I would have been born in Annapolis, except my maternal grandmother was dying of cancer here in Washington, so my mother, who was then pregnant with me, came up to look after her and I was born here. Then we went back for the second time when my father was supply officer at the Academy in 1942. We were there until 1945 when he retired.

Q: Where were you educated?

HEMPSTONE: When I started going to school, we were up in Newport and then I went to school in Coronado, California, for two or three years. We came back here in 1938 and I went to St. Albans. I attended St. Albans until 1943, which was my freshman year in high school, at which point I went out to Culver Military Academy, from which I graduated in 1946.

Q: Were you thinking of a career in the Navy?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, and certainly my father was thinking of the Navy for me. He used to say that he and my mother would walk by Bancroft Hall and he would look up there and say, "I wonder which room Smith will have one of these days." But sending me to Culver was the coup de grace for that. My counselor advised me that if I pursued a career in the military, I would be courtmarshalled within five years, and that was probably right.

Q: While you were at Culver, what type of academics and sports were you interested in?

HEMPSTONE: Like most boys of that age (15-17), I was interested in all sports. I was not much interested in academics. I was always good in history and English and always terrible in sciences and mathematics, which was another good reason not to go to the Naval Academy.

Q: Were you looking at the newspaper world at that time?

HEMPSTONE: That was the sort of second obvious thing. If I wasn't going to go into the military, then I had lots of family in the newspaper business, all of them at The Star. So, I did have that in mind when I got out of the Marine Corps. I was in the Marines during Korea. I got in the officer program while at college at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. I was commissioned in 1950, which is when the invasion took place.

Q: A good time to get into the Marines.

HEMPSTONE: Yes, as a 21 year old single second lieutenant, I was raw meat.

Q: To go back a bit, I'm just a year older than you, so we sort of grew up at the same

time. Did World War II play a big role?

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes.

Q: Could you talk a little about that?

HEMPSTONE: Sure. In the first place, all of our family, with one exception, were in the military. I had one brother-in-law who was 4F and he was an opera singer. My father, who said to him one day (My father had a good sense of humor), "Well, Garfield, what are you going to do during the war?" He said, "Well, Dad, I thought I might go into OSS." My father looked at him and said, "You couldn't be a spy, Garfield." He said, "Why not?" He said, "They couldn't get you up at dawn to shoot you." My one brother was an officer in the Army. I had two other brothers-in-law. One was an officer in the Marines and the other was an officer in the Navy. I had a cousin who was a Marine enlisted man. I had another cousin who was Navy enlisted. So, it was a very exciting time for me. I kept a diary every day of what happened.

Q: For our generation, it was the greatest geography lesson in the world. I could tell where Rostock was, and Civarani, and these places that just tripped off our tongues.

HEMPSTONE: When I was 14 or 15, I dutifully stood out on Garfield Street with a tin hat on looking for German air raiders. I was a fire watcher.

Q: I spotted a Luftwaffe at the top of the Hotel Annapolis. From Culver, you went to the University of the South. Why there?

HEMPSTONE: I didn't go directly there. I went to George Washington for a year. I didn't much like George Washington for two reasons. One, it was a streetcar college, no campus or anything. Two, I was living at home in Bethesda, which was not my idea of what to do. I'm a Episcopalian and Sewanee is Episcopalian. So, I had heard of Sewanee. One of my best friends was going down there, Maurice Heartfield. He said to me once, "Come on down to Sewanee with me." I couldn't think of any reason not to, so I did.

Q: What was your major at Sewanee?

HEMPSTONE: History.

Q: Any particular part of history?

HEMPSTONE: Not really. I took ancient history, American history, Europe since 1815, a little light on the Asian history.

Q: I think Asian history was pretty light for everyone in those days. Lots of African history?

HEMPSTONE: No. I don't think we even had anything that might be described as

colonial history aside from American history. As I say, I always did well in that and I always did well in English, in writing.

Q: When you joined the Marine ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Course], what was this?

HEMPSTONE: This was a platoon leaders class, which was a very good program, good from a taxpayer's point of view, good for the Marine's point of view, and good from the guy's point of view because it cost absolutely nothing and it laid no obligations on you. You went to Quantico two summers, the first summer as a corporal and the second summer as a sergeant. It was a glorified boot camp. When you graduated from college, you were offered a commission in the Reserves, which you either could or could not take, and I took mine.

Q: Then we come to June 25, 1950, which is the date many of us all remember. What happened with you?

HEMPSTONE: As it happened, I was in Europe at that time. In those days (It may be the same now), if you were a Reserve officer, you had to get the Marine Corps' permission, a pro forma thing, to leave the country. I had done that and had permission to leave the country. I didn't receive any communication from them while I was in Europe, nor did my father. So, I just went ahead and finished the summer trip and then came home. My father, in his usual brusk manner, said, "Well, are you going to volunteer or are you going to wait until they come and grab you?" I said, "Well, if you put it that way, I suppose I'll go down." So, I went over to Arlington Hall and said, "I'm Hempstone. I've been out of the country." They said, "Oh, yes," and they got the box down. This was before computers. Everything was on 3x5 cards. They said, "We never would have gotten you if you hadn't come in." I said, "Thanks a lot. Well, when can I expect to be called up?" They said, "Not immediately because we've got a big backdraft." I said, "Could you promise me that I'd have time to do one semester at the University of Virginia [UVA] in graduate school?" They said, "Oh, yes, no problem." So, I went down to the UVA and the Woodrow Wilson School. Of course, I got my orders at Thanksgiving time, so I had wasted my time. I had a good time at Virginia. I can't complain about that. I went in on active duty the first of January 1951.

Q: What did you do in the Marines?

HEMPSTONE: Like all brand-new 21 year old single second lieutenants, I was an O301, an infantry officer. But on the way out, we were given a chance to state some preference. I said, "I think I'd kind of like to be in amtracks (light armored vehicles, crossing rivers)." In the first place, I wouldn't have to walk. They said, "Okay," so I was down for amtracks. But we arrived right in the middle of a big offensive, the next to last big offensive that the Marines had trying to straighten the line out. We had lost tons of forward observers, at least half of them. So, they said, "Okay, all you guys whose names start with "H" are now artillery officers," which caused me some trepidation because I had slept through the lectures on artillery and hadn't been to Fort Sill or anything like

that. But I became an artillery forward observer serving with the Second Battalion of the 11th Marines.

Q: What was your impression of the Korean War?

HEMPSTONE: What did I know? I was a 21 year old kid. I always felt that we could have won it with two more divisions. It's probably not true, but that's how we felt. I never had any fear of those guys, the North Koreans and the Chinese, which I suppose again shows how stupid we were. It was like most wars. It was boring most of the time and terrifying for the rest.

Q: When did you leave Korea?

HEMPSTONE: I was there from May of 1951 until April of 1952. Artillery officers had to spend one month more than infantry officers. I believe infantry officers spent 10 months, so I think we spent 11.

Q: By that time, were you released from duty?

HEMPSTONE: I was posted to headquarters battalion in Quantico. Headquarters battalion was composed entirely, aside from myself and a few others, of officers and enlisted men awaiting court marshall. It was very entertaining. I suppose I was there for four months. It was very boring. I thought, "Well, maybe I can get out a little early." I think my commitment was two years. But they were eager to get rid of people, so I applied for early release and I got it and was released in September or October. I was offered a regular commission, which I told them I would take if they'd let me stay overseas. I liked the Marine Corps overseas in the field, but I didn't like all the spit-and-polish at Quantico and Parris Island.

Q: You got out in 1952. Did you have any idea what you were going to do by that time?

HEMPSTONE: I thought, for lack of any other better idea, that I'd give the newspaper business a try. I got a job with the Associated Press (AP), which was a good teacher, in Charlotte, North Carolina. $42.50 a week. That extra $2.50 was for working the lobster shift at night. Again, that wasn't terribly interesting. I was doing rewrite, basically sports. I wasn't a reporter. Charlotte was the center that handled all the stuff from both the Carolinas and we put it on the wire. I could barely type at the time. I had eight deadlines a day, one an hour. I was the only non-union member in the shop.

Q: Did you have the traditional hard boiled editor who was always pounding on your head and telling you how to write?

HEMPSTONE: Sure. I don't know whether they have that sort of editor anymore. I won't say that the bureau chief was a great one because I don't think he was. But I soon left there. I didn't stay very long. I stayed about six months. I wanted to go someplace else. My brother was on The Star here in Washington. He had met the city editor of the

Louisville Times at a seminar in New York. He said, "Why don't you go talk to him. I'll give Ed O'Neill a call." So, I went up to see him on my weekend off. They had nothing for me, but O'Neill said he would let me know when they did. I didn't expect to ever hear anything more from him. Since I wasn't able to develop a job from AP in Charlotte, I went up to New York to conquer the world. I called on Time and Newsweek and Esquire and all of those. People were very nice to me in those days, nicer than they are today. I talked to a lot of good editors, all of whom gave me the same message: "Go back where you came from and get some experience." I was just about to go on veterans' compensation, which I don't think my father would have liked much, when a job offer came from the Louisville Times. I went down to Louisville.

Q: So, you were working for the Louisville Times from when to when?

HEMPSTONE: I guess we're talking about 1953. I was pretty light-footed in those days.

Q: Did you stay long?

HEMPSTONE: No. I enjoyed The Louisville Times. I had a good time there. I was doing reporting there, which is what I wanted to do, and writing and everything. I got a merit raise and everything was going fine. But I had a girl I was interested in up here and my hormones were fairly active in those days. So, I got myself a job on The National Geographic. I came up and went to work for them. That was very pleasant. The Geographic had nice people and it was fairly lush. They paid a huge amount of money. I think I got $100 a week or something like that, whereas I had been making $60 in Louisville. But again, it wasn't too interesting. I was doing rewrite, rewriting other people's stuff. Because of my family's interest in The Star, it was pretty certain unless somebody was really mad at me, that I could get a job there when I wanted. I decided it was about time to play The Star card. So, I went over to The Star, this being 1955. I got married to the same lady. I worked for The Star from 1955 to 1956. I had a good enough time at The Star, although working for a paper which your family owns a bit of is not all a bowl of cherries. People think anything you get you got because of that. On the other hand, I was once denied a raise that my boss put me in for because another member of the family who was sort of a running mate of mine didn't get one. So, I thought, "Am I going to be tied to this guy forever?"

I then got a fellowship from the Institute of Current World Affairs, which in those days was based in New York. It still exists, but it's based in Hanover, New Hampshire. The Institute was a small foundation and it was basically run by one guy named Walter Rogers. In other words, there were no committees or forms to fill out. If Rogers liked the cut of your jib, you got a fellowship; if he didn't, you didn't. It was as simple as that. I wanted to go overseas. After a certain amount of bickering, meeting other former fellows and so forth, it was agreed that I should go to the Horn of Africa for two years.

Q: This was when?

HEMPSTONE: This was 1956.

Q: This was about two years before the discovery of Africa which happened in the United States. I say that facetiously. It came on our radar all of a sudden. What prompted you towards there and particularly the Horn of Africa?

HEMPSTONE: For one, in my age group in the newspaper business, everyone who had literary pretensions, which was almost everybody, it seems, worshiped Ernest Hemingway. I had met Ernest Hemingway in Italy in 1954. This is in the book, by the way. He said, "Ever been to East Africa?" I said, "No." He said, "Do you speak Swahili?" I said, "No, I don't speak Swahili?" He said, "Well, you'd like it. It's a man's country. Good hunting, good fishing, good writing. Go there sometime." So, I guess I squirreled that away in the back of my head. I read Robert Ruark. We always had on one part of the family an overseas tradition in that my father had been posted in Haiti, China, and so forth. I didn't have any fears about going overseas. Also, our family situation here was a little close because we had both of my parents here and my wife's parents. So, I sometimes say facetiously that I went to Africa so I could be 8,000 miles away from my wife's parents.

Q: That's what Africa was designed for a great number of generations. The British sent their escapees or their remittance men. Could you describe what the Horn of Africa meant at that time?

HEMPSTONE: That meant, to me at any rate, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Zanzibar, and Uganda. But I didn't stay there. A wonderful thing about the Institute, which was a small outfit of maybe eight fellows, which was started by Crane, the Chicago plumbing mogul whose name you've seen on toilets. I think my money came from Ford. I don't know when I decided not to stay in East Africa. I loved East Africa. I loved Kenya. I thought I had died and gone to heaven. But I decided I wanted a broader stream than that. We were traveling by road in a Chevrolet Suburban carry-all, which was not four-wheel drive, but had pretty good clearance.

Q: It was a big thing. I used to travel around Yugoslavia in one of those things.

HEMPSTONE: We drove all the way around Africa, 60,000 miles from Masawa to Cape Town to Dakar. I had a one year extension on my fellowship to make it three years and then I told Mr. Rogers that I would like to put a book together. He said, "Fine" and gave me a fourth year, which was not unusual in the Institute. They tended to run four, five, even six years. We produced a number of ambassadors: Philips Talbot, Dick Nolte, who was briefly in Egypt, and so forth. So, we went back to Kenya in 1960 and lived around the countryside, not in Nairobi. During that time, I was basically working on the book, which was called Africa, Angry Young Giant. I was doing some Institute newsletters and some newspaper stuff also.

Q: While we're on this period of about 1956-1960, what was your impression of particularly Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, and all?

HEMPSTONE: Of course, this was the colonial period. It was difficult, not impossible, to get to know Africans on any sort of intimate basis. I suppose they were fundamentally distrustful of all whites. This began to change when the nationalist movement got going and the nationalists were eager to get press. Ethiopia I found fabulously interesting mainly because of the history of the place and the personality of the Emperor and all that sort of thing. I always liked the Somalis myself. They were quick, intelligent, never forget an insult, quick with a knife, all that sort of thing, dirt poor. I guess they didn't have anything more than bananas. Kenya was paradise to me. The wildlife - I am or was a hunter. There was good hunting and fishing. Interesting, nice people, both black, white, and brown. But a difficult time. For instance, when we went to rent a guest house in Nairobi from a guy who became one of my best friends, I said to him, "Graham, I'm a newspaper man and it will be necessary for me to entertain people of color. Is that okay?" "No, you can't do it." I said, "Okay, it's your house." So, I didn't hold that against him in any way, but that is the way the attitude was. He later became a Kenyan citizen. I considered up until I left Kenya buying a place out there and staying there once I got too old.

Q: With Ethiopia, what was your impression of the rule of the Emperor?

HEMPSTONE: It was very clear because of what they called the "Shifta," later Eritrean liberation forces, that Eritrea was very unhappy with the Emperor's rule. People didn't really hide that too much, although they had to be careful. In Ethiopia itself, I didn't get that impression, but that may have been because I didn't speak any of the languages I could have spoken with the common people. I was dealing with people who were mainly the Emperor's kinsmen or allies.

Q: Let's move down to Somalia. It used to be British Somalia. Were they getting ready to become independent?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, I think independence came in 1960. It was clear that Somalia, former Italian Somalia, didn't have much use for the Italians. Things were a little different in British Somaliland. Of course, there were not settlers there in British Somaliland, just administrators.

Q: What about in Kenya? When did the Mau Mau war go on and where was it when you arrived?

HEMPSTONE: It really began in 1952. The emergency lasted from 1952 to 1960. It was pretty much over by 1955. It was always confined to the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meroe homelands. They could not come out to Nairobi to work. Whites were allowed in, although not in all areas. But you could go through there and stay at the hotels in Nanyuki and Tiau, and so forth. As I said, that was pretty much over by 1954-1955.

Q: You were saying that because of the language and society, you were pretty well limited to the official contact. They were getting ready at this time to move toward independence. What was your impression of the colonial class there at that time?

HEMPSTONE: It varied enormously if you're talking about officials. You had people like Dick Turnbull (Sir Richard Turnbull), who was Chief Secretary and ended up as Governor of Tanzania and then of Aden. He was a first-rate guy, a world-class administrator and man and everything else. He had a lot of guys who were pretty so-and-so. Many of them had come out during Mau Mau, had been recruited. They had been in the police during Mau Mau and had gone into colonial service. They were not up to that mark. Many of them were quite mediocre.

Q: The problem is always when you do recruit police types, you're talking about people who are efficient in their field, but when they move beyond it, cultural niceties aren't necessarily an arrow in their quiver.

HEMPSTONE: That's right in most cases, although I knew at least one outstanding policeman there who later had a very good career with the oil companies.

Q: What was the feeling when the country gained independence. You were there just before this.

HEMPSTONE: And after it. Most of the farmers, the settlers, were shocked that it came so quickly. I don't know why they were so shocked because I could certainly see that and I told them so. They said, "No, no, in 10 or 15 years. I'm ready for it." It wasn't the point that they were ready for it. It was clearly coming. Most of those who couldn't stomach it, couldn't accept a black government, and that includes almost the entire Afrikaner population, left pretty quickly. That was a good thing that they did leave because they would have been unhappy and they would have made other people unhappy. Those who elected to stay had varying degrees of loyalty to Kenya. The first cut that divided them was those who retained their British citizenship and those who became Kenyan citizens. The Kenyan citizens are mostly still there. There are just a couple thousand. I think the whites who decided to stay said, "Well, let's muck in and see if we can't make the damn thing work." They were helped by Kenyatta in those days, who was very reasonable.

Q: Had he been released by this point?
HEMPSTONE: Yes, he was released in 1961, became Prime Minister in 1962, and President of independent Kenya in 1963.

Q: Did you develop any different sense during this 60,000 mile trip around Africa? Was the whole area sort of gearing up for becoming independent at that time?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, I would say so. We're talking about British Africa. The Congo was not gearing up and French Africa was not gearing up, although De Gaulle gave it to all of them in 1960. But nobody was geared up.

Q: You say you were doing some newspaper work. Did you find that you were able to place pieces? Was interest beginning to build up in the United States during this period?

HEMPSTONE: Initially, there was not much interest in 1956. When I went overseas (I was allowed to do this under the terms of the fellowship), I wrote to 100 newspapers and I told them what I was going to be doing. I said, "Would you be interested in receiving articles on spec [on speculation]. It wouldn't cost them anything unless they used it. If they did use it, it would be the massive sum of $25.00 an occasional article?" Out of the 100, eight said "Yes." This doesn't indicate very strong interest. Then there did come a period right about 1960 where Africa had a certain vogue for a while.

Q: Oh, yes, this was red hot stuff. I might add that you have written a book called "Rogue Ambassador," published in November 1997. Your views are rather strong about the Foreign Service. Did you have much contact with our rather sparse representation in Africa at that time?

HEMPSTONE: I always called on the embassy, at least, initially during my first visit and talked to the political officer, the economic officer, and usually in those days the ambassador.
Q: Most of them were consulate generals at that point.

HEMPSTONE: Right. They were all helpful to me in those days. Also at that time there was a degree of cooperation, which would probably be considered scandalous today, between the CIA and newspaper men. I had many CIA contacts around the countryside.

Q: Were they just pumping you for information?

HEMPSTONE: Both, I was pumping them and they were pumping me.

Q: We are talking about a time when almost anything was new. There wasn't any information. There really wasn't much of a network there.

HEMPSTONE: I don't think anybody ever told me anything that was of vital security importance. I don't know whether I told them anything that hadn't been or wouldn't be in the newspapers.

Q: You got to South Africa?

HEMPSTONE: Yes.

Q: Where did South Africa stand at that time as far as that? High apartheid? Early apartheid?

HEMPSTONE: It was right at the end of Malan's period. He was the first Afrikaner Prime Minister. If my memory serves me correctly, he was followed by Strijdom. Strijdom was a very tough guy. Apartheid was just in the period of its codification. Most of those laws existed before either as single bits of legislation or simply as practice. What the National Party did was to codify them all, engrave them in stone.
Q: What was the feeling when you went through there, your first look at the situation?

Was this something that was going to last? This was before the Civil Rights Movement. You had gone to Sewanee and grown up in the Navy and Washington, DC. So, we had both experienced segregation, so this wasn't that unique. How did you see this when you got there the first time?

HEMPSTONE: I found it pretty bad in the urban areas. For instance, it no longer exists, but there was a black slum in the middle of Johannesburg known as Sofiatown. While it was a slum, it was a place where Africans could own property, which was very important to them. That was where Archbishop Huddleston, who just died the other day, lived and worked. Through him and through my newspaper contacts in the South African press, I had many contacts in places like Sofiatown. I broke the law many times, which probably came back to haunt me because there was a period where I couldn't get into South Africa. I spent the night in Sofiatown in some guy's house. Just drinking with him was against the law. One guy that I knew pretty well said, "When the night with the long knives comes, we will have to cut your throat, too." I said, "Well, I'm glad you told me that." Nothing personal.

In the countryside, the Africans really were at such a primitive level. Literacy was quite low in the countryside. There wasn't any nationalist activity to exacerbate relations between the two races. Relations could be pretty good. For all you can say about the Afrikaners (and you could say a lot bad about them because they were tough on the Africans), they were at least open with them, which the British South Africans frequently weren't. They were hypocritical. They would complain about the Afrikaners themselves and about apartheid: "Well, we never created this sort of thing." Well, they believed in apartheid just as firmly as the Dutch did. So, many of the Afrikaners got along well with the Africans. When we lived in Tiumauo, Kenya, we had an Afrikaner policeman there, a very good officer who got along beautifully with Africans.

Q: You left there in 1960. This was the time when things were really beginning to pop. Did you want to play on this?

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes, I left there with the intention of coming right back. I was on a leave of absence from The Star during this time and I went back to talk to them about what I might be doing. They said, "We've got a big job for you. We want you to cover Africa and Latin America out of Washington." It was impossible. I couldn't do anything like that. The Star was fairly tight with its money. I knew I wasn't going to get much.

Q: This was when The Star was beginning to move down, wasn't it?

HEMPSTONE: Not yet.

Q: When did The Post come up and start to be a nationwide newspaper?

HEMPSTONE: It was coming then. The die was caste in 1954 when The Post bought the Times Herald, but it took quite a while for it to expand. We were still in the catbird seat in terms of advertising, circulation, and everything. I said, "That's quite a job you're

offering me. What sort of salary had you in mind?" They said, "I tell you what we're going to do, Smith. We're going to count your time in Africa just as if you had been working here." I said, "That means instead of making $100/week, I'll be making $115, is that right?" He said, "Yes, that's about right." I didn't like the sound of that worth a damn. I had been in touch with The Chicago Daily News because Walt Rogers, the guy who headed the Institute, was from Chicago and had worked with The Chicago Daily News as a youngster. They had been receiving my Institute newsletters. So, the foreign editor out there, Baker Marsh, knew all about me. I went out there and said, "Are you interested in hiring me to cover Africa?" They were just the opposite of The Star. They said, "You bet we are!" I said, "What would you have in mind for a salary?" They said, "What do you think you're worth?" I had no idea what I was worth. I had been in Africa for four years. I had no idea what salaries were. I said, "Well, I don't know." They said, "How about $11,000?" I don't know how they came to that conclusion. I had never heard of so much money in my life. I said, "What about $12,000." They said, "Well, we'll have to go to Marshall Field about that." Can you imagine going to Marshall Field? I got my $12,000 and went to work for them.

Q: This was The Chicago Daily News. Could you describe the paper at that time?

HEMPSTONE: I have a great fondness for The Chicago Daily News. I never had a bad day there. It was moderately conservative, certainly not as conservative as The Tribune. I guess The Daily News was Republican. I'm sure Marshall Field was Republican. But it wasn't wildly conservative. They had had a tradition which began just before World War II of a very fine Foreign Service. All kinds of guys worked there at one time or another: William L. Shirer, Ed Murrow. All the big shots of that time worked there. It was a very proud organization. That aspect of it was beginning to show a little wear. When they hired me, I was by 20 years the youngest correspondent they had, but they still had some good ones: Bill Stoneman in London, George Weller in Rome, Keyes Beech in Tokyo, and so forth. I was very pleased and proud to be hired by them. It was wise to have a sense of humor.

Q: You were with The Daily News from when to when?

HEMPSTONE: That would have been from 1960-1965.

Q: They didn't have anyone covering Africa at that point, did they?

HEMPSTONE: No. I was the first and I was the last. We had that period where the bloom was on the rose and then went off the rose. When it went off the rose, which I would say was 1964, I went to Harvard on a Nieman fellowship with the object of regearing for Latin America. The Daily News was supportive of this. I spent that year at Harvard studying Latin American affairs and Spanish.

Q: Let's go back to this 1960-1965 period in Africa. This was a time when some countries became independent. After a while, the intense focus was on the Congo. When you went there, where did you base yourself and how did you cover Africa?

HEMPSTONE: I was based in Nairobi, as was almost everybody else, every other American correspondent, not that there were many. There were about six in those days. When the Congo trouble came, I went to Elizabethville, now Lubumbashi, in Katanga, now Shaba. I wrote a book about the Katangese secession.

Q: Moshe Tshombe. You were there when Lumumba was killed?

HEMPSTONE: In 1960/1961.

Q: What was your impression of the Lumumba episode in the Congo?

HEMPSTONE: I did not know Lumumba well. I did not have a good impression of him. It's quite possible that I was a victim of western propaganda in that. I did regard him as a leftist, a pro-communist. He was a hothead also. He didn't seem like the right man. When he was deposed, I was delighted. I wouldn't have wished what happened to him on him.

Q: Much of the focus on the Congo ended up as an East-West thing between the United States and the Soviet Union. What was your feeling about this?

HEMPSTONE: I thought that was it, although I always thought in some way we should not be trying to keep the Russians out of Africa, but to lure them in.
Q: You play this game. The way it turned out, it was money down a rathole. They couldn't afford as much.

HEMPSTONE: To a degree, it was for us, too.

Q: Proportionally, they probably put more in than we did.

HEMPSTONE: You can't buy those guys. You can only rent them.

Q: What was your impression of the Congo as being an entity?

HEMPSTONE: It's too big for one country given its communications problems. Communications were never good there. They were a combination of rail, river, and road. For that to work, things had to go very nicely. You couldn't have disorder here and there and that sort of thing. The Katangese were really quite different in many ways from the people in northern Congo, the Lunda and Baluba. I damn near got killed there by the Baluba.

Q: How did that happen?

HEMPSTONE: There were a number of white mercenaries up in Katanga working for Tshombe, mainly South Africans and Rhodesians, but some British, French, and some Americans. These guys when they'd get drunk, which they did fairly frequently, they considered it amusing to lob mortar shells into the Baluba camps. They had the Baluba

concentration camp - not in the sense that they did anything nasty to them there, but they were confined there. The Baluba finally got desperate. They didn't have enough food. They broke out of the camp and came very near to overrunning me.

Q: Did you get to Stanleyville at all during that time?
HEMPSTONE: I really was not up there. My friend and Institute colleague, David Reed, was. He wrote a couple of books about that.

Q: I just interviewed a man yesterday, Dan Phillips, who was in Katanga around 1963. He talked about going up to Stanleyville. It was run by mercenaries who were basically wild people. What were your impressions of the governments that were forming in Nigeria, Ghana, etc., and the West African states?

HEMPSTONE: I guess I felt that the Anglophone West African states (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia) started pretty well. They were better equipped to go into independence than the East African states. Ghana had a very good civil service, a very good university, a growing middle class, all that good stuff. So did Nigeria. The initial Nigerian governments, when Balewa was the Prime Minister and Azikiwe was the head of what became known as Biafra. I thought rather highly of it. That government was overthrown in the most brutal fashion and everybody was murdered.

Q: What was your impression of the first wave of what later became known as Africanists in the Foreign Service? They really came in about the time you went out there, too.

HEMPSTONE: I would say they were a mix. In the past, many officers who were posted there were not particularly highly thought of by the Department, which is why they were posted there. Then when it became chic and embassies were opening all over the place, it became quite desirable from a sharp young officer's point of view. You can expect to get ahead pretty quickly, more quickly in Africa than in Europe. So, they had some very good ones. Arthur Woodruff, for instance, who was in the same company in the Marine Corps with me in Korea, later became ambassador to Central African Republic. Arthur had served in Katanga. He was a fine officer. I thought very highly of him. Earl Richie, who I met in Eritrea, a career officer who also served in Morocco, was an excellent officer.

Q: One of the things that I notice in some of my interviews is that they tended to be very eager young officers. I didn't go there, but I applied for Nigeria and ended up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. But this is a good place to go for somebody who is up for a career and a new thing. At the same time, the first cut as ambassadors were people who had been DCMs [deputy chiefs of mission] in Paris, Bonn, or someplace like that who really were not ready for that type of life at all. So, you had this split in the Service.

HEMPSTONE: I think that's so. I think you still get that. There are people going there who have a strong interest in being an ambassador, but a rather weak interest in Africa.

Q: You were there during the French withdrawal, where De Gaulle did it all at once.

Wasn't it Senegal where he pulled out everything?

HEMPSTONE: Guinea.

Q: What was your impression of those places?

HEMPSTONE: You just wondered what was going to happen next. I was in Liberia (I was traveling by car) bound for Guinea. That was my next stop, second tour. One had heard a lot about what had happened there. My wife and I took off in our car and headed up to the one road and the one bridge out of the country. There was a big padlock on it. I said, "Where is the officer in charge here?" They said, "He's gone home on leave." I said, "Did he leave the key with anybody?" They said, "No, he took it with him." We were stuck for two weeks on the border just waiting for a guy to arrive with a key. We got in then and proceeded to Conakry, which was run in a very haphazard way. I was in the principal administrative building of the government and forget who I was looking for, but I stumbled into the office of Sekou Toure. He was sitting there at his desk. I recognized him. I said, "Mr. President, je suis americain [French: Mr. President, I am an American]" and sat down and had a chat with him. That was the way things worked. They were so disorganized. Bill Atwood was our ambassador there. The Russians were very active, everybody looking out the hotel window.

Q: Did you feel very much a part of the international focus on these places, the Cold War, and everything else?

HEMPSTONE: One did. One thought that perhaps one was important.

Q: What were the Soviets and the Chinese doing in those days? Were you reporting on what they were up to, too?

HEMPSTONE: Trying to, but that was the height of the Cold War and they weren't particularly receptive to American journalists. I was turned down for a visa to the Soviet Union when I later went to London. I suspect that is because of my reporting in Katanga. They never told me why. I didn't see a lot of the Chinese or the Soviets personally. I guess they were mainly running in arms.

Q: Going back a bit, you were talking about reporting in Katanga. What was the type of reporting that might have riled the Soviets?

HEMPSTONE: The fact that I will have to admit that my reportage certainly had a pro-Western tinge to it and I was anti-Lumumba. I was pressing for goals that were not their goals.

Q: What about Uganda? How were things working there?

HEMPSTONE: Uganda in the days that I was in Kenya as a reporter was very quiet and rather like Ghana in some respects: good public service, good university, quiet little

place, doing quite well economically with coffee, cocoa, copper and so forth. I always regard myself as a Kenyan, so I sort of looked down on Uganda. But it was a nice place.

Q: What about Ghana when you were there? Nkrumah was riding high then and very much an international stage. But from accounts I've heard, he was essentially ruining the country. Did you have that feeling at the time?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, and it wasn't just Nkrumah. It was people like Krobo Edusei, who was around him, who were thugs. They certainly weren't statesmen and they were barely politicians. They were thieves and thugs.

Q: Nkrumah had quite a following in the United States for a while.

HEMPSTONE: Those were the people in my mind who did not know what the hell was going on. When I came back at one point, we had a sizable three-man Chicago Daily News bureau at the UN. Those people were rather appalled by me and by my reportage. They thought I was anti-UN, which I may have been.

Q: What about Tanzania? I think it was Tanganyika and Zanzibar and then it became Tanzania. Julius Nyerere was there. He seems to have sort of captivated everybody who got to talk to him.

HEMPSTONE: He was the darling of the liberals.

Q: Yet he was again destroying his country though socialist experimentation. Were you getting that at the time?

HEMPSTONE: I knew Julius before he went into the government, when he was still a labor union organizer. He was a very nice man. One can see why he did change people. But his policies were disastrous for Tanzania.

Q: While you were there reporting, did you find yourself falling under his charm? Was this part of the whole western approach? Was it had to report what in retrospect was not a very auspicious rule?

HEMPSTONE: Initially, one tended to give Tanzania a break because Julius was transparently a nice man and a well-intentioned man. It took a while before one saw the disastrous effects of his policy. Zanzibar was a little different. There was a lot of leftist activity out there. I knew all those guys quite well. Most of them ended up in jail. Then you had the Africans massacring the Arabs.

Q: Were you there at that time?

HEMPSTONE: No, I was not. I was in Africa, but I wasn't there.

Q: I've interviewed Frank Carlucci on this. He came a little afterwards. Were the Soviets

messing around there?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, and Cubans. I think I thought when we started reporting presumed sightings of Cubans, I think many editors in the United States thought we were embellishing. As we now know, we weren't.

Q: You left in 1964. You went to Harvard. The Nieman fellowships are renowned in the newspaper world about being a time to decompress and learn something. How did you find you year?

HEMPSTONE: It was marvelous. You had Harvard University at your disposal. You can take any course anywhere. You could take a course in the medical, business school, wherever you wish. Your only responsibility is in one course to write all the papers and take all the exams. You're graded in that, but otherwise, you're not graded; in fact, you can't use it to get credit. In some ways, I wish it had not been that way. It was a super experience.

Q: Did you do anything particular there?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, I had decided at that point (in 1964) that I either had to stay in Africa for life or I had to make a career change. I decided that I would like to go to Latin America. The powers that be on The Daily News were amenable to that. So, I took whatever Harvard had to offer in the way of regional studies, which really was not a great deal. If you want to prep for Latin America, you should go to the University of Texas. But what they did have was excellent. They had some very bright young professors that they turned that over to. I geared up my college Spanish. I took Ted Morrison's writing class, which had always been a favorite with Niemans. I wrote a book in that, a novel. It didn't have anything to do with Africa. It was set in Vietnam. It was a fairly successful year for me.

Q: So that was 1964-1965. Where did you go then?

HEMPSTONE: What I wanted to do because I believe in it wholeheartedly was to do the same thing in Latin America, to travel by vehicle rather than flying and to do a swing around the continent to the extent that I could and then set up my base someplace. So, we took off driving from Boston and drove down to Washington, home, saw my family, and drove out to Chicago and conferred with my betters out there. Then we drove down to Texas and crossed into Mexico, as I recall, on July 4, 1965. We proceeded south. We traveled the same way we did in Africa, that is, in a leisurely fashion. We were six months in Mexico before we crossed into Guatemala.
Q: What was your impression of Mexico in 1965?

HEMPSTONE: I suppose the thing that struck one immediately because you encountered it right at the border was the corruption. Of course, the poverty, the unique quality and distribution of income, made for a very small, wealthy upper class, some of whom I had known at Culver. Traditionally, they sent their sons out there because they liked to ride

and to improve their English. There was a small middle class and then a huge lower class. At that point, you still had the conflict between church and state in Mexico and the land problem. I haven't been there outside of Mexico City in some years. I suppose they probably all still exist. Then we headed on down to Central America, spending maybe a month or two weeks in a small country. The Panama Canal was as far as you could go. We put the car on a boat to Venezuela. I had to come home for some reason. I've forgotten what it was. I think it was family. We flew back down again, picked up the car, and proceeded south to Venezuela into Colombia. At that time, The Chicago Daily News had a new editor come in. He was less enthusiastic about my continuing in this thing. I had written this novel about Vietnam. I had been in Vietnam on the way home in November of 1963 when Diem was still in power. Of course, it was beginning to heat up by 1965. They wanted me to go out there. That was fine with me, except that they were not going to take Keyes Beach out. Keyes was going to remain in Hong Kong and I would be in Vietnam. I knew what that meant because I knew Keyes. He was a very aggressive newspaper man. He would come in and skim the cream off the thing and I would do the dog work. So, I said, "Look, I'll go if you keep Keyes out of it or, alternately, if you let me finish the Latin American trip." I still had maybe eight months to go.

Q: I assume you were sending reports.

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes, I was all the time. Roy Fisher, who was the new editor, thought I was trying to buck him, to question his command or whatever. He said, "I'd like you to go." I said, "I think we'd better talk about this." I flew up to Chicago from Cali, Colombia, where we then were, and talked with him. I couldn't convince him that my position had any merit to it really. But I was determined to continue that Latin American trip because I had invested too much time, a whole academic year, in studying up for it and was half way through the trip on the ground. I told him, "I'll reconsider my position, but I'm going to Washington and have a chat with the people at The Star, which I did. Newbold Noyes, who was then the editor of The Star, my second cousin (not that that makes any difference) was delighted to have me back and said, "Sure, you can continue. Finish the trip and then we'll decide." That was fair enough for me. So, I switched back to The Star while I was in Colombia, and continued on south through Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and so forth, down to Chile. Editors and, I suppose, readers were, if possible, even more disinterested in Latin American news than they were African news. The only time I got on the front page was when I happened to be in Argentina at the time of the Ongania coup, which was just an accident that I was there. The Star was saying to me, "Your writing is fine." Writing had always been my strongpoint. They said, "But it's a bit too sociological." I never quite figured out what they meant about that. I guess I was writing about the way people lived rather than political movements. They said, "We'd like you to go to London." That struck me as a pretty nifty assignment. So, I said, "Okay, when I finish the trip in maybe four months, I'd be delighted to go to London." So, that was agreed. I finished up in Brazil in December of 1966. Kitty and I flew home and stayed here two days and flew on to London. I took over there as bureau chief. I was the entire bureau. It was a great assignment. I had all of Europe based in London, so when the weather got rotten, I could think of a good story to do in Greece or Portugal and off

I'd go. We had no one in Eastern Europe, so I went into Eastern Europe also. I covered the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. That again was a very good three years for me.

Q: You were there from 1967-1970.

HEMPSTONE: Yes. My own game plan, my own agenda, was to do another tour in Europe, another three years, and then probably go to Tokyo, spend some time in the Far East. But it didn't work out that way. Newbold said to me, "I want you to come home. I've got a very important job for you, but I'm not going to tell you what it is now." That didn't please me very much, but he was the boss. So, we went home in 1970. It turned out what he wanted me to do was to be editorial page editor of The Star. That's a pretty good job. It sort of put me in the slot of being Newbold's heir apparent at The Star, which I couldn't complain about.

So, I did that. I started writing a twice-weekly column, which The Star syndicated for a while. I syndicated it first because they said they weren't interested in syndicating it. Then when I did rather well with it, they talked me into letting them syndicate it for a year. They didn't do as well as I did, so I took it back.

Q: At this particular time, in the political sector, when you're writing columns, you usually have to fall one place or another. Where were you falling?

HEMPSTONE: I was certainly conservative. I was not a conservative in the sense that somebody like George Will might be. I had never been a political activist. Indeed when I became editorial page editor, I dropped my membership in the Republican Party and became an independent because I thought that was more appropriate for the editor. But I was conservative, no question about it. I wasn't as conservative as James (Jack) Kilpatrick or Buckley, but some people seemed to think I was because when Kilpatrick would go on vacation, I would frequently sub for him. His clients never complained.

Q: Was The Star the conservative paper and The Washington Post the liberal paper?

HEMPSTONE: That's right. Of course, there were some internal politickings within the ownership of The Star. Newbie was probably to the left of me, a centrist though. His brother Tommy, who was one of the editorial writers and would dearly have loved to have that job, was considered too left for it by Newbie, his brother, which is why they made me. So, there was a little churning going on there.

Q: When were you there?

HEMPSTONE: 1965-1975. I had been there earlier from 1955-1956.

Q: Could you give me a little feel about, particularly in the foreign affairs field, your impression of Washington in those days? This was Nixon and Kissinger. How was this playing within the conservative circles? Nixon was certainly an internationalist.

HEMPSTONE: I guess the primary turning point for everyone was the Vietnam War. I supported Nixon's position. If I had thought about it, I would have supported Kennedy's position to intervene there. I believed in the containment policy, that we would deny to the Soviets any piece of turf we could. There did come a time when, like anyone else who was not a total fool, I did see that we couldn't win that war on the basis that we were allowed to fight it. I don't believe in fighting wars that you aren't allowed to win. So, my view changed there. But I was very much a man of the Cold War. I had a very strong anti-communist tilt to me and I still do.

Q: What was your impression from the newspaper point of view of the Nixon-Kissinger combination in international affairs, how they used the press?

HEMPSTONE: Everybody tries to use the press. I don't object to that since you know everybody's going to try to do it. Kissinger wowed the press, including me. Nixon, mainly because of his somewhat unappealing personality, never got the credit for being as astute as he was in foreign policy. I think he was as smart as Kissinger was.

Q: In my interviews with Foreign Service people, Nixon comes across quite strong on foreign affairs. Even when he was out of office, he went around and talked to people and was considered a first-class mind in really getting in there and finding out things. There is considerable respect for him.

HEMPSTONE: At the time, I would have said the combination of Nixon and Kissinger was terrific, but I probably would have given Kissinger more credit for it than Nixon.

Q: How did Watergate play from your perspective? This was a major event.

HEMPSTONE: I viewed Watergate when it happened as the third rate burglary that it was. I didn't think it was particularly important, the usual dirty tricks. That became increasingly difficult for a conservative directing an editorial page of, what's the proper position to take on this? What finally tore it with us at The Star, which caused a 180 degree turn on The Star's part was the-22 minute gap. They just couldn't accept that that was the actual thing that had happened.

Q: This was his secretary, who had some transcribing tapes and all of a sudden, there is a 22 minute gap and they tried to explain that this was an accidental erasure.

HEMPSTONE: It just wasn't plausible, so we ceased to support the President anymore.

Q: Was there much debate on the paper on this?

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes. There was a great ferment between the editorial section and the staff. This also extended to the Vietnam War. We had a protest by a bunch of our reporters on the Cambodian incursion.

Q: This was the spring of 1970. I was consul general in Saigon at the time.

HEMPSTONE: Some of these people I had hired personally, like Jimmy Doyle, whom I had gotten from The Boston Globe. I was very bitter about their position. In the first place, demonstrating against their ownership. They insisted in the talks with them and Newbold Noyes that their letter of protest be published in The Star. I thought Newbold was weak as water to allow that. I told him, "If I were you, I'd fire those guys, get them out of here."

Q: Junior Foreign Service officers at the Department of State at the same time were doing the same thing and Nixon said "Fire them." I think Rodgers sort of sent them off out of sight for a while and it died down.

HEMPSTONE: That feeling lasted a long time. We have made it up now, Jimmy Doyle and I, for instance. The only one I haven't made it up with is Mary McCrory. Those were very difficult, tumultuous times for a conservative editor. At the same time, we were starting to lose ground at The Star to The Post. It was money. We were small, family-owned. We didn't have great resources. We couldn't carry losses of about $10 million a year. I had all kinds of worries on my shoulders. I dealt with them as best I could.

Q: In 1975, where did The Star stand vis à vis The Post?

HEMPSTONE: We were failing. The Post was beating the sand out of us, not in terms of circulation so much as in terms of advertising revenue. It seems to be the practice of merchants (Don't ask me why) that if you have two papers competing and one has 60% of the circulation and the other has 40%, you don't give 60% of your advertising dollar and 40%. You give 100% to the leader. So, although our circulation was holding up alright and The Star was a fine paper in those days still, we were losing ground very rapidly.

Q: In 1975, whither?
HEMPSTONE: In 1975, The Star was sold to Joe Lewis Albritton of Houston, Texas. I was the second person he fired. I had opposed his acquisition. I was a member of the board of the paper, not of the corporation that controlled the whole thing. I resigned from the board when it was clear what they were going to do, that they were going to sell it at a disastrous price. If it had been a publicly held company, they would have had so many stockholder suits it would make their ears burn. I think we got $26 million for the whole thing. That included television stations. A television station is a license to print money. That's what they did, my kinsmen. I got fired, which didn't surprise me. But the column was doing pretty well. In those days, I had maybe 90 subscribers. That saved me from the ignominy of having to go look for a job. Neither my wife nor I are particularly extravagant. Our first and only child was born in 1975. So, that was a change that came on too at that time. I just went on writing the column. That was fine. It gave me more of an opportunity to travel. I had an adventure right at the end of my tenure at The Star and this was something the editorial page editor had no business doing at all. I went out to Iraqi Kurdistan with Barzani and his boys, illegally, of course, and covered the Kurdish rebellion against Saddam Hussein for a while. I was able to go to Angola on my own. When I say "on my own," I usually had a magazine assignment. In Angola, I had a

Readers's Digest assignment. I could use it for the column, covering all the expenses.

Q: When you were with Barzani in the Kurdish rebellion, this was one that initially the United States was sponsoring and then cut it off at a certain point.

HEMPSTONE: Yes. There would be some people who might challenge your terminology there, "sponsoring." Certainly, the Shah of Iran sponsored it and certainly we supported the Shah. That was my position, that we were indirectly responsible for it. Kissinger (and I used to bait him on this all the time because I felt very strongly) always denied that we could have...

Q: This is something that still hangs around, the culpability of the United States in this support up to a point and then sort of leaving the Kurds hanging out there and then turned on them and suppressed them.

HEMPSTONE: I felt very embittered by that. I told the Kurds when I was out there, "You guys mustn't depend on any outside force, including us. If it's not in our national interest anymore, we will stop supporting you. You can only do what you can do with your own people."

Q: I think this whole experience with the Kurds is something that has sort of hung over us ever since, as did the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. There was sort of a shyness about getting too involved with local rebellions because we know we probably won't follow through. Many people feel morally responsible if you get too deep into that.

HEMPSTONE: I don't know how deep we were into that. Kissinger always denied it. Clearly, if Kissinger had said to the Shah, "You must not do this. You will not do this," I don't think he would have done it. But it would have taken that. Also, he had the Israelis horsing around in there. What would you say about the Angola thing? There's one that we...

Q: Oh, absolutely. I think the term is a nuanced moral approach to these things.

HEMPSTONE: I was with Savimbi for a month. I guess I sort of prefer covering from the underdog's point of view, from the guerrilla point of view, rather than from the government, although I did cover the Polisario War in Morocco from the government's side. That's an entirely different situation when you're with the government.

Q: You were doing this column from about 1975 to when?

HEMPSTONE: I wrote my last one in 1989. I wrote my first one in 1970. So, I was doing it for 19 years.

Q: Did you find that you were developing a clientele within the Republican Party leadership? Were you mainly with foreign affairs?

HEMPSTONE: Mainly, but I did an analysis of my columns and I think maybe 60% of them were foreign related, maybe 30% domestic, and 10% bits and pieces. Yes, in the sense that I was regarded as a friendly. That's where I got to know a little bit people like George Bush, Barry Goldwater, and people like that. But I think they always regarded me as probably a bit of a maverick. I wasn't dependable on ideological issues. I tended to be more liberal in domestic politics than in foreign affairs, sort of like Senator Dodd used to be in Connecticut.

Q: You were at least close to the Republican Party, something that's always troubled me about the Republicans is that they seem to have really a carry-over from the 1920s sort of an isolationist hard corps there that really doesn't like foreign affairs. Did you find this at all?

HEMPSTONE: I didn't run into that much. I would have thought that since World War II that group had gotten pretty small. Would you include Jesse Helms in that?

Q: Yes, in a way. That's not isolationist. But it's a conservative bent that wants to keep relatively uninvolved in foreign affairs.

HEMPSTONE: I think that was more than counter-balanced by the anti-communism of the Right. Certainly even from a guy like Joe McCarthy on, they were anti-communist.

Q: Yes, and that meant activism. During this time from leaving The Star, was that pretty much what you were doing?
HEMPSTONE: Yes.

Q: Did you find yourself back in Africa quite often?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, I did. I was my own boss. I was free to travel where I wanted to travel. I should never reveal this. This is one of the secrets of the trade. You may wonder how I did this when I was off in the boondocks of Angola. I had subbed for Jack Kilpatrick, sometimes under his name, sometimes under my name. I had a guy named Paul Hope who was an editorial writer at The Star and was safely conservative. He wasn't a brilliant writer, but I didn't need to worry that he was going to write something that was going to embarrass me under my name. I could go where I wanted to go and do what I wanted to do. In this period, I took a lot of magazine assignments with Reader's Digest, U.S. News and World Report, and others. I spent a lot of time in what was then Rhodesia covering the guerrilla war there from the government's side.

Q: This was Ian Smith. This was the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). What was your impression of the Smith regime at that point?

HEMPSTONE: They certainly weren't monsters. The Rhodesian system, while it was hard on blacks, was not like apartheid. It was not codified in the sense that blacks were excluded from all aspects of life. The universities, for instance, in Rhodesia were more integrated than the universities in the American South. It was totally integrated at the

university level. Integration was allowed. So, if some liberal fellow wanted to start an integrated school, he could do so. There was nothing stopping him. These guys tended to be pretty provincial in the sense that any little country like that with a quarter of a million white population to take on Britain and, at least by remote, take on the United States, they should have known that they couldn't win. Constitutionally, since they had had internal autonomy since 1920, they could have carried on just as they were and thumbed their nose at the British. The British had made it clear they were not going to use force against Rhodesia. So, what was an embassy in Lisbon and one in Pretoria worth to them? Was it worth bringing down the wrath of the world on them? It wasn't.

Q: What was the thrust of your articles during this time as far as the United States' attitude toward the Smith regime?

HEMPSTONE: I thought we were too hard on him. I had seen the Rhodesian political scene since confederation when Roy Welensky was head of the whole thing, Garfield Todd, who was a liberal, was the Rhodesian Prime Minister. Ever since then, the Rhodesian prime ministers kept getting more and more conservative as more and more pressure was put on them from outside. In other words, it seemed to me like it wasn't working and that maybe we should do as Chet Crocker later did with South Africa, follow a party of engagement, of seeing by supporting these guys to a degree what we could accomplish in liberalizing the regime. Joshua Nkomo or Robert Mugabe in my view could be numbered among the major bad men and there was an awful lot of suffering and killing going on out there that didn't need to happen.

Q: How about South Africa? Were you getting involved with that at all?

HEMPSTONE: To a degree. I had been banned from South Africa for four years. I finally got them to reverse that when Frick Botha was the ambassador here in Washington. He was a very wise and decent guy. I said to Frick, "Look, if you guys have got problems with me, Smith Hempstone, you really have problems. I am not even Joe Kraft. So, how about it? Let's open up." They started doing that and started letting me go back in. I don't suppose I had much more luck than any other American reporter in sort of breaking through to the Afrikaner politicians. I was able to deal with them. I had Afrikaner friends in the lower level. Of course, you had this schism within the white community and within Afrikanerdom as to what the proper approach was towards black policy.

Q: You had gone through the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe business. Did you see a parallel in South Africa or was it quite different?

HEMPSTONE: Not so much. South Africa, the white community, was so much stronger, and the economy was so much stronger. I never expected the National Party to come so quickly to the agreement that it did.

Q: It surprised everyone. This brings us up to the time when you were appointed ambassador to Kenya. How did this come about?

HEMPSTONE: Let me just interject one thing that we haven't talked about. That was my time as executive editor and editor in chief of The Washington Times from 1982, The Star having folded in 1981, to 1985. That was a lot of fun. It was very satisfying in some respects because I was able to help a lot of my old Star buddies who were out of jobs, people like photographers. Photographers were a dime a dozen. I hired a whole photographic section in one day at The Times. I was executive editor when we started. There were just two of us, myself and Jim Whelan, who was the first editor in chief. I was always glad to have a go at The Post.

Q: The paper was supported by the Unification Church of the Reverend Moon. This left a real taint on the process. You were there in the place.

HEMPSTONE: In the first place, I very much resented that because I said, "Look, if you've got a quarter, you can buy this newspaper every day and you show me the effects of the Reverend Moon on it." He owned it. I said, "I'm running a newspaper, not a seminary." It was very difficult to get people to accept that. The Moonies generally speaking treated me quite properly. Did they try to influence policy? Sure, they nibbled around the edges the way any publisher does. Sam Kauffman, who was publisher of The Star used to get on my case from time to time on editorial policy. I did the same thing at The Times that I did at The Star: I listed politely and said, "Thank you very much for giving me your views on the subject" and went on and did what I thought was the proper thing to do. The proper thing to do in my view was to cover the Reverend Moon and the Unification Church with unedited AP copy, which is what we did, including his sentencing to jail for income tax evasion, the Moonie wedding at the stadium. You see the paper today, 15 years later, and you won't find the fingerprints of the Unification Church on it.

Q: It must have been a topic of conversation amongst the professional newspaper people. What was in it for the Reverend Moon?

HEMPSTONE: I never had an official answer to that, but my own view is that he hoped through The Washington Times to shorten the period in the wilderness of the Unification Church where they would become more acceptable, which I think they have. Of course, they stopped doing some things that were making them unacceptable, although it was always exaggerated, this forcible recruiting of people and holding them. That happened on the West Coast. There were very few cases of it.

Q: That's very Korean. I served in Korea from 1976-1979. We were very suspicious of the Unification Church and its influence.

HEMPSTONE: Korea is full of churches like that. I don't know that I ever told Moon this. In the first place, I only saw him about three times. His English was not too good. But Colonel Pak, who was his honcho on the paper, and he didn't like this, which I understand, and I think it had a lot to do with my eventual departure from the paper, I told Colonel Pak, "The success or failure of The Washington Times will depend directly on the distance that we can lay between ourselves and the Unification Church. We've got to

shake this image to the extent that we can." That hurts your feelings. It would have hurt my feelings. I refused, as Whelan had done, to go to any of their big seminars of writers, scientists, and lawyers, very first class. They flew everybody to Moscow first class. That hurt their feelings that I wouldn't go to those. I just said, "I simply can't do it. I have to stay here and run this newspaper." The time came when Arnaud de Borgrave, who had been scheming against me, replaced me in 1985.

So then I'm back to doing the column again for another three years. I had gotten bored with the newspaper business. I had done everything that I wanted to do. I had been an editor-in-chief of a Washington newspaper. I got to start a Washington newspaper, which nobody else this century has done. I had been an editorial page editor at The Star. I had been a columnist. I had been a foreign correspondent.

Q: Been there, done that.

HEMPSTONE: Yes. The only thing I could have said is like Hagar the Horrible: "Seconds." In 1987, I was up in Maine thinking about it, and as I always say, a lightbulb exploded inside my head and I recall there was to be a presidential election the next year in 1988. It seemed to me (You didn't have to be a genius to figure this out) that the Republican was probably going to win that election. It seemed to me that, in all probability, though he had not yet declared, George Bush was going to be the candidate. Then it occurred to me that he would need an ambassador to Kenya. Why not me? I could think of about 14 reasons. I really didn't know Bush that well. I had never been a Republican activist. I had given Bush $100. That was my extent of being a big donor. But I was regarded as a friendly and so forth. I hadn't gone to Yale, to Andover, wherever it is he went, hadn't been in the Navy, hadn't belonged to Skull and Bones, hadn't been in the oil business in Texas. There were any number of people that would have had a closer association than I. On the other hand, I did know something about Africa. I did want to be ambassador to Kenya. So that eliminated an awful lot of people who were not qualified, I presume, or who didn't want it. I kind of forgot about that by the summer, but October 1987 came along. Nobody had declared yet. Bush had not declared his candidacy. I closed down the cottage and came back down here. As it happened, I was invited to a White House reception - I think it was for the press. While I was wandering around there with a weak drink in one hand and a soggy canape in the other, I saw Bush standing in the corner all by himself, as American Vice Presidents tended to have to do since nobody wants to talk to them. I went up to him and reintroduced myself. He claimed he knew very well who I was. I said, "Mr. Bush, when you are President, I would like to be your ambassador to Kenya." He drew back a little bit because that's not the way you do it, but he recovered himself quickly and said, "Well, Smith, that's a very interesting notion." So, it was left at that. There was certainly no commitment on anybody's side. But in due course, he did declare, he did get the nomination, he was elected. At that point, I wrote him a note. I said, "Mr. President Elect, I just want to remind you of our conversation in the White House and my statement that I'd like to be your ambassador to Kenya. I just want you to know I was dead serious about that." I received a note back from him. He was, as you know, a prolific writer. He said something non-committal such as "Well, Smith, that's very interesting and we'll certainly keep you in mind." Then I started doing a

little maneuvering on my own. In the first place, I couldn't expect to get the nomination through the usual channels. Maryland in those days (1987/1988) had a democratic governor and two democratic senators and six out of eight democratic congressmen. So, I decided "I'm going to have to get this in an unusual way. I am going to have to get it on the basis of merit, on a national basis." So, in 35 years in the newspaper business, I had earned a few chips here and there with some people whose names would be well-known to you and to others: Henry Kissinger, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Dick Helms; and then some people whose names would not be familiar probably even to you, who is much more knowledgeable than most people, but are well-known within the foreign affairs circle. These included academics like Ned Munger from Cal [California] Tech and Carl Brown from Princeton. They included politicians such as Dick Lugar from Indiana and Jesse Helms from North Carolina. They included people in the intelligence community such as Dick Helms and Howard Imerey. Did you ever know Howard?
Q: No, I don't.

HEMPSTONE: It's alright to mention his name now because he's retired. I still see a whole bunch of these guys: John Waller. A bunch of career Foreign Service people such as Arthur Woodruff and Earl Ritchie. A bunch of businessmen. What I tried to do was get people right across the stratum of society but with a concentration in foreign affairs. To my absolute astonishment, 44 of the 45 agreed to do so, to either write or speak to either Bush or Baker, and probably some of them even did so. I think most of them probably did; some didn't. The one who turned me down was Bob McCloskey, who had been ambassador to Cyprus.

Q: And spokesman.

HEMPSTONE: Yes, spokesman for Kissinger. Then he went on to be head of Catholic Relief. I knew Bob very well. He was a friend of mine. He said, "I just can't do it because all my career, I've inveighed against political appointees and it would be incongruous for me to support your candidacy." I didn't say to him, "Bob, I'm a different kettle of fish and you can take your incongruity and stick it up your..." I said, "Okay, I understand perfectly." Also, I have a nephew who worked in the White House at a low level. As it happened, I was over there chatting him up one time in the old State War Navy Building, the Executive Building. We ran into in the hallway Chase Untermeyer. He was the head of White House Personnel under Bush. My nephew introduced me to him. He knew that I was interested in the Kenya appointment. The time came when he arranged for me to go with General Vernon (Dick) Walters on a small group to represent the United States on the anniversary of the accession to the throne of King Hassan of Morocco. There was no substance at all of the trip. It was just protocol. But it gave somebody (I don't know whether it was Dick Walters or Mrs. Potter Stewart, who was a big pal of Mrs. Bush) a chance to see me over a period of time and see how I behaved myself and that sort of thing. So, I guess I passed that test because the time came in the spring of 1989 when Jim Baker called me. He said, "Well, Smith, how are you doing?" It was a very friendly conversation. I was on vacation down in South Carolina. I said, "I'm doing fine, Mr. Secretary." He said, "I understand that you're a candidate for the ambassadorship to Kenya." I said, "You bet I am." He said, "I think that's grand. I can't promise you

anything, but I can tell you you're on the short list. My advice to you would be to get a little more support in the Senate. What you've been doing is fine, but you need some more in the Senate." So, I said, "Okay." I went about doing that. It was a simple enough thing. I simply called up the senators or their administrative assistants or their press assistants and got an appointment with them and went up and said, "Mr. Senator, I am hopeful of being appointment ambassador to Kenya. I think you know my background. I just want to present myself to you so that if you have any concerns about me or about policy towards Kenya, you can ask me and I'll do my best to answer." I worked both sides of the aisle on that, Democrats and Republicans, although naturally I tended to go to more conservative Democrats (Sam Nunn, Chuck Robb, and so forth). So, when the time came in the spring of 1989, it was a Sunday and my wife was out on a walk across the Bay Bridge, when the phone rang and it was a Camp David operator and he put Mr. Bush on. Mr. Bush said, "Smith, I wonder if you would be prepared to temporarily give up your very interesting newspaper work to serve as my ambassador to Kenya." I practically jumped through the ceiling. I said, "Well, Mr. President, I would be pleased and honored to do that." He said, "Fine, that's done then. I want to get you and Kitty over here to the White House a couple of times and then you're on your way." I said, "Thank you very much." So, I was named and then I sat around cooling my heels for four or five months. There were people I needed to see here in the Department and outside of the Department. I spent some time over at the Foreign Service Institute brushing up on my Swahili. In due course, I went before the Committee for Foreign Affairs. It was a big disappointment for me because I was loaded for bear. I had reviewed all my files. I knew everything you could possible ask me about Kenya. I think I was asked two questions. Paul Simon asked me how my Swahili was and I told him it was rusty but redeemable and that I was doing my best to redeem it at FSI and that pleased him. He said, "Will you continue doing that if you are appointed" and I said, "Yes, I will, Sir." He said, "How do I know that we can count upon you to defend human rights in Kenya?" I said, "You can count upon me because I am an American, Senator." He didn't seem quite satisfied, but he accepted it. That was all. It took about three minutes. Then we were off shortly thereafter.

Q: You were there from 1989 to when?

HEMPSTONE: I arrived there on December 1, 1989.

Q: And you left when?

HEMPSTONE: February 26, 1993.

Q: Before you went out, you had been reading up about the country at the State Department, talking to other people. What were you carrying with you as your mental portfolio of things that you felt needed to be done? How did you see American interests in Kenya?

HEMPSTONE: Not at all the way it worked out. In the first place, that was a rather benign period in Kenya's history. There were no political detainees. Daniel arap (son of) Moi's grasp on the country as far as I could see from there was fairly easy. There were

probably worse tyrants than he around. I thought I was going to spend my time getting the security treaty with Kenya, which had expired in June, reupped and helping Richard Leaky preserve the elephant (He is a paleontologist) and do whatever I could do in terms of AIDS. I assumed that we had some programs out there- (end of tape)

Q: You had obviously traveled extensively in Europe, Africa, and Latin America. What was your impression at the time you arrived of the American Foreign Service and how it operated?

HEMPSTONE: Of course, on my arrival, any pro or con bias really was not very strong. I hadn't really worked with them on a day in, day out basis. As far as the time in the Department was concerned, I had a very good desk officer, Jim Entwhistle. So, I had a good impression from him of that end of things. I suppose my initial impression was positive enough. I had no reason to think otherwise, though that did change a bit for the worse. I had some very good officers in Kenya. I mention most of them by name in the book, Rogue Ambassador. I knew my political officer, Al Eastham, was first-rate. Both my station chiefs were okay. I had a good economic officer, good consular officers. I had no complaints. But I did find as I got to know more of them better that there were amongst them many to whom the assignment to Kenya was just another job. They were what we would call in the private sector "Clock-watchers," many careerists amongst them who seemed to spend more time on the telephone to Washington trying to line up their next job. Many of them never left Nairobi, never had any interest in the country. There certainly wasn't any such thing as a cultural bath going on. I was disappointed in that.

Q: Who had been the ambassador before you?

HEMPSTONE: Elinor Constable.

Q: I've interviewed her. How did you find at the time the connections with the embassy with the Kenyan government and the various organs, newspapers, T.V., and all that?

HEMPSTONE: I want to be fair to Mrs. Constable, but I don't think she had particularly cordial relations with any of the power areas. I think that was probably largely because of her physical condition. Her eyesight was so bad that she had to have an aide stand next to her to tell her who somebody was. Her hearing was also bad. Her husband was not with her. He was then in Rome on another assignment. So, she was by herself, in poor health. She became sort of a semi-recluse. The only one whom I'm told ever saw much of her was George Griffin, her DCM. She didn't tend to open up the residence to members of the staff and so forth.

Q: Now that you were on the ground, what did you feel that you'd better start doing?

HEMPSTONE: Being the new boy on the block, there were a number of things I had to do. First I had to deliver my letters to Moi, which was accomplished rather quickly, within a week. Then I had to call on the ministers and I had to call on the other ambassadors, just protocol things really to open up lines of communication. While I was

doing that, I had to make some connections in the private sector, white and black, American, British, and Kenyan, and other denominations. I should say that the first four months almost was a honeymoon period. The Kenyans, the government, had been delighted with my appointment. Mrs. Constable they did not feel was the greatest thing since sliced bread, maybe because she was beginning to articulate some of the concerns that I later did. They knew who I was. They knew I was conservative. They knew I was a political appointee and had George Bush's ear every day. I never saw George Bush again. I knew Moi slightly. I knew lots of the old timers around there from the days right after independence. So, they thought they had gotten a patsy. I followed around dutifully on Moi's heels and went to things other ambassadors wouldn't dream of doing like agricultural shows and college graduations. At all of these places, I saw Moi and the members of the Cabinet, even those I hadn't formally called on. So, that's what I was doing.

Q: What was your impression of Moi?

HEMPSTONE: At first, he seemed like a rather genial, avuncular type. He wasn't any nuclear scientist in terms of intelligence I did not think and do not think now. He was a little uneasy. He didn't accept any sort of criticism at all well. You could say he was paranoid. I would say now he was paranoid, but I didn't know that then. He was very nice to me in those initial months. I guess I knew him for what he was, a pastoralist, a member of the pastoral tribe, a tribe that was economically disadvantaged, and he from one of the poorer families of the tribe.

Q: What tribe was this?

HEMPSTONE: This was the Tugen of the Kalenjin language group. It's 14 small tribes, one big tribe, the Nandi. They're sort of decent, stalwart guys who serve in the police and the army. All Moi had was a high school education and not a particularly good high school. He never traveled until he got into politics and that sort of travel was worthless in some ways. He was not a sophisticated man.

Q: What about the people surrounding him?

HEMPSTONE: As things began to go bad, let me just mention that. Things started to go bad, at least in my view, when Robert Ouko, the Foreign Minister of Kenya, was murdered in Kenya after a visit to Washington. The head of the police initially put out the story that he might have committed suicide. He died of a broken leg with his hands crushed and most of his body burned and a couple of bullet holes in the back of his head. So, that first awakened my eyes to the fact that maybe we were dealing with some guys who weren't nature’s noblemen. I initially subscribed to the view which a number of people held that Moi was a pretty decent individual, but he was surrounded my some evil advisors. He certainly was surrounded by some evil advisors like Nicholas Biwott, the Minister of Energy; and Willie Entimama, the Minister of Local Government; Wangale; and some others whose names I've forgotten. I used to call them the thug wing of the party and they were thugs. I thought, "He's a captive of the thug wing. The thing to do is

try to separate him from that group and get him to move against them, replace them with decent people, of which there are plenty around." But it soon proved, as things deteriorated after the Saba-Saba riots in which at least 20 people were killed (The opposition says it was more like 200), that was not the case. Moi was at the center of the policy of that group. He probably couldn't even if he wanted to separate himself from someone like Biwott, who had been with him personally (He was also a Kalenjin), who had so much on him and probably had it stashed away in a safety deposit box to be opened on the occasion of his death, that Moi wouldn't dare move against him.

Q: Why had the Foreign Minister been killed?

HEMPSTONE: We don't know. That is a very interesting story. I tried to find out. I was constantly being asked this by the Kenyans and by other people. The Russian ambassador pointed out that he had just come from Washington, obviously something had happened with us that caused his death. The rumors were, and it was probably somewhere close to that, that someone had made the mistake of mentioning that he might make a good president of Kenya, which is enough to get you killed. Also, there was a report that he had seen Bush, whereas Moi had not. When I say "seen him," they both saw Bush at a prayer breakfast and had maybe shaken hands and said a few words. But certainly Moi had not been to the White House. As it happened, a few months later, I received from Joseph Verner Reed, former ambassador to Morocco and Chief of Protocol, (I always got along well with Mr. Reed. He was always kind to me. A lot of people don't like him in the Department, but that didn't make any difference to me. I did like him. [He sent me]) a photograph and asked me to deliver it. It was a photograph of Ouko shaking hands with Bush on the steps of the White House. There was no date on it. There was no explanation of it. I wrote back to Ambassador Reed and said, "I can't deliver this, Joe, because, as you will recall, the Foreign Minister departed this veil of tears some six months ago. I will send it to Mrs. Ouko," which I did. I never pressed him for an explanation. I should have. I have been in contact with him a couple of times. He has read my book.

Q: Is he here in Washington?

HEMPSTONE: No. He lives up in Connecticut. He works at the UN now. He has read the book, so he knows the story, which I repeated in the book. He hasn't challenged me on that, nor made any explanation. So, I don't know. Of course, there are other reasons, too. There is allegedly a molasses factory up in Ouko's area which was deeply enmeshed in corruption - and he was including some other ministers in the government that he was trying to blow the whistle on. That may have had something to do with it. It could have had something to do with a woman, "cherchez la femme" [French: search for the woman]

Q: As you were beginning to realize the thuggishness of the government, did this set off the human rights alarm bells?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, it did, but prior to that, back at Christmastime there had been what they would call in the Department, the Peterson cable, from Ambassador Donald Peterson, who was then in Tanzania. He served all around. He's an old hand.

Q: I've started to interview him. He's up in New England.

HEMPSTONE: He made, as far as I know, the original suggestion that the United States now that the Cold War was over, which it was, should change its policy to support most vigorously those nations which shared our ideas and ideals for human rights, expansion of democracy, and the rule of law. Herman Cohen, the Assistant Secretary for Africa, had had the cable copied and sent to all of us with his imprimatur. Then he had called a meeting of all the ambassadors. I think as frequently, I gather, as is the case at the State Department, there was no need to call the meetings and the conference because it had already been decided that that would be U.S. policy. In fact, I believe, both Baker and Bush had articulated it even before that. I was prepared to get on that human rights horse extraneous from what happened to Robert Ouko. But it helped contribute to it, as did the government's reaction to the formation in June of 1990 of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD). This involved dissenters from the Moi line, some of them former Cabinet ministers like Ken Matiba, some of them youngsters like Paul Muite, who had been involved at a very high level. Since Kenya was still a single party state, they couldn't call FORD a political party. They called it a movement to discuss the future of Kenya. I had put out my lines already to the opposition. It was clear that Moi didn't like my doing that. But I told him, "It is my duty to know and to report what is going on in this country to the Department." I pointed out to him what had happened in Iran, where we had had no contact with the opposition because the Shah didn't want us to and we ended up with egg on our face. So, I said, "I'm sorry, but I feel I must do this." So, I did. At the Fourth of July party, I had many opposition leaders. I also had government servants. That again was part of my idea to make the embassy and the residence a place where men of good will could gather and discuss things in a rational fashion, as indeed they did. Everybody had a good time. You could see the judges who sent them to jail talking to guys and laughing like rails. But right after the Fourth of July party, there had been a FORD rally scheduled for July 7th, but the government had denied them a permit. So, the leaders of FORD (Matiba, etc.) said, "Okay, we won't hold the meeting, but we will continue to press for such a meeting." As it happened, the government moved against the leaders anyway on the 4th, 5th, and 6th, arresting the eight most prominent of them and many small fish also. They were detained and then rioting broke out on the 7th. Those were the so-called Saba-Saba riots. It was the 7th day of the 7th month. A number of people were killed, somewhere between 20 and 200. I protested openly both the opposition's brutality and the security force's brutality in putting it down. The General Services Unit (GSU) was out there with ax handles beating up grandmothers and all that sort of thing. I also said I didn't think much of the arson and looting that the democrats on the left engaged in. A human rights lawyer, Gibson Kamau Kuria, had taken refuge in the embassy and asked for asylum, which I granted him. I wasn't the one who talked to him. I had my political officer, my station chief, and my consular officer talk to him and they all agreed that his concern was genuine, that if he were put out on the street he would be arrested. He had been arrested before and tortured. So, I said, "Okay, Gibson, you can stay for the time being and we'll see what we can work out." Then I informed Cohen. I didn't ask Cohen's permission. I told him. I don't think he was pleased as punch. I don't suppose he should have been. He said, "You know you're going to have a hard time ahead

of you there." I said, "I guess I do know that, but I didn't see that I had any choice." We worked out between us (and I will give the Department the lion's share of the credit for this) getting Kuria out of Kenya, working it out with the Kenyan government that he could leave and I escorted him to the airport and saw him on the plane. He came to America, got a job at Harvard and Yale. Relations were very cool between me and the Kenyans.

Q: Had you developed a relationship with Kuria?

HEMPSTONE: I knew him. I had met him. He was one of the young lawyers who had been around to my house. But he was by no means the one I knew best. He was one that I knew really least.

Q: Around the Fourth of July, what about what our concerns were on human rights? How did we talk to a government when they're supposedly putting down unrest?

HEMPSTONE: I know what I did. My immediate concern was to get the conditions of detention improved. They were held under rather draconian conditions. They were treated like criminals and criminals aren't treated very sweetly in Kenya. Matiba was denied adequate medical assistance and suffered a couple of strokes while in prison, which permanently impaired him. He still can't read, can't use his right hand or right arm. I wanted to see that they received visits from family and clergymen. Oddly enough, when I went to the Attorney General, who was then Muli, he was not well thought off. The guy had spent a little too much time drinking. He gave me the list of visits to each of these guys. It was damning. He was fired two days later for having given it to me.
Q: In a way, a government can rightly say "What the hell's business is it of yours to talk about how people were being treated.

HEMPSTONE: Except I would say it is our business. We don't just export Coca-Cola and blue jeans. We export democracy. Thomas Jefferson didn't say that all Americans have these rights. He said, "All men have these rights." I thought, "If you want to have warm relations with us, you will give them these rights. If you don't give a damn about your relations with us, you treat them any way you want to."

Q: What was in it for the government of Kenya to have good relations with the United States?

HEMPSTONE: Money.

Q: Could we talk about that a bit? This was early on.

HEMPSTONE: We started cutting aid, which was at that point about $80 million a year after Saba-Saba, the riots. We froze all military aid. We started cutting and now it's $27 million or something like that. It cost them millions of dollars.

Q: You mentioned that there was a security treat that was in process. What was that

about?

HEMPSTONE: That was kind of a strange treaty in that it is well-known in this country, at least in circles that interest themselves in such things, but it's top secret in Kenya. You can't even mention it. What that allegedly did was give us these three airports (Mombasa, Nairobi, and Nanyuki) and also the Port of Mombasa when we had need of them. I say "allegedly" because it wasn't automatic. Any time you had an airplane coming in, you had to go with all the numbers and so forth. You had to get permission for it. We didn't pay very much for that treaty. I think we gave them something like $270,000 a year. Before I went out, one of the people I talked to was Mike Armacost, who was then doing the security portfolio. I said, "I know these people are going to ask for more money and we don't pay them very much. How much have I got to play with?" He said, "Not a dime." So, it became clear in that instance that we didn't put that much importance on the Kenyan bases because we had the Indian Ocean. We had good relations with Oman and could use [the island of Diego] Garcia.

Q: This was July 1990. How were things going in the Persian Gulf at this point?

HEMPSTONE: It was on. I've forgotten the dates. We, like everybody else in the region, were sort of geared up to support to the extent that our support was necessary or desirable. In our case, it wasn't much. I don't think we had a single ship visit during that time. The Department was concerned about the activities of Iraqi terrorists. They put out a lot of security stuff which I tended to ignore. The Department during Desert Storm told us to take all kinds of security precautions which seemed to me unnecessary and indeed deleterious in the sense that I didn't want the Kenyans or the other ambassadors to think that we had the wind up so much about this bunch of ragheads and go running for cover. We were supposed to use different routes coming to work and come in at different hours. I did carry a pistol during that time, the only time I did out there. Otherwise, I flew the flag from the car just to show them where we were.

Q: Actually, Kenya didn't play much of a role in Desert Storm.

HEMPSTONE: No. Guys came there for liberty.

Q: What happened with our treaty? Did they ask for more money and you said "No?"

HEMPSTONE: As I recall, it was mutually determined given the atmosphere which existed between their government and our government (or at least between their government and my embassy) that this would not be a propitious time to renegotiate. I don't remember whether we set up a committee on the military side just to talk about things so we knew more or less where we stood. Anyway, the impression was, "Okay, not too much of a hurry. You can probably use it." We did use it in providing relief food for Somalia. We used the airports and the port. That was an interesting thing, too, in that I was out of Nairobi down on the Tanzania frontier when my radio in the jeep came on saying to get back to Nairobi right away. They didn't want to talk about what it was, but said I might be able to guess. Somalia was certainly a strong header for what it might be

and it was. The word I had was that we were going to launch a food relief program from Kenya. I said, "When?" They said, "They're on their way." I said to Michael Southwick, then the DCM, "Have you informed the Kenyans?" He said, "I tried, but it was a weekend and there was nobody at the Foreign Ministry." I said, "Go and park at Sally Koskie's house (She was the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and let her know that this is happening. Meanwhile, I'm going to get down to Mombasa to meet the planes when they come in." At that point, I think there were maybe two or three C-130s. I went down there and they arrived on schedule. There was Brigadier General Frank Lebutti, now Lieutenant General Frank Lebutti. He was then a brand new brigadier. He had just gotten his star about two weeks before. He seemed a little bemused about where he might be. He was an American Marine. He was the head of the operation. He said, "Are we going to have a security problem here?" I said, "No, Sir. You may be overrun by souvenir hawkers and prostitutes and that sort of thing, but your greatest pain is going to be sunburn. These are friendlies really." He was glad to hear that. We got the headquarters set up. It had been well set up by my people. I had a very good consul in Mombasa named Don Stader. We had a shed out there, a hangar that we maintained and he had gotten that all fixed up for headquarters for Lebutti and gotten them all hotel rooms. Then he said, "There is a message for you at the consulate to call Southwick in Nairobi," which I did. He said, "Moi has called it all off." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "He's called off Operation Provide Relief." I said, "Well, get word to him. Go see him or at least talk to him on the telephone and see to it that he doesn't say anything more in public until I get there, which would make it more difficult for him to climb down." In point of fact, the statement didn't have Moi's name attached to it, which made it easier for him to climb down. I said, "I'm on my way up there." I got up there and called Moi. I said, "Mr. President, I feel I must be misinformed because I am told that you have canceled Operation Provide Relief." He said, "No, you're not misinformed. I have canceled it." I said, "Sir, if I may point out, this is entirely a food operation. A lot of the food is going to go to your people when you've got an election coming up. I just wonder if you might want to reconsider. The foreign press is pouring in here (which it was) and if we have to tell them, and I've got a press conference set up for tomorrow, that this thing has been canceled, the effect is going to be very bad for Kenya, bad for you." He said, "Well, I think you'd better get over here and bring your top people and I'll get my top people." So, we gave him the full court press. By then, Lebutti and his assistant were out there. I took them along and took along our military in their war suits and medals and all, and our political people, and the Agency people. He had a flock of Cabinet ministers there, including the Foreign Minister and the Defense Minister. So, it was a pretty heavy crowd on both sides. Moi started out the discussion. The thrust of it was how, yes, he had canceled it because we hadn't gone about it properly; we hadn't asked permission; and we didn't do that because we took them for granted now that the Cold War was over; we had forgotten that he was the first person who opposed communism. Before he got too carried away, I interjected and said, "Mr. President, we have not forgotten that you're the first person to oppose communism. Of course, we honor you for that. This is just what it appears to be. It's a food operation for your people and for the Somalis."

Q: When you say "your people," what was that?

HEMPSTONE: A quarter of the stuff was going to northeastern Kenya.

Q: We're talking about an extreme drought.

HEMPSTONE: And disorder. Many Somalis had fled into Kenya, most of them armed. I said, "One out of every four tons is going to go to Kenyans. It will be based out of Mombasa so that we will not be too conspicuous, we Americans. I can't see why you would want to cancel such an operation. If I may make a suggestion, why don't we change my press conference into a Kenyan press conference, let the Foreign Minister handle it. He can put whatever spin he wishes on this. Our only interest is in getting the food through to people who are hungry." Michael Southwick suggested, knowing how all bureaucrats love a committee, "Why don't we set up a committee, half Kenyan, half American, to monitor the operation on a day to day basis." Lebutti chimed in, saying, "I think that's an excellent idea and I'll send an officer here who will sit with you people (meaning General Mohammad) and you send one of equal rank down to me and he'll know everything that we're doing." So, Moi sort of hesitated then. It was clear that he had been somewhat mollified by this. He said, "I'll think about it." I said, "Mr. President, we haven't got time to think about it. The press is coming in here. Lebutti is here with his planes. Even now, he needs to be flying reconnaissance missions into Somalia. We want to start the food going by early next week." He finally said, "Well, alright, you can start it on a day to day basis. But if I don't like it, you'll cancel it." So, that's what we did. We got the thing off the ground, but just barely.

Q: Obviously, a drought doesn't just happen overnight. Had this been something that we were monitoring? Strictly from your embassy point of view, were you looking at and realized we had a situation developing?

HEMPSTONE: To give myself credit, I had spent some time recently up in the northeast. I had written a couple of cables which were sufficiently moving that they were brought to George Bush's attention. That apparently is what got it off the ground as far as Kenya was concerned. Of course, we had an idea of what was going on in Somalia.
Q: Who was our ambassador in Mogadiscio at that time?

HEMPSTONE: We did not have one. We had evacuated the embassy earlier when it was Jim Bishop.

Q: That was during the height of Desert Storm, so there were Marine Corps assets, such as helicopters, in the region.

HEMPSTONE: It was quite an operation. The Marines never got credit for it because so much else was going on. Not only did they snatch all our people, but they snatched most of the diplomatic corps.

Q: That was a close run thing.

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes, the bad guys were coming over the wall.

Q: Had your country team been getting ready, thinking, "We're going to have to do something here?"

HEMPSTONE: Oh, yes. We already had I don't know how many refugees in Kenya in camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under bad sanitary conditions. Clearly, they were hungry already and they were going to have cholera and stuff like that. So, yes, we were sending out stuff all the time.

Q: When you get situations elsewhere other than right on the ground, usually, it's because the T.V. is there and the pictures are there. My understanding of this is that our response was very much driven by the pictures from Somalia on the nightly news. Were you getting reverberations from this?

HEMPSTONE: I can't say that I was getting reverberations. I had taken the precaution of assuming that we might very well have to evacuate our people from Addis Ababa overland. I had sent people up to the border to make arrangements up there. [The entire embassy], Ambassador Cheek and his people, [were evacuated] out of Sudan [to Nairobi hours before the air war started]. I had sent Michael Southwick into southern Sudan. I had been up there myself on the border. We were looking at any number of ways.

Q: We're talking about a widespread famine of the whole area.

HEMPSTONE: We were talking also about genocide in Ethiopia and Sudan. I don't know what you want to call it in Somalia.

Q: Tribal disturbances with heavy weapons. What about AID at that time? Was AID gearing up to do something or weren't we prepared for that sort of thing?

HEMPSTONE: I suppose they were. We managed in most instances to have a fairly decent supply of food, blankets, medicine, and so forth on hand when people started pouring in from wherever they started pouring in. It was never enough. I really didn't see as much of the AID people as I probably should have and they should have seen me. I don't think that was too well coordinated in that I don't remember a lot of...

Q: How was the government of Kenya responding to this, prior to the arrival of food aid?

HEMPSTONE: In a rather ambiguous fashion. In the first place, General Mohammad, the Chief of Staff of the Kenyan army, is an ethnic Somali. He is now retired. He was up to his armpits in Somali politics, including gun running and everything else. So, he was very much an interested party. The Kenyans themselves don't like Somalis, don't trust them, didn't want Somali refugees in their country. So, it was difficult.
Q: The original intervention there was staged through Mombasa. How did that work?

HEMPSTONE: That worked very well. It was limited in its scope. All we were doing

was delivering food to a number of airfields in Somalia where the Red Cross was taking it over as our agent to distribute it. If there was trouble around an airfield, we didn't go in there that day. We went someplace else. When we did go in, they kept the engine running. They could unload one of those big planes in 20 minutes and get out of there. So, we never lost a life. Material damage was insignificant, a couple holes in airplanes, that's about all. Then there followed, and that's when I got really deeply involved, the second phase, which was unilateral American armed intervention in Somalia - 20,000 [troops].

Q: Had you envisaged before that we might get into this?

HEMPSTONE: I had envisaged it in the sense that it almost always happens that way when you start with food. Whatever you do start with, it tends to expand when the situation does not respond the way you hope it will and it almost never does. I was asked at that time what my view was of an armed unilateral American intervention in Somalia. I said in words that will be engraved on my tombstone, "If you liked Beirut, you'll love Mogadiscio." That was the so-called "Tar Baby" cable. That cable of mine was leaked, not by me (although there are people who say I leaked it, but they're either uniformed or lying), to U.S. News and World Report and published in that magazine. That caused a furor here in Washington. Dick Cheney, the Secretary of Defense, got on T.V.; and Larry Eagleburger, who was Deputy Secretary of State, both spoke out. Cheney was particularly strident, I felt, in his attack on me, since I had been asked for my opinion. I was so naive, I figured when people asked for my opinions, they really wanted them, that it was not just a cover your ass program, which I think it was in retrospect. He said two things that were untrue and make me sore to this day. He said that I had opposed humanitarian aid, which I hadn't. There wouldn't have been any if I hadn't gone up there and bent Moi's arm out of shape. He also said that I didn't know anything about Somalia anyway. Well, I never claimed to be a Somali expert, but I was filing a copy out of Somalia in 1957 when Dick Cheney was still in short pants. Eagleburger, who maybe has a better respect for me than Cheney does, was more restrained in his criticism. He said what he had to say, obviously. He said, "Ambassador Hempstone sometimes exaggerates." I suppose I do.

My situation at that juncture was, I could either go on head to head with Cheney and Eagleburger, in which case I would have lost, or I could shut up. I chose to shut up, both because I knew I couldn't win and because we had the election coming up in Kenya within six weeks and I felt I had to be there to keep an eye on Moi and his boys to keep it as straight as possible. So, I shut up.

Q: What were you getting from your embassy? Essentially, your embassy was the closest one to Somalia at that point. Prior to this, using the station chief and your political officers, did you feel yourself sort of a listening post on Somalia?

HEMPSTONE: Yes. We had one officer (I think his name was John Fox) who had been in the Mogadiscio embassy who was assigned to my embassy to keep a watching brief on Somalia. We sent people in there, mainly CIA and AID people, on an ad hoc basis and

got them out again as quickly as possible. We didn't like people spending the night there if we could avoid it. That's what was going on. We were getting some information out of there, but a relatively small number of individuals was involved.

Q: When the Beirut/Mogadiscio cable occurred, was this essentially something that was supported by those of the rest of your staff who were familiar with Mogadiscio?

HEMPSTONE: I think so. It was certainly supported by almost all the people I knew in Kenya. There were a lot of old Somali hands around there, Brits. Anybody who knows the Somalis and knows a little bit of history and remembers the mad mullah and that sort of thing knows when you grab Somalia, you've got a tiger by the tail.

Q: We put our forces in. I sort of had the feeling that we went in to Mogadiscio really not for great policy considerations, but just the drum beat of the press talking about how awful conditions were there. So, this was one of these almost hasty responses to the emerging of human catastrophe.

HEMPSTONE: It was that and the combination of the fact that the U.S. military did not want to go into Bosnia-Herzegovina and hoped that Somalia would be a softer option, which it was, despite the horrible things that happened. It worked pretty well under the Marines when it was a unilateral operation for obvious reasons. Multinational operations are a pain in the ass for everybody, even multi-service ones like the rescue attempt in Iran. But with one service, the Marines, who know each other and know what the drill is and so forth, that worked pretty well. It was in the third phase, the multinational one, that things began to come apart.

Q: Did you find yourself sort of the odd man out? How did you find yourself within the foreign policy establishment having already said this thing wouldn't work? There you are and we're getting deeper and deeper in.

HEMPSTONE: I had told them at the time after the exchange with Eagleburger and Cheney and so forth, "I will support the President's position publicly," which I did. Mainly, I did it by not saying anything. When people asked me questions, I would say, "That is not my bailiwick." By then, we did have someone in there, Pete De Voss first and then Bob Oakley. When I was [first quoted], there was no American ambassador. There was no embassy there. I would say after De Voss came up, "It's not my bailiwick. I've got enough to do with Kenya. Go ask somebody else."

Q: Did you find the Department of State since you had Cheney and Eagleburger down your neck, did they kind of freeze you out? Did you have any feel of that nature?

HEMPSTONE: Yes, in a sense. I had sought permission seven times to go into Somalia. I thought I could help [General] Lebutti and his Marines, which are my Marines. I was refused and refused in very direct terms one of the seven times by Eagleburger. I am a Marine. I do obey orders if I have to. I thought I did have to. So, I saw Lebutti and his gang off at the airport at dawn and I didn't like it at all. I think there was a chill in the

atmosphere after that towards me from some members of the Department, not all by any means. Eagleburger always supported me. Bob Houdek always supported me. There were others that did. There were those who thought I was pressing the policy in Kenya too hard and too fast, so they already regarded me as something of a loose cannon.

Q: When you use the term "rogue ambassador," I don't get a rogue feeling from our conversation so far.

HEMPSTONE: I was not a rogue ambassador in that what I was doing (or at least what I thought I was doing) was implementing the President's policy. But the Kenyan government believed or purported to believe that I was a rogue ambassador, that I was acting on my own. Various individuals said on various occasions, "We have no problem with the United States. We have a problem with Hempstone. He acts on his own." I said to some of the brighter ones amongst them, including Bethuel Kiplagat, who had been the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before, a very good man, "I am a political appointee. If I were doing something that President Bush didn't want done, he would have me out of here in five minutes. You know that. So, why do you talk all this nonsense?" It's sort of ironic.

Q: At a certain point in this operation in Somalia, it did turn into a Beirut type situation of real chaos. We had to leave ruinously. Sometimes being the Cassandra who tells what's going to happen doesn't endear you. How did you find this?

HEMPSTONE: I found that true. It didn't endear me to Eagleburger, with whom I always had and still have a good relationship. He wrote the review in The Washington Times of my book. It did not amongst many who served in the Pentagon, some of them regular officers, some of them reserves. When I came back to the United States in 1993, I taught at VMI for a while and I was in touch with a lot of military. They all said, "You were dead right on Somalia. Many of us felt that way at the time," but being military junior officers, they couldn't say.

Q: What happened in Kenya itself aside from the Somali thing?

HEMPSTONE: We had had the Saba-Saba thing in July 1990. There continued to be jabbing and sparring, some of it more serious than others. They didn't like my traveling around the countryside talking to people. They weren't used to ambassadors doing that and were also afraid I might learn something, which I did. The well-known substance hit the fan in late 1990 when I went to Kisumu and I called on Oginga Odinga, who was the first vice president of Kenya, but was a non-person really by then. He couldn't travel freely, couldn't speak to the press. If he did speak to the press, the press couldn't publish what he had to say, although he had been guilty of no crime other than being opposed to Daniel arap Moi and Kenyatta before him. Oginga had a reputation of being a leftist, but I always felt that was kind of a silly approach to it. He was a massive capitalist himself, very wealthy. He was an opportunist. If we were going to support Tom Mboya, which we were, who was his great rival amongst the Luo people, then he would then take help where he could get it. He got it from the Russians and the Chinese. At that party, which

was also attended by Bishop Okulu, an Anglican bishop who was anti-government, very much in the government's bad book, and other opposition figures, but also other government figures, I invited the provincial commissioner and the local district commissioner.
Q: This was down in Kisumu.

HEMPSTONE: Yes. You wouldn't think that an old man in his late 80s attending a party would create banner headlines, but it did. They put out some other extraneous but untrue stuff that I and my staff (because we were again going by land when we left Kisumu and went over to Homa Bay) were cavorting in rough public houses, drinking, wenching, otherwise carrying on. They got everything wrong in that newspaper article except the fact that I was in Homa Bay. They got our license plates wrong. They got the names of the guys who were along wrong. They failed to mention that Kitty was along, so there wasn't much red hot wenching going on. But I was hopping mad. Meanwhile, Bishop Alexander Muge, who was an Anglican bishop, a very fine man, a former GSU (General Services Unit, paramilitary, heavily armed) enlisted man who had been decorated for valor in the fighting against the Somalis after independence, but had turned pretty much opposition, was killed in a "road accident." It may have been an accident, I don't know. But it was suspicious to many people because a cabinet minister had said that if he visited a certain town, which was within his see, that he would see fire and die, which he did. The cabinet minister did have to resign, but they never established anything. So, I was hopping mad by the time I got to Nairobi. I went to see Kiplagat and said, "Look, I am not really all that concerned about the lies that The Kenya Times tells about me. (I mentioned the editor's name, which now escapes me) I'm not interested in what he said, but I am interested in who is pulling his chain. You know and I know that nothing appears in The Kenyan Times of which the President does not approve. What does that say to me about the type of relations that you people want with me and with the United States? I'm not going to come in here and complain every time this guy, the editor, complains about me because I wouldn't have time to do anything else and neither would you. But I'd be very interested in whether it stops or whether it goes on." It stopped immediately. I heard nothing from that guy for about two months.

But there were other instances. They followed me every place I went. The police interviewed everybody I saw and some of them rather roughly. Some of them were totally innocent. A little Lamu innkeeper who I had never known, but I had to stay with, I hadn't been off the island for 10 minutes before they had him down at police headquarters and kept him there for the better part of the day, wanted to know what I had told him and how much money I had given him. Due to their own corruption, they assumed that I was corrupt, too, and so forth. They nailed me for distribution of seditious books to the people of Kenya. These were the same books that USIS had been delivering to Kenya for 20 years, mainly self-help volumes, Up From Slavery, and stuff like that. I responded to that simply by publishing the titles and the names in the local press to show how ludicrous this thing was.

There came even more problems. There were problems going on between the Brits and the Kenyans. I had gone through three British High Commissioners. Each time, they were

improving a bit. Sir John Johnson was terrible in my view. He wanted to stay on in Kenya in his retirement and he wanted to be an adviser to the Kenyan government. The only way he could do that was with Moi's support. The only reason he didn't do it is because his daughter fell very ill and he and Lady Johnson had to go home. Moi was about to fire Richard Leakey as head of the Kenya Wildlife Service. Leakey had been promised carte blanche as far as personnel were concerned. He had discovered that something like at least half the game scouts were corrupt, in league with poachers and everything. He was going to fire them. Well, Moi didn't want them fired. They all were members of constituencies that he needed with elections coming up. About that time, he did agree to legalize the opposition, which is what we had been trying to get him to do all along. I went to see Moi. Queen Elizabeth was coming through there on her way to Harare, where the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference was taking place. So, I went and saw Moi and said, "Look, if this demonstration which the opposition has scheduled takes place on the eve of the Queen's visit, there's blood on the streets, and you fire Richard Leakey, your profile in the world is not going to be very good. You know very well that if you instruct the police to use restraint that they will do so. I want you at least to delay this Leakey decision until you have had time to think about it." He did those two things. The demonstration worked out very well. There was only one person killed and that's not bad. The Queen came and stayed and was able to leave without being embarrassed. Leakey stayed on for the time being.

But then there was a strong backlash from that. The Foreign Minister called me (the only time he did call me) and tore an enormous strip off me, claiming that I was a drug dealer and that I was providing children with liquor and money to demonstrate against the government and that indeed I was running the opposition. I told him, "Mr. Ayah, if I were running the opposition, it would be running a lot smoother than it is, I can guarantee you that. I don't accept what you have to say." He said, "I'm going to leave it up to you whether you stay or not." I said, "I don't accept what you're saying and I feel that my duty requires me to remain here and I will remain here until my President calls me back or your President expels me." He repeated all these things, really scandalous remarks, in a press conference. The Germans by that time had sent in a new ambassador who was a great help to me. He was my strong right arm in terms of human rights and so forth. The Scandinavians had always supported me, but they didn't have the specific valence that the Germans did. Those guys were worked over by the Foreign Minister also.

Then they held a whole day's session in Parliament on my merits, which seemed to be few, and my demerits, which were many. At the end of the day, Parliament voted unanimously for my recall, which I will always remember as a badge of honor. At that point, both the White House and the Department really came through in first-rate fashion. The President through his spokesman gave total support to me and so forth. So, there we were. It more or less ended on that note, except we still had the elections to come. They didn't like me worth a darn. They wanted me out of there. But they didn't have the guts to kick me out. Bush was not going to recall me.

So, up comes election time. This was December of 1992. There was hassling over foreign observers. They turned down a democratic party group here, the Institute for Democracy

or something like that. It was run by Brian Atwood, who ended up under Clinton as head of AID. He refused to accept them. I told him, "You are making a mistake here. Should a Democrat be elected, Brian Atwood is likely to have a fairly high powered job in the new administration. I think you ought to reconsider." He said, "No, I'm not going to take it." He did accept the Republican crowd. But there were other hassles with other nations. The Germans finally withdrew. I was concerned about the lack of the numbers of foreign observers of which there may have been 150 to have a look at 10,000 polling places. So, just to help a little bit, I've put together embassy teams. There were only 15 of them, four members in each, all volunteers. There were two Americans, a Kenyan driver and a Kenyan interpreter. I sent them out to key constituencies to observe there. I think we had a positive effect. We had white hats made up for us and that sort of thing. I think it also indicates a true basis of the popularity of what I was doing with the rank and file at the embassy. Certain elements did not take part. No CIA guys went because the acting station chief didn't think it was what she wanted them doing. No military people were engaged. All the rest were volunteers. I had 30 Americans and an equal number of Kenyans who were willing to give up their weekend and take some slight risk to observe.

You know how the election worked out. Moi won the presidency with 36% of the vote. There were three opposition leaders dividing the opposition vote against him. The German ambassador and I told them that this was the sort of thing that would happen if they couldn't agree on a common candidate. Opposition won 88 out of 200 seats in Parliament, which was a pretty good showing for the first election in 25 years. The opposition swept the local council elections. That was it. Moi had eased up a bit on beating up journalists. He started up again after the election.

Kenya is a different place than it was when I went there in 1989. People are not afraid to talk anymore. They're not afraid to come to the American embassy. There was a time when they were. So, I think we didn't do too badly.

Q: What about crime as far as living, not just for you but for the staff? I've always heard that this was a real problem.

HEMPSTONE: It certainly is a problem in Nairobi. It certainly is a problem after dark. I haven't been back in Kenya in four years.

Q: We're talking about the time you were there.

HEMPSTONE: While I was there, that was about it: the problem in Nairobi after dark. You didn't wander around Nairobi after dark, particularly on foot. There were some problems outside of town occasionally.

Q: What about the staffing of the embassy? There had been at one point (I don't know how it was during your time) a tendency to load all the agencies who wanted to have anybody in Africa in Kenya. Ambassadors had tried to cut that down, to stop the Fish and Wildlife Service from having an attache. Any group in the United States government wanted to send somebody to Kenya. Was this a problem when you were there?

HEMPSTONE: Yes. I was instructed by the Department (I've forgotten whether it was Eagleburger or Cohen) to resist that, which suited me fine because I wanted to resist it. The FAA wanted to go in there with a big bunch of people. Sometimes there were problems. Mombasa and Nairobi had become big narcotics transfer points. We didn't have any narcs down there. They had to come down from Cairo for it. Sometimes that had the effect of getting my State Department guy in Mombasa involved in narcotics, which frequently was very dangerous and wasn't really his work. So, in some ways, I was of mixed emotion. I would like to see them there; on the other hand, we were trying to keep the lid on that place. But another problem, which was even greater from my point of view, was the tendency of the Department to dump people on Nairobi who were problem people, many of them single mothers. I said, "Look, you can't keep doing this. I don't mind minorities. Send me all the blacks and Hispanics you want. But send me decent people who don't have terrible problems. Otherwise, you're going to ruin this embassy." Well, they didn't do that. After I left, I think of the 20 top people, 14 of them were women and they did not get on with each other and they made a mess out of the embassy. The morale was once sky high. Morale is now low, particularly since the bombing of the embassy.

Q: I was in Personnel at one point. This was back in the 1960s. All of a sudden, we kind of came up short because every time we had a problem case, they'd say, "Let's send them to London or Paris because they can absorb it." There is a personnel saturation point. There is a tendency to do this. Kenya was considered one of the...

HEMPSTONE: Cohen told me that specifically when I said, "You've got to stop doing this." He said, "I can't because I can't send them to Ouagadougou. They're a real problem. You can absorb them." As you say, you can't absorb them after a while.

Q: You left there with the change of administration. It was actually a normal tour. Did you find that the new administration was at all interested? Was it "Here is your flag" and "Nice to see you?" Did you have much of a chance to talk to the new group?

HEMPSTONE: No. I talked to various groups like FSI, but certainly not to the political administration. As you know, many people in the Department rightly or wrongly are opposed to political appointees anyway. So, I pretty much got the flag and a bottle of warm champagne and went out the door. The rest, as they say, is history.

Q: Since you left there, what have you been up to?

HEMPSTONE: I taught for a year at VMI [Virginia Military Institute] and in Sewanee. Then I wrote this book Rogue Ambassador: An African Memoire, which is more or less to set straight the record on some of these things. That has had the same sort of reception that I had personally. That is, it has many vigorous proponents, particularly amongst the younger officers, although I sold the book personally to nine ambassadors and they were all in opposition.

My own feelings are mixed on the thing. I if I were offered another post if a Republican wins, would I take it? I don't know whether I would or not. I got awfully tired of some of that bureaucratic stuff.

Q: I know what you mean. I'm a professional Foreign Service officer and I'm absolutely delighted to be outside the system and being doing what I want on my own. I have an appreciation for America's role in foreign policy, but how one goes about it at the nitty gritty gets difficult.

HEMPSTONE: I don't know the answer to that. Foreign Affairs, the Bible of the foreign policy establishment, excerpted my part about the Foreign Service and also part about foreign aid. On Foreign Service, I declared myself perplexed that I know these guys are all very bright in an academic sense. After all, you have maybe 200 people selected from about 14,000. But somewhere along the line, they lose something. What do they lose? I think it's because the Department, like most institutions, does not really welcome innovative and risk-taking policies. They'd much rather have a guy who's safe, who will go on with the act, do his job, what's technically required of him, and so you lose something. Maybe they should be all political ambassadors over 60 who have no future and aren't afraid to do what they think is right.

Q: I saw an excerpt where you mentioned something which troubles me, too, because I interview many people who become ambassadors. That is that moving to the top often depends on being close to the flagpole, people who work as assistants or they work with the National Security Council or as assistants to heads of bureaus or in Personnel. These are staff jobs. Alright, but people who make a career working in this type of thing, really, this is not what foreign service should be. The strength should be that somebody knows Germany very, very well, and knows how something will play in Washington.

HEMPSTONE: Yes. Maybe the tours should be longer. What do you think?

Q: I don't know. It's difficult. There are all sorts of problems. Why don't we stop at this point?

HEMPSTONE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Kennedy.

Q: Thank you.

End of interview